

**INTERMEDIATE PHASE EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE
BARRIERS TO LEARNING THAT OCCUR IN AN ESL CLASSROOM**

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VAN DER BIJLPARK

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DEDICATION

The product of my work is dedicated to my husband, Tanesh Latchman, my children, Sarvesh and Tiya Latchman, and my mother, Seethamah Pillay. Thank you for giving me the support, unconditional love, understanding and space needed to complete my research.

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PROOF OF EDIT



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Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Redelinghuys'.

Karien Redelinghuys
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ABSTRACT

The language in education scenario in South Africa is a complicated one since learners' language backgrounds are diversified and span the spectrum of all eleven official languages as well as other languages that are not official to our country. Many learners enter the learning environment with a multitude of barriers, and in this study language was reported by educators as the most common barrier to learning, especially for English Second Language (ESL) learners. A majority of these learners reside in homes where there is no facilitation of or exposure to the English language, yet these learners attend schools where the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) is English. In many instances they are also taught by educators who themselves are not proficient in the English language and who indicated that they did not have the necessary skills to teach and support the Intermediate Phase ESL learner effectively. A notable finding of this study was that educators seemed not to comprehend the importance of mother language proficiency as an important foundation for acquiring and learning in a second language. Educators also emphasised the following factors as complicating the learning environment for ESL learners: large classroom numbers, an inflexible curriculum, insufficient support from the Department of Education, as well as a poor socio-economic environment. Therefore it has been ascertained that the education of the ESL learner cannot be dealt with in isolation, but should rather be directed at addressing the plethora of barriers that the ESL learner is faced with, so as to ensure that a successful learning environment is provided.

ABSTRAK

Die taal in die onderwys scenario van Suid-Afrika is 'n ingewikkelde een, aangesien leerders se taalagtergronde gediversifiseer is en strek oor die hele spektrum van al elf amptelike tale, sowel as ander nie amptelike landstale. Die meerderheid van die leerders tree die leeromgewing binne met 'n menigte van hindernisse en in hierdie studie is taal as die mees algemene hindernis deur opvoeders geïdentifiseer, veral vir Engels Tweede Taal (ETT) leerders. Baie van hierdie leerders woon in huise waar daar geen fasilitering van of blootstelling aan die Engelse taal is nie, maar tog woon hierdie leerders skole by waar die onderrigtaal Engels is. In baie gevalle word hulle ook onderrig deur opvoeders wat self nie vaardig is in Engels nie en wie aangedui het dat hulle nie die nodige bekwaamhede het om Intermediêre ETT leerders effektief te onderrig en te ondersteun nie. 'n Opvallende bevinding van die studie was dat dit blyk of opvoeders nie die belangrikheid van moedertaalvaardigheid as 'n belangrike grondslag vir die verkryging van en leer in 'n tweede taal verstaan nie. Opvoeders het ook die volgende faktore beklemtoon wat die leeromgewing bemoeilik vir ETT leerders: groot klaskamergetalle, 'n onbuigsame kurrikulum, onvoldoende ondersteuning van die Departement van Onderwys, sowel as swak sosio-ekonomiese faktore. Gevolglik is dit vasgestel dat die onderrig van die ETT leerder nie in isolasie hanteer kan word nie, maar dat dit eerder gerig moet wees op die aanspreek van die verskeidenheid van hindernisse wat die ETT leerder konfronteer, om te verseker dat 'n suksesvolle leer omgewing verskaf word.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANA	Annual National Assessment
BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
DBST	District Based Support Team
ESL	English Second Language
FAL	First Additional Language
GPLMS	Gauteng Primary Literacy and Numeracy Strategy
HL	Home Language
ILST	Institutional Level Support Team
LiEP	Language-in-Education Policy
LOLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
LSEN	Learners with Special Educational Needs
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
SAL	Second Additional Language
CES	Chief Education Specialist

CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction and rationale

The spoken language is the main medium of communication among human beings throughout the world. In order for effective teaching and learning to take place, it is imperative that this medium of communication between educator and learner be conducted in a language that is understood clearly and applied effectively by the learner.

South African classrooms comprise learners who are not only multicultural but also multilingual. There are eleven official languages in South Africa, and the education system has to cater for these languages since they all have equal status. Within the South African classroom context many of the learners are English Second Language (ESL) learners and are taught in English either at a home language level (HL) or a first additional language level (FAL), depending primarily on the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) of the particular school. Consequently, the teaching and learning experience for many learners takes place in a language that is often not their home language. As communication is essential in both formal and informal contexts (Department of Education, 2012b), this could cause a communication breakdown between the teacher and the learner, resulting in barriers to learning.

According to Cline and Shamsi (2009:14), there are arrays of areas that are essential for successful learning in which ESL learners can experience barriers. These include inadequate perceptual skills, phonological awareness, knowledge of the language, which includes syntax and morphology, and vocabulary knowledge, the inability to access lexical memory, and inadequate content and background knowledge. Research conducted by Van Staden (2011:10-21) has highlighted the importance of the relationship between phonological awareness, cognitive-linguistic and pre-reading skills, word identification skills, syntactic awareness and spelling. Learners with a limited proficiency in the language of teaching and learning are prone to experience increased difficulty in coping both academically and socially because of the aforementioned difficulties. Van Staden (2011:10-21) reiterates the

need to ensure that gaps in these areas are identified and remediated as early as possible in an ESL learner's academic career. In addition to ESL learners not being proficient in the LOLT, many of these learners did not master their mother tongue adequately. Research has ascertained that a learner's cognitive ability is determined in their mother tongue and the learning of a second language depends on the child's competence in their mother tongue (Nel & Theron, 2005; Theron & Nel, 2008).

A distinction was introduced between "surface fluency" and "conceptual-linguistic knowledge" and was later formalised in terms of Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) by Cummins (1984). According to Cummins (in Theron & Nel, 2008: 207), Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) are skills needed for everyday conversations using informal language, e.g. pronunciation, basic vocabulary and grammar. Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) is the formal, more sophisticated command of language that schools use, which is necessary for success at school, e.g. analysis, synthesis and evaluation. According to Cummins and Swain (1986), educators primarily focus on BICS, i.e. surface forms, when teaching ESL learners, failing to acknowledge the importance of CALP in the overall learning experience. An educator's inability to ascertain at what level an individual learner is functioning or ignorance of a learner's deeper levels of cognitive processing could result in a misdiagnosis of the learning barrier.

Although the mother tongue is promoted by researchers and policies as the best choice of language to learn in, many parents and learners in South Africa choose English as the LOLT (Nel & Theron, 2005). There are a variety of reasons for this. English is the common language that is used in South Africa between speakers of different languages to communicate and do business in. It is also believed by many South Africans that English is the language of empowerment (Nel & Theron, 2005). Consequently, since knowledge and information forms the cornerstone of modern development (Department of Education, 2012a), it is imperative that South African learners acquire a well-developed proficiency in English to ensure that they achieve their full potential in the formal learning situation as well as competence in the ability to communicate. However, this does not require that English must be used as a LOLT.

The Language in Education Act 27 of 1997 regulates government's strategy of building a non-racial nation in South Africa through the facilitation of communication across the barriers of race, language and region, in turn creating an environment in which respect for languages other than one's own is encouraged. A key goal of this policy is additive multilingual education to counter any particularistic ethnic chauvinism or separatism through mutual understanding. The underlying principle is to maintain home language(s) while providing access to additional language(s). Hence the position of the Department of Education that an additive approach to multilingualism must be regarded as the accepted orientation of the language-in-education policy. However, parents still seem to believe that their children should receive education in English, despite it not being their home language.

Since ESL learners with limited English proficiency are a reality in South Africa, teachers need to understand the impact that their teaching approach, either positive or negative, has on these learners' learning experiences, especially when teaching reading and writing (Nel, 2003). Intermediate (Grade 4–6) and Senior (Grade 7–9) phase teachers are not primarily trained to teach learners how to use and apply language across the curriculum, since this task is primarily the responsibility of the Foundation phase or language educator. According to Stoddart et al. (2002:664-687), most teachers, irrespective of years of teaching experience, are novices at teaching a second language in the context of the subject matter instruction. Brice et al. (2006) explain that in addition, educators need to be aware of the language demands that the curriculum places upon learners and those educators' instructional practices may have to be modified to match the ESL learners' language needs. Van Staden (2011:10-21) asserts that many ESL learners are also at risk of being misdiagnosed as "learners with learning impairments" because educators in ESL learning settings find it difficult to determine whether barriers to learning stem from low linguistic proficiency or from a general learning impairment. Consequently, teachers of ESL learners need to be trained in identifying and supporting ESL learners who are struggling only because of their limited language proficiency or are experiencing barriers to learning as a result of additional learning impairments. Theron and Nel (2008) argue that although South African teachers are generally aware that ESL learners' limited proficiency in English is a cause of these learners

experiencing barriers to learning, it seems that especially in the Intermediate to Senior phases teachers do not have the knowledge and skills to distinguish between limited language proficiency and a learning impairment. In addition, most of these teachers also do not have the knowledge and skills to support the ESL learner experiencing barriers to learning whether due to limited language proficiency or because of a learning impairment. One of the support programmes being implemented by the Gauteng Department of Education is the Gauteng Primary Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (GPLMS). The Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) (2010:4-5) states that the GPLMS programme was conceived due to the poor results achieved by the province in Grades 3 and 6 according to the Department of Education's Systemic Evaluations, as well as other cross-national studies of Literacy and Mathematics. Based on the ANA (Annual National Assessment) results of 2011, (Department of Education, 2012c), it had been established that the average performance in English and Mathematics was extremely poor. Owing to this, the GPLMS programme was conceived. According to the Department of Education (2012c), educators are expected to remediate a learner's barrier accordingly and provide support for learners who are lagging behind in the curriculum, irrespective of whether the educator is a content area educator or a language educator. However, Barrera (2006) asserts that there is a particular gap in educators' knowledge as a result of a severe lack of systematic training in the process of second language acquisition. Hill (2009) adds that educators do not seem to have achieved sufficient levels of knowledge to believe in their own efficacy as literacy practitioners to sustain effective classroom practices.

Research has found evidence with regard to the barriers to learning that ESL learners in the Intermediate Phase experience (Cummins, 1984; Nel et al. 2012). However, there is still a notable gap in the knowledge of how Intermediate Phase educators experience the challenges of an ESL classroom and the barriers to learning that ESL learners experience.

1.2 Purpose statement

This research study has attempted to establish Intermediate Phase educators' perception about the barriers to learning that occur in an ESL classroom.

1.3 Research questions

To realise the purpose of the study, the research was guided by a range of research questions and objectives.

1.3.1 Primary question

The primary question for this study was: What are Intermediate Phase educators' perceptions about the barriers to learning that occur in an ESL classroom?

1.3.2 Secondary questions and objectives

The following secondary research questions, derived from the primary research question, were formulated:

- What is the South African language in education scenario?
- What is language proficiency?
- What is ESL learning?
- What barriers to learning do ESL learners experience in the Intermediate Phase?
- What do Intermediate Phase educators construe as barriers to learning that ESL learners experience?
- What recommendations can be made to assist educators in supporting ESL learners who experience barriers to learning in the Intermediate Phase?

Deduced from the secondary research questions, the matching objectives were constructed:

- To establish what the South African language in education scenario is.
- To ascertain what language proficiency is.
- To determine what ESL learning is.
- To clarify what barriers to learning ESL learners experience in the Intermediate Phase.

- To determine what Intermediate Phase educators construe as barriers to learning that ESL learners experience.
- To make recommendations to assist educators in supporting ESL learners who experience barriers to learning in the Intermediate Phase.

1.4 Theoretical framework

The study fits into the theoretical framework of social constructivism. According to Beaumie (2006:2-3), social constructivism is based on specific assumptions about reality, knowledge and learning. Construction of social meanings involves intersubjectivity among individuals whose interaction is based on common interests and assumptions that form the grounds for their communication.

This study, it is hoped, will give a clearer understanding of educators' perceptions about the barriers to learning that occur in an ESL classroom. This will be achieved through the analysis of the feedback gained from educators regarding their personal experiences and perceptions when engaging with ESL learners.

1.5 Concept clarifications

1.5.1 First Additional Language (FAL)

First Additional Language (FAL) means the language other than the mother tongue that a person or community uses for public communication. It is a traditional term for the use or study of the English Language by a person or speaker who is not English speaking (Nordquist, 2013). In the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) FAL is the proficiency level that reflects the basic intercultural and interpersonal communication skills needed in social situations and the cognitive academic skills essential for learning across the curriculum (Department of Education, 2012a).

1.5.2 Home Language level

This is the language (or the variety of a language) that is most commonly spoken by members of a family for everyday interactions at home (Nordquist, 2013). The DoE (2011) describes it as the language first acquired by learners.

1.5.3 Second Additional Language level

According to the CAPS, second additional language level means the language proficiency level that focuses on the basic interpersonal communication skills needed in social situations and includes intercultural communication. It is intended to further multilingualism. Although reading and writing skills will be developed at this level, the emphasis will be on developing listening and speaking skills (Department of Education, 2012a).

1.5.4 Language of Learning and Teaching

The Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) is the language chosen by the school's governing body in consultation with parents. It is the language educators use for instruction and assessment. It is also the language of the textbooks provided by the school (Department of Education, 2012a).

1.5.5 Barriers to learning

Barriers to learning refer to the difficulties any learner experiences in accessing the curriculum due to factors that serve as barriers (Department of Education, 2012c). Learning difficulties are relative to the social contexts in which they arise and are maintained. The degree to which a learner experiences a barrier to learning is then the product of the particular disability or difficulty and the economic, social, cultural and educational context in which he finds himself (Donald et al., 2010: 253). Extrinsic barriers are conditions outside the person, i.e. systemic problems and pedagogical causes, while intrinsic barriers deal with conditions within the person, i.e. health, giftedness and learning difficulties (Nel et al., 2012:15).

1.5.6 Cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP)

Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) is the formal, more sophisticated command of language that schools use and which is necessary for success at school, e.g. analysis, synthesis and evaluation (Cummins in Theron & Nel, 2008).

1.5.7 Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS)

Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) are skills needed for everyday conversations using informal language, e.g. pronunciation, basic vocabulary, grammar (Cummins in Theron & Nel, 2008).

1.5.8 Additive bi/multilingual education

Additive multilingualism/bilingualism entails that the primary language (mother tongue) is maintained throughout the schooling period as a LOLT, while other languages are introduced as second languages through the curriculum (Department of Education, 2002:26).

1.5.9 English as a "second language" (ESL)

In the case of this study, English is the learners' second language but is used as the LOLT which primarily involves classroom learning (Cummins & Hornberger, 2008).

1.5.10 Limited language proficiency

Limited language proficiency is the inability to apply knowledge that is unique to language use and general metacognitive strategies (Cummins & Hornberger, 2008).

1.6 Research methodology

1.6.1 Research paradigm

The proposed study has followed a pragmatic world view. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), pragmatism is not committed to any one system of philosophy and reality. This applies to mixed methods research in that inquirers draw liberally from both quantitative and qualitative assumptions when they engage in their research. This approach to research has been adopted to understand the barriers that ESL learners experience through the execution of both quantitative as well as qualitative assumptions.

1.6.2 Research design

A research design describes the procedures for conducting the study, including when, from whom, and under what conditions the data will be obtained (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:20).

The research adopted the explanatory mixed methods research design. The explanatory design is a mixed methods design in which the researcher began by conducting a quantitative phase by means of a self-structured questionnaire and then followed up on specific results with a second qualitative research phase by using semi-structured interviews. The second qualitative phase was implemented for the purposes of explaining the initial quantitative results in more depth (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011:82). The rationale for mixing both types of data was to create a more complete picture of the research problem.

1.6.3 Strategy of inquiry

Survey research was implemented during the quantitative phase of the research. According to Creswell (2009), survey research provides quantitative or numeric description trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population. The proposed study used a self-structured Likert-scale questionnaire (see Appendix B) which was administered to Intermediate Phase educators who are teaching ESL learners in four English-medium primary schools that comprise a majority of ESL learners in the Lenasia area. An opportunity was also given to the respondents to add comments to their responses if they felt the need to explain their response in a qualitative manner. During the second phase, i.e. the qualitative phase, phenomenological research was employed as the strategy of inquiry. Creswell (2009) stipulates that this strategy identifies the essence of human experiences about phenomena as described by participants. With the implementation of semi-structured interviews a clearer, more refined perspective was gained from educators regarding the barriers that Intermediate Phase ESL learners experience. According to Merriam (2009), the semi-structured interview is guided by a set of questions and issues to be explored. The first step to qualitative enquiry is the identification of a good participant, who is able to adopt a stance of investigator, thus becoming a valuable guide in unfamiliar territory. In turn these participants should be able to express thoughts, feelings and opinions that offer a perspective on the topic being studied, which in this case are the perceptions of educators regarding the barriers ESL learners experience in an Intermediate Phase classroom.

1.6.4 Participant selection

The process of participant selection, during the quantitative phase, was conducted through the implementation of non-probability sampling (or convenience sampling), in which, according to Creswell (2009), respondents are chosen based on their convenience and availability. A self-designed questionnaire was administered to approximately sixty (n=60) content area as well as language Intermediate Phase educators who teach ESL learners in the four respective English-medium schools in the Lenasia area. The administration of the questionnaire to respondents was based on their availability at the given time at the four respective primary schools.

During the qualitative phase the purposive sampling method was implemented with a specific purpose in mind, i.e. gaining a clearer picture of Intermediate Phase educators' perceptions about the barriers to learning that occur in an ESL classroom. In order to limit the variables of the study to a specific context, the research was conducted at four English-medium primary schools. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011:185), because the quantitative and qualitative data collections are related to each other, the follow-up phase consisted of content and language educators who participated in the initial quantitative data collection phase. The intent of the explanatory research design was to use the qualitative data to provide more detail about the quantitative results. The individuals best suited to do so are the ones who contributed to the quantitative data set. Purposive sampling, according to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011:173), means that researchers intentionally select participants who have experienced the central phenomenon or key concept that is being explored in the study. The sample area for selection was Intermediate Phase content and language area educators who are teaching ESL learners in four primary schools where the LOLT is English. These educators were either language educators or content area educators. These schools are situated in the Lenasia area where a large majority of the populations of learners attending are ESL learners who reside in the informal settlements surrounding the Lenasia area, as well as those learners who commute from Soweto, a neighbouring suburb of Lenasia. A considerable proportion of these learners come from lower-income socio-economic backgrounds, where many of the parents are domestic workers, who either have no

formal education or who work long hours and are not available to assist their children at home with school work.

1.6.5 Data collection strategies

During the first phase of the research, a self-structured, four-point Likert-scale questionnaire (see Appendix B) was administered at the four English-medium primary schools in the Lenasia area to Intermediate Phase content and language educators who were teaching ESL learners. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011:117), a quantitative questionnaire usually asks respondents to rate their answers to questions on a scale. Brown (2011) affirms that a four-point scale should be used in order to produce data that are easier to analyse and discuss by eliminating the chance of participants maintaining a neutral stance. Therefore no indifferent option was available. An above-average response rate of 60% was obtained, where 34 out of 56 of respondents returned the questionnaire.

Data collection during the qualitative phase, i. e. the second phase, took place by means of a semi-structured individual interview (see Appendix D) that was conducted with two educators from each of the four schools. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011:181), the qualitative follow-up phase has a smaller sample size than the quantitative phase, therefore only two educators from each of the four schools were interviewed, one being a language educator and the other a content area educator. The reason for selecting one language educator and one content area educator was so that the proposed study could further infiltrate and refine the various perspectives of the educators in order to gain valued and enriched data. According to Maritz and Visagie (2009), semi-structured interviews might include: several main questions to direct the discussion, focusing on topics or subject areas that are to be expected; an interview guide/ proposal/ schedule; a decision by the interviewer on the sequence and wording of probing questions during the course of the interview. Merriam (2009) proposes that an investigator collecting data through interviews will feel more confident with a more structured interview format, where most questions are written out ahead of time in the interview guide, but do allow probing if answers are not clear.

1.6.6 Data collection process

The role of the researcher in most quantitative and qualitative research is to remain detached from the group or process and thus act as a complete observer (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). However, the researcher was actively involved in:

- the selection of the participants
- the development and management of time schedules
- the compilation and facilitation of the structured questionnaire.

According to Stake (in McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:148), the researcher needs constant participation “from conscience, from stakeholders and from the research community” in order to prevent ethical issues from arising. Consequently, the researcher’s functional role is one of an impartial observer.

1.6.7 Data analysis and interpretation

1.6.7.1 Data analysis of the quantitative phase

The quantitative data was collected by means of a structured questionnaire, using the Likert scale. The researcher required the expertise of an external statistician to analyse the data. The researcher arranged with the statistical department of the University of North-West to assist with the analysis of the questionnaire for capturing data in the computer system. Quantitative data was captured by the computer and analysed with the aid of the Statistical Analysis System (SAS) software (Ivankova et al., 2007).

The researcher drew inferences from the data to establish conclusions about the population. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:149), inferential statistics are used to make inferences or predictions about the similarity of the sample to the population from which the sample is drawn. It describes the probability of results for populations.

1.6.7.2 Data analysis of the qualitative phase

The researcher designed the qualitative strand based on the quantitative results. Qualitative data was collected through the implementation of two individual semi-

structured interviews with Intermediate Phase content and language educators from each of the four schools. The qualitative data was qualitatively analysed using analytic approaches best suited to qualitative and mixed methods research questions. According to Merriam (2009: 194), qualitative data analysis should be done in conjunction with data collection and is primarily inductive. The data collected from the qualitative strand was analysed through a process of coding. Coding is a process of making notations next to the bits of data that strike one as relevant. Codes/themes were assigned to pieces of data. A code and retrieve approach was adopted for data analysis during the qualitative part of the study. The researcher coded the data. Quotes were relied on for evidence. Bazeley (2009:13) stresses the importance of not relying too heavily on brief quoted texts as evidence, because this could encourage superficial reporting of themes. Instead, the evidence gained from participants contributed to the building or support of the researcher's argument. The latter has subsequently contributed to the insurance of trustworthiness, since the participant's words served at the basis of the conclusions. However, their words were not used to formulate the argument for the researcher. Finally, the researcher attempted to interpret the connectivity between the results to answer the research questions.

1.6.8 Validity and reliability

In order to ensure the validity and reliability of the research study the researcher conducted a pilot study with a small group of four educators. These educators were excluded from the actual research study sample however the input gained from these educators helped guide the phrasing of the questions in order to ensure that there was no ambiguity in the questioning and that the questions were interpreted correctly.

1.6.9 Quality criteria

According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011:267), the following quality criteria need to be carried out in order to evaluate a mixed methods study: both quantitative and qualitative data must be collected; the researcher must employ persuasive and rigorous procedures in the methods of data collection and analysis; the two sources of data must be integrated so that their combined use provides a better

understanding of the research problem than the one source or the other alone; all integrated features of the study must be consistent with the design; the study must be framed within philosophical assumptions; and the research must be conveyed by using terms that are consistent with those being used in the mixed methods field today.

By applying the quantitative and qualitative method, the research design strove to eliminate any bias that may have infringed on the reliability of the findings by ensuring that an impartial stance was adopted at all times. Before the actual administration of the semi-structured questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted on a small sample group, who were excluded from the actual study sample, in order to establish whether statements were interpreted correctly and whether the response categories provided for the statements were suitable. The credibility of the research was enhanced by ensuring that the research design took into account potential contextual sources of errors that would undermine the quality of the research and would have distorted the findings of the conclusions.

According to Ivankova et al. (2007), when applying mixed methods to research, trustworthiness of the data should include various topics discussed under both quantitative and qualitative approaches. In addition, the researcher triangulated all the data collected and analysed it during the research process. In order to determine if there were any discrepancies in the findings, the results obtained from the questionnaire as well as the interviews were included so as to establish credibility. Furthermore, the researcher eliminated any bias that may have been introduced into the study by constantly reflecting on the research process. The researcher made every effort to produce findings that are believable and convincing, and also presented negative or inconsistent findings in order to add to the credibility of the study. The self-structured questionnaire was assessed by the supervisor as well as the North-West University's statistical department to ensure that it was adequate for measuring what it was supposed to measure.

1.6.10 Ethical considerations

Educational research focuses primarily on human beings. The researcher was ethically responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of the participants who

participated in a study. Informed consent for the study was obtained from all relevant institutions (Gauteng Department of Education, school principals and participant educators), and it was ensured that arrangements were in place to protect the confidentiality of the data and the privacy of the participants/respondents (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:117).

The following ethical considerations were implemented during the course of the research study.

- Voluntary participation. Participants were not be coerced into participating.
- Ethical clearance from NWU was obtained (See appendix F).
- Informed consent. All participants were provided with a clear explanation of the research.
- Consent was sought from the principal, educators and the Department of Education.
- There was no harm or risk to the participants.
- Privacy was maintained at all times when participants chose to remain anonymous.

Confidentiality: The researcher ensured that the participants/respondents were made aware, before they participated, who would have access to the data gathered. Because the study included a qualitative follow-up phase, the names and addresses of the participants were required, but the reasons for this appeared on the informed consent forms before the research commenced. A master identification file was created that linked numbers to names to permit the later correction of missing or contradictory information. All the respondents' personal details have been kept confidential.

1.7 Possible contributions of the study

The study has led to the establishment of a clearer picture of the perceptions of Intermediate Phase educators regarding the barriers that Intermediate Phase ESL learners experience. The study has established more clarity regarding intrinsic and

extrinsic barriers that influence the learning of ESL learners, and has also ascertained to what extent educators are equipped to identify and overcome these barriers.

1.8 Possible challenges of the study

- Time constraints and the availability of the participants for the study were a challenge.
- Some educators were not willing to take part in the study and were not cooperative. This resulted in not all of the questionnaires being returned.

1.9 Chapter division

This dissertation is structured as follows:

Chapter One: Introduction

Chapter Two: Literature review – English Second Language learning in South Africa

Chapter Three: Literature review – Learning in English as a second language

Chapter Four: Research Methodology

Chapter Five: Research findings and discussions

Chapter Six: Summary and conclusion

CHAPTER TWO

ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.1 Introduction

After the inception of full democracy in South Africa, eleven languages were officially acknowledged by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (South Africa, 1996). This had a large impact on school language curriculums as well as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) of schools. Government and the Department of Basic Education encourage a policy of multilingualism, geared towards the accommodation of all South African languages, which in turn supports equal access for all children to educational services. However, the implementation of such a policy has many challenges.

This chapter provides a synopsis of the history and scenario of language education in South Africa. Policies that have an influence on language education are briefly discussed. The choice that schools and parents make about the LOLT of learners is also addressed.

2.2 The history of language education in South Africa

To thoroughly understand the language scenario in South Africa, it is important to know and appreciate the complicated political history of South Africa that influenced language in education issues over a long period of time. Prior to the first democratic elections in 1994, the South African educational system did not recognise the language diversity of the South African masses. Instead, it used this diversity to divide and separate the different races of South Africa. According to Kaschula (1999:65), from 1948 to 1960 the development of English proficiency among black South Africans was not facilitated by the Government. Instead, a notable effort was made by the authorities to encourage the use of African indigenous languages as LOLTs, which created a linguistic divide between black and white South Africans, as well as between the various language groups. Kaschula (1999:65) and Mesthrie (2006:156) discuss the attempts made by community leaders, A. C. Jordan and Jacob Nhlapo, to unify the various African dialects into two major African languages, i.e. Nguni and Sotho. However, this proposal was rejected by peers inside and

outside the African National Congress, resulting in the continuation of diversified independent dialects over the years (Alexander, 2003:10). In 1976 an uprising occurred among the black youth against the imposition of Afrikaans-medium instruction on black school children in the racially segregated classrooms of that time (Alexander, 2006:8). Prior to the 1976 uprising, “Bantu education” (being taught in the mother tongue for the first eight years of schooling), was enforced. However, after the student uprising in 1976 the apartheid authorities had to reduce mother tongue education to the first three years of primary schooling as well as eliminate Afrikaans as a medium of instruction for black children (Alexander, 2003:15).

In 1994, after the first democratic elections, many educationists and socio-linguists began to place the emphasis on linguistic pluralism, a term used to describe the acceptance and practice of linguistic diversity (Mesthrie, 2006:152). In 1996 a new South African constitution was enacted, wherein the emphasis was placed on the linkage of language, culture and personal development by promoting multilingualism, the development of official languages, and respect for all languages used in the country. In an attempt by the Government to address the diverse language needs of the democratic South African nation, 11 official languages were approved. According to Mesthrie (2006:152), the approval an 11-language policy was a last-minute compromise by politicians to eliminate any conflict of language supremacy.

The policies after 1994 that influenced the language in education issue are discussed next.

2.3 Policies that influenced language in education

2.3.1 The Constitution (1996)

In terms of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996), there are 11 official languages in South Africa. The Constitution declares that everyone has the right to use the language of their choice and to participate in the cultural life of their choice. It also states that everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions. In order to ensure effective access to and implementation of this right, the state must consider all reasonable educational alternatives suited to accommodate all language preferences and requirements. The Constitution requires that equity, practicability

and the need to redress the results of past racially discriminatory laws and practices must be considered at all times when the language in education issue is addressed by all relevant role players such as departments of education, school managers as well as parents.

The Constitution of South Africa provides the foundation for all the following policies.

2.3.2 National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996

The National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 empowers the Minister of Education to determine a national policy for language in education. In terms of the South African Constitution, government as well as the Department of Education recognises that diversity is a national asset and hence is committed to promoting multilingualism. This policy declares that due to the fact that societal and individual multilingualism are global norms today, the learning of more than one language should be a general practice and principle in our society, across all provinces and in all districts.

This policy is a broader governmental initiative to ensure co-operation between the national and provincial governments and most importantly educational district offices. The policy is geared towards ensuring that educational districts perform their essential function, namely to support schools to deliver the curriculum effectively and provide equal and consistent educational opportunities to all children irrespective of their language diversity and academic language proficiency level and needs.

2.3.3 South African Schools Act 84 of 1996

The objective of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 is to provide a strong foundation for the protection and advancement of the country's diverse cultures and languages. Section 6 of Act 84 of 1996 empowers school governing bodies to determine the language policy of schools within guidelines set out by the Constitution (Olivier, 2009:3). The act stipulates that there should be no unfair discrimination against any of the official languages, and all official languages must be offered and accommodated in the curriculum if chosen as the language of preference by the learner, receiving equitable time and resource allocation.

2.3.4 Language in Education Policy Act 27 of 1997 (LiEP)

The Language in Education Policy Act 27 of 1997 section 3(4) supports additive bilingualism in that it assumes that learning more than one language should be the general practice in our society as an approach to language in education. Its central aim is to promote and develop all the official languages.

The policy stipulates that parents can exercise their right to choose the language of teaching upon admission to a school. Where a certain language is not available, learners may request the provincial education department to make provision for instruction in the chosen language. A clear directive is provided by this policy to governing bodies regarding the promotion of multilingualism through the use of one language being the LOLT at HL (home language) level and an additional language at FAL (first additional language) level. This can be achieved, according to the policy, by offering additional languages as fully-fledged subjects, and/or applying special immersion or language maintenance programmes, as approved by the head of the provincial department. However, Madiba (2012:20) and Balfour (2007:41) assert that the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and the new Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) seem to promote a "monolingual" ideology. Madiba (2012:20) and Balfour (2007:41) further claim that although the Language-in-Education Policy (LiEP) stipulates a switch to the additive language, i.e. English after three years of being taught in the mother tongue, there is a loophole in the policy because the South African School Act 84 of 1996 grants school governing bodies the power to decide which language should be used as the LOLT, usually resulting in English being used from Grade 1. This in turn leads to the additive approach to multilingualism not being implemented correctly. This has dire repercussions for the language proficiency level of ESL learners entering the Intermediate Phase since, according to Madiba (2012:20), the adoption of a second language before developing strong foundational academic language in the mother tongue hampers cognitive academic language proficiency across languages and grades.

The Language in Education Policy Act 27 of 1997 section 3(4) stipulates that where there are less than forty requests in Grades 1 to 6, or less than 35 requests in Grades 7 to 12 for instruction in a language in a given grade not offered by a school in a particular school district, the head of the department will determine how the

needs of these learners will be met, taking into account the duty of the state and the right of the learners in terms of the Constitution. In terms of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996), there is the need to achieve equity and redress the results of past racially discriminatory laws and practice, and the advice of the governing bodies and the principals in public schools concerned is sought.

2.4 The choice of LOLT

2.4.1 Policy requirements

From the above discussion, it is obvious that South African policies provide a clear directive regarding the promotion of multilingualism. The underlying principle of the LiEP, which determines LOLT and curriculum policy, is to maintain the home language while providing access to the effective acquisition of additional language(s), hence the Department of Education's position that an additive approach to bilingualism is to be viewed as a normal orientation of the language-in-education policy.

According to the new CAPS, only official languages may be used for instruction. However, language may not be used as a barrier to admission. Governing bodies must also stipulate how their schools intend to promote multilingualism (Department of Basic Education, 2011).

From Grade 3 onwards, all learners have to study the language they are taught in, and at least one other official language. Based on the adoption of the additive approach to language, all learners are required to be adequately conversant and skilled in the understanding of two official languages, the second being a mandatory language, namely English. Irrespective of what the HL (home language) of the school is, according to policy (DoBE, 2011), English should be offered as one of the official languages from Grade 1.

According to the CAPS (DoBE, 2011), the HL is the language first acquired by learners. However, many South African schools do not offer some or even all of the learners' home language, but only offer one or two of the languages at HL level. As a result, the labels Home Language and First Additional Language refer to the proficiency levels at which the languages are offered and not the native (home) or

acquired (additional) language/s. Therefore, the HL should be understood to refer to the proficiency in the language and not the language itself. According to the Department of Basic Education (2011), official languages are presented in three levels, i.e. home language (HL), first additional language (FAL) and second additional language (SAL). These language levels apply to the proficiency levels at which official and non-official languages are offered.

The National Protocol for Assessment Grades R-12 DoBE (2012) states that the HL level assumes that the learner is already proficient in the language, and that this reflects the mastery of interpersonal skills and cognitive academic language skills, whereas the FAL level assumes that the learners do not necessarily have any knowledge of the language when they arrive at school, and it focuses on the development of the learners' ability to speak and understand the language on the FAL level.

The DoBE (2011) recognises that learners need adequate proficiency in the LOLT to be able to achieve and progress academically. Consequently the CAPS stipulates that a learner's progress to the next grade should be based on the learner obtaining an adequate achievement (level 4 /50-59%) in one official language at HL level, and a moderate achievement (level 3 /40-49%) in the second required official language at FAL level as well as a moderate achievement (level 3 /40-49%) in Mathematics. Consequently, failing a language will result in failing a grade (Olivier, 2009:4).

2.4.2 Parents' choice

According to Heugh (2008), Kaschula (1999) and Mesthrie (2006), mother tongue instruction is beneficial and necessary in the laying of the language foundation before second language acquisition and transition takes place. Yet Posel and Casale (2010) state that since parents have been given the right to choose the language of instruction at their children's school, in most cases they choose English as the LOLT. The reason for this is that they consider it to be the language that will afford their children the greatest success and status in life. Black South African parents also believe that because apartheid policies prevented them from having the opportunity to become proficient in English, it alienated them from the international community – English is now associated with unity and liberation (Mncwango, 2009:53; Kaschula,

1999:66; Mesthrie, 2006:151). Cele (2001:185) and Mncwango (2009:53) also state that many parents choose town schools because they believe that these schools provide a better quality of education because they are better resourced. Mncwango (2009:53) adds that town schools are mostly English LOLT schools, which reinforces the tendency to equate a better education with the acquisition of the English language.

However, a result of the choice of parents insisting that their children learn in English is that many learners experience barriers to learning, because they are learning in a second language. This will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

2.4.3 Mother tongue education

According to Ouane and Glanz (2011:11), there are three prominent bilingual education programmes or models: the first is the early-exit bilingual model which is designed to begin with mother tongue instruction for one to four years and then gradually move to the official foreign language as medium of instruction. The second is the late-exit transitional model which maintains mother tongue instruction beyond five to six years and involves the delay of the transition from mother tongue as a medium of instruction to a different target language. The third is the subtractive educational model, which is directed at moving children as early as possible out of mother tongue instruction and into the official/foreign language as medium of instruction.

Ouane and Glanz (2011:28), Case et al. (2005), Van Staden (2011), Jordaan (2011) and Yazici et al. (2010) all support the view that the retention of mother tongue instruction during at least the first six years of primary school (late-exit model) is extremely beneficial, which enables effective transfer of cognitive and academic competences from mother tongue to the second language.

In 2004, the then Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, declared that children must be taught in their mother tongue for the first three years of schooling before a switch may be made to the medium of the second language (Mesthrie, 2006). Yet many academics felt that it was impractical simply to stipulate a "blanket" time for language acquisition and also argued that this was too short a time period to achieve the desired cognitive language skills in the mother tongue (Mesthrie, 2006). Heugh

(2011:148-153) asserts that the curriculum seems to promote early-exit bilingualism, a switch from mother tongue instruction to a different target language after one to four years of mother tongue instruction, rather than additive/late-exit bilingualism, a switch from mother tongue instruction to a different target language after five to six years of mother tongue instruction. In light of this, it can be argued that the current language curriculum merely facilitates the transition from mother tongue to English without promoting adequate transfer of cognitive academic language competence across language and grades (Madiba, 2012:20).

2.4.4 Additive bilingualism

"Additive bilingualism is the maintenance and promotion of the child's home language while facilitating the acquisition of the additional language" (Joseph & Ramani, 2012:23).

Nel (2005:151) and Barnes (2004) assert that the additive approach to language learning is one that advocates the use of the mother tongue until learners gain cognitive academic language proficiency in their mother tongue while learning a second additional language. This will permit successful cognitive transition to English as a LOLT.

According to Alexander (2003:17) the additive approach to language acquisition endorses mother tongue-based bilingual education and multilingualism aimed at acquiring competence in additional languages, since competence in mother tongue instruction lends itself to competence in the additional language. According to Tuafuti (2010), the additive bilingual approach in education permits learners to succeed in both language worlds, their own cultural as well as their foreign world. Tuafuti (2010) further states that the additive approach to language acquisition enables empowerment and active involvement, while at the same time maintaining and creating continuity of the learners' native culture and language.

2.4.5 Learning in a second language

It is important for the focus of this study that in South Africa many learners learn in their mother tongue in the Foundation Phase and then abruptly change to their second language (in most cases English) as the LOLT in Grade 4. This requires that

learners entering the Intermediate Phase need to have a high level of English language proficiency by the end of Grade 3 with regard to BICS and CALP skills (cf. Section 3.2.). This means that they need to adequately speak, read and write in the English language. Yet Madiba (2012:20) believes that ESL learners are expected to make a transition from their home language to English before they have developed strong foundational academic proficiency in their home language. According to Heugh (2008:42), most South African learners never acquire the required level of proficiency in English to achieve in the different subjects of the curriculum because they have to acquire English proficiency while already using English as the LOLT in all areas. Therefore Heugh (2008:42) maintains that the lack of proficiency among ESL learners is a result of undeveloped language skills necessary to master the concepts typical of a particular subject because learners are unable to apply the myriad language skills such as linguistic, conceptual and procedural knowledge related to the content area in the second language. Manyike and Lemmer (2010) and Hugo (2008:63) both assert that this has led to a particular challenge to ESL learners, especially when they have not gained proficiency in their mother tongue before an additional language is introduced. According to Hugo (2008:63), social and survival skills in English are not sufficient to ensure that ESL learners cope with the required standards in the content areas. South African ESL learners therefore require considerable exposure to the English language in order to acquire conversational fluency let alone academic language proficiency.

2.5 Conclusion

The cultural and language diversity of South Africa has necessitated a change in the curriculum in order to facilitate equal access to education of progressively high quality. Education policies, directed by the South African Constitution, are geared towards the facilitation of an additive approach to bilingualism. This has proved to be a contentious issue among researchers as they believe that although government has produced language policies, it has failed to provide a plan as to how the policy will be put into practice (Mesthrie, 2006:152). Alexander (2003:17) contends that although the language infrastructure appears in place on paper, this is not always the case in practice. Alexander (2003:17) avers that the cause of this is the lack of strategic clarity with regard to the language dispensation, since there is a notable

discrepancy between the constitutional provisions on language and the actual practices in the classroom. Many schools are not applying the additive approach to bilingual education (Madiba,2012:20), therefore ESL learners are not gaining adequate proficiency in their mother tongue, which contributes towards inadequacy in the additional language. Another pertinent contributor to the ongoing language battle is the lack of parental knowledge of the importance of mother tongue instruction and the impact that their language choice has on their children.

In the next chapter the language proficiency, development and acquisition as well as the intrinsic and extrinsic barriers that impact on the learning experience of the ESL learner will be discussed.

CHAPTER THREE

LEARNING IN ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

3.1 Introduction

ESL learners in South African classrooms have certain learning needs that must be acknowledged and addressed by all role players in the education system. This chapter aims to clarify and define language proficiency and language acquisition. It will also address the relation between home language and second language competency. The chapter also attempts to encapsulate the extent to which external barriers influence ESL learners' learning experience

3.2 Language proficiency

Language proficiency, according to Cummins (1984), can be conceptualised along two continuums, namely context-embedded versus context-reduced communication. Context-embedded (face-to-face) situations provide more cues that assist with establishing meaning, in contrast to context-reduced texts, which require the ability to manipulate and interpret cognitively demanding situations. In context-embedded communication the participants can actively negotiate meaning by providing feedback due to the message being supported by a wide range of meaningful para-linguistic and situational cues, whereas context-reduced communication, on the other hand, relies primarily on linguistic cues and the interpretation of the message, which depends heavily on knowledge of the language itself. In the Intermediate Phase it is expected that learners should be able to interpret content at a context-reduced level.

According to Cummins (1984:136), establishing the distinction between the child's Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), is the underlying process in determining a learner's level of language proficiency. BICS refers to the manifestations of language proficiency in everyday communicative contexts and CALP is conceptualised in terms of the manipulation of the language in contextualised academic situations. Conversational fluency (BICS), according to Cummins et al. (2007:789), is the ability to carry on a conversation in familiar situations. This involves high-fluency words and simple

grammatical constructions. Concurrent with conversational fluency, learners learn incidental language skills in English. However, this is just the beginning step in the process of developing CALP. This refers to a learner's ability to understand and express, in both oral and written modes, concepts and ideas that are relevant to academic success in school. Cummins and Yee-Fun (2007:891) assert that even if ESL learners have acquired conversational fluency and decoding skills in English, they are still a long way from adequate performance in academic language proficiency.

According to Ouane and Glanz (2011:29), the first language needs to be reinforced and developed for a minimum of six to eight years in order for a learner to achieve successful academic transition to learning in a second language. Education models which remove the learner's home language as the LOLT before Grade 5 will result in a majority of learners being academically unsuccessful due to their lack of academic proficiency in their home language, thereby contributing to the lack of proficiency in their second language (Ouane & Glanz, 2011).

Heugh (2008) and Cummins (1984) both state that learners cannot become sufficiently language proficient by the end of Grade 3 to facilitate successful transition to English as a medium of instruction in Grade 4. Manyike and Lemmer (2010) believe that a sudden transfer to English, usually after four years of schooling (Grade R to 3) is a contributing factor to the poor academic results of ESL learners. Since learners require as many as seven or more years to become academically competent in English, it seems that there is a misconception among parents, who believe that early access to English as the LOLT would bring about a higher level of proficiency in English and thus educational success (Cummins, 1984; Heugh, 2008:359). Cummins (1984), as well as Heugh (2008:359), declare that this merely widens the educational gap instead of narrowing it. When learners are not proficient in English, it leads to a downward spiral of teaching and learning competence across the entire education system (Heugh, 2008). Since the LOLT, cognitive skills and academic achievement are interconnected, limited English proficiency will affect the academic performance of ESL learners (Theron & Nel, 2005; British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1999; Manyike & Lemmer, 2010). The mechanism of language acquisition of ESL learners will be explored next.

3.3 Language acquisition

Language acquisition is a process of attaining a complex communication system, composed of the interrelated linguistic elements of communicating, social usage, meanings, structures, vocabulary, word formation and sounds (ACARA, 2011:6). According to the British Columbia Ministry of Education (1999), learning a language is a complex and gradual process; it is not linear and the progress rates of two apparently similar learners can vary enormously. Yazici et al. (2010) explain that the process of second language acquisition is different from learning a mother tongue. There are different factors that could influence an ESL learners' adequate acquisition of the English language in order to ensure academic achievement, such as: mother tongue proficiency, at which school grade they achieve proficiency in English; family and social contextual factors that will contribute to the early versus later acquisition of English proficiency; possible intellectual barriers that could manifest in learners' limited ability to listen, speak, read, write, spell, think or even do mathematics; previous learning (such as incidental learning, exposure to the written word); and similarities and differences in phonological, orthographic decoding, vocabulary and comprehension skills between the mother tongue development and acquisition of English (Nel et al., 2012:17; Halle et al., 2011; Doeksoon, 2011; August et al., 2009).

It could happen that at Grade 1 level, learners who are learning in an additional (second) language are not at the same level of language processing as their monolingual peers (Jordaan, 2011). Therefore, Jordaan (2011) states, ESL learners need to develop specific skills (such as listening and speaking, decoding and comprehension of language structure) in order to ensure their effective learning. Generally language proficiency is dependent on the learner's level of acquisition of BICS and CALP, and this in turn determines whether a learner will be socially and academically successful in a language (Nel et al., 2012:111).

Acquiring the English language should not be viewed as a separate entity from content area learning since the use of language is fundamental to developing a conceptual understanding (Stoddart et al., 2002). ESL learners require constant exposure to the language in order for their linguistic skills to be developed.

Consequently English language acquisition should be integrated into all elementary and secondary subject matter. Manyike and Lemmer (2010) agree with this contention, and state that CALP is neglected in cross-curricular reading and writing in South Africa. In turn learners may experience serious problems in content area learning because they have not yet acquired the required language skills to understand the subject matter.

Having a well-established mother tongue is essential to enable ESL learners to attain second language proficiency for learning. This will be addressed next.

3.4 The relationship between home language/mother tongue and second language competency

It is emphasised by researchers that ESL learners' language proficiency in their mother tongue affects their ability to acquire a second language (Matthew & Lori, 2012:227; Yazici et al., 2010; August, 2009). ESL learners who have achieved the normal linguistic developmental milestones in their mother tongue and have well-established academic, linguistic and cognitive skills can usually easily transfer these skills to the second language (Nel et al., 2012:110). This is a premise supported by many psycho-linguists and applied linguists from both international and African institutions (Ouane & Glanz, 2011:28).

ESL learners usually experience difficulty listening to and acquiring the phonological system of the English language as it differs from that of their mother tongue (Nel et al., 2012:111). Due to the varying phonological and linguistic demands between the learners' mother tongue and English, the acquisition of the additional language becomes more challenging (Nel, 2005; Shore & Sabatini, 2009). There is a direct correlation between ESL learners' mother tongue proficiency in the phonological, orthographic decoding, vocabulary and comprehension skills and the skills in their second language, namely English. Nel et al. (2012:111) expand on this and highlight the fact that poor comprehension is also caused by ESL learners using different ways of decoding words since sound/letter relations and letter combinations in their mother tongue differ vastly from those of English.

There is also seminal evidence advanced by Matthew and Lori (2009) that shows a correlation between English language proficiency and the acquisition of sight words, i.e. look and say words or words that cannot be sounded phonetically. Consequently, an ESL learner's inadequate basic linguistic skills could prove a disadvantage to the learner's development in, or acquisition of, the second language.

Many ESL learners cannot form a link between known and unknown knowledge because they have a limited English vocabulary and knowledge of BICS to serve as a foundation when they come from a home environment that does not provide them with the necessary tools to communicate in English (Lessing & Mahabeer, 2007; Nel, 2011). Yazici et al. (2010) explain that children with a rich vocabulary in their mother tongue find it easier when they start school to learn to read and write earlier in the additional language. With a well-established mother tongue, children could enter school with a linguistic store of 7 000 or more words and a sophisticated knowledge of the structure of language (complex and simple sentences). They also know various techniques to adjust their register on the context and function of their communication. Although they may not have learned to read all the language items and structures, they have an extensive reservoir from which to draw (Heugh, 2011:186). However, if ESL learners are expected to jump from mother tongue literacy (simple decoding and narratives) to a second language as medium of instruction too early, even if they had a year or two of early literacy exposure to rudimentary mother tongue narratives, the cognitive distance is simply too far for the majority of learners to cope with at the CALP level (Heugh, 2011: 186).

According to Krashen (cited in Manyike & Lemmer, 2010:43), when ESL learners enter the intermediate phase (the focus of this study) they should already be able to demonstrate some academic language proficiency, which includes good comprehension and the ability to analyse, support and evaluate subject matter. When they reach Grade 7, ESL learners should have achieved a level of advanced academic fluency in the LOLT in which they can use subject-specific technical vocabulary to demonstrate reading and writing skills in context-reduced situations. However, research has found that the early introduction of English as the LOLT before the mother tongue has been mastered stunts the ESL learner's ability to optimally achieve CALP in the second language (Heugh, 2011:120). Having to

acquire a new language as the LOLT and using it to learn subject matter at the same time, together with a poorly established mother tongue, could result in the ESL learner not becoming proficient in the LOLT or attaining the academic skills to achieve in subject matter (Heugh, 2011:120).

Many Intermediate Phase ESL learners' limited CALP in English precludes them from effectively tackling abstract concepts since they do not fully understand context-reduced situations (Cummins, 1984). The aim of schooling is to develop the ESL learner's skills in both context-embedded and context-reduced situations because a better understanding of the context-embedded situation contributes to greater success experienced in context-reduced situations (Cummins, 1984:130-138). Cummins (1984) further explains that although many ESL learners have mastered BICS in the additional language since educators frequently focus on surface manifestations of language proficiency, they have not acquired the necessary skills in CALP, and as a result they cannot successfully engage in more cognitively demanding activities in the Intermediate Phase.

According to Van Staden (2011), many ESL learners are expected to become proficient English readers despite not being proficient readers in their mother tongue, therefore learners with low levels of meta-cognitive or meta-linguistic awareness in their mother tongue will experience deficits in second language acquisition (Shore & Sabatini, 2009). However, if ESL learners read well in their first language, they are able to transfer their reading abilities across languages. Shore & Sabatini (2009) maintain that cross-linguistic transfer can be seen as a determining factor in acquiring a second language (Nel, 2011).

According to Donald et al. (2002:223), ESL learners must bring to the learning environment effective communication and general problem-solving skills so that they are equipped to express their needs, feelings and thoughts and are able to address life's problems free of feelings of insecurity. These critical thinking demands are based on high levels of abstract thinking and logical reasoning skills that are primarily influenced by the individual's language ability. Therefore in order for ESL learners to be able to effectively engage in the learning process, particularly in the Intermediate Phase, they have to possess abstract thinking, critical thinking and

logical reasoning skills to cope with the linguistic demands of the grade (Grosser & Nel, 2013).

Grosser and Nel (2013:11) assert that CALP is essential for future language and consequent academic competence. Inadequate or undeveloped CALP can manifest itself in academic failure.

It is important to mention that even when ESL learners have a well-established mother tongue, effective teaching, well-trained teachers and well-resourced learning environments are essential to ensure that ESL learners' cognitive and academic competences are effectively developed (Ouane & Glanz, 2011:28).

3.5 The importance of adequate vocabulary

According to Hugo and Nieman (2013), an adequate vocabulary is imperative for language acquisition. A limited vocabulary base of the learner as well as the educator can lead to communication breakdown between them. Having a limited vocabulary can in turn result in ESL learners experiencing a learning barrier. It is essential for any learner to have a relatively extensive reservoir of listening and speaking vocabularies before they can begin to establish a reading and writing vocabulary (Nel et al., 2012:94). However, many ESL learners enter formal schooling with a limited spoken and sight vocabulary in the LOLT because of various factors (cf. Sections 3.3, 3.4 and 3.6). This complicates their ability to increase their literacy skills more easily (Nel et al., 2012:110). Nel et al. (2012) assert that a limited English vocabulary will also make it difficult for the ESL learner to understand the meaning of new and unfamiliar words, which is essential for the learning of new subject content. A lack of English reading material at home and at school in particular, as well as the poor language teaching by teachers whose own English proficiency is limited, can contribute to these learners not acquiring an adequate vocabulary to assert themselves in informal as well as academic and business environments.

3.6 External factors influencing ESL learners'

3.6.1 Educators

Mediation should be viewed as the “engine” that propels the child's development. Therefore there is a close link between the educator's understanding of the learner's ability and the educator's skill in facilitating the development of the new knowledge based on the learner's previous knowledge (Vygotsky, cited in Miller, 2011). Developing an ESL learner's competence in the LOLT requires using a variety of teaching methods (such as communicative language teaching and task-based language teaching), and being able to adapt teaching skills and approaches to assist the ESL learner (Farahnaz, 2011:38). Language acquisition develops more effectively when the intake, i.e. the "subset of linguistic input", is communicative and understood by the child. In essence the essential ingredient for second language acquisition implies that the learner should be able to understand what the teacher is saying (Krashen, 1988; Alant & Casey, 2005; Nel & Muller, 2010:636).

One must bear in mind that English is a second language, not only for learners but also for many educators in most schools in South Africa (King & Chetty, 2014:42; Msimanga & Lelliott, 2014:1160). Consequently many educators lack confidence in their level of language proficiency in English, and this may limit their ability to teach and mediate through the medium of the target language (Farahnaz, 2011:38). Numerous Grade 4 educators are required to teach content subjects in English, their second language. They are therefore faced with grappling with their own understanding of the language as well as conveying the content to the learner in the same language (King & Chetty, 2014:42). When faced with this dual task of teaching both the language and the subject content in their classes, many teachers struggle to address their learner's language needs in content-based environments (Baecher et al., 2013:119). This raises concerns about whether ESL teachers can engage ESL learners, who also have a limited English language proficiency, in meaningful learning of the subject matter (Msimanga & Lelliott, 2014:1160). Thus it is essential, if the educators are to provide effective teaching and learning opportunities for their learners, that they first gain command and advanced proficiency of the language of

instruction before they attempt to engage effectively with the learners (Msimanga & Lelliott, 2014:1160; Farahnaz, 2011:38).

The task of ESL educators becomes even more complicated when they are expected to teach ESL learners with learning disabilities (Rapetsoa & Singh, 2012; Garcia & Tyler, 2010) because they do not have adequate training to deal with this (Garcia & Tyler, 2010; Worthington et al., 2011). In many instances ESL learners' linguistic behaviour and communicative styles are not clearly understood and catered for by educators (Nel et al., 2012). As a result many ESL learners are also at risk of being misdiagnosed as learners with special educational needs (LSEN), because educators in ESL settings find difficulty in determining whether academic problems stem from low linguistic proficiency or from a general learning impairment (Van Staden, 2011). It is therefore imperative that educators should be able to establish and understand the language proficiency level of the learner (Nel, et al. 2012).

Intermediate Phase ESL learners who do not have the necessary linguistic tools to access the educational curriculum need to be supported to make the transition from their home language as the LOLT to English, their second language as the LOLT. Yet, since many teachers are themselves experiencing challenges with the LOLT, they do not have the required skills to provide this support (Zimmerman et al., 2007).

3.6.2 Large classroom numbers

Small classroom numbers are imperative for effective ESL learning (Hashim et al., 2014:104). Overcrowded classrooms can contribute to the ineffective delivery of the curriculum as many ESL learners who experience barriers as a result of limited language proficiency seem to be disadvantaged because of the ineffective provision of support. Findings from a study conducted by Hashim et al. (2014:113) confirm that ESL learners are inadequately supported because of the large classroom numbers. Consequently it is important that schools should manage the numbers of ESL language learners in a class as this could have a direct effect on the quality of education provided to these learners. Hashim et al. (2014:113) stress that teachers can support ESL learners more effectively in smaller classes because there is more opportunity to address miscommunications and barriers.

3.6.3 Inflexible curriculum

Another factor that impacts negatively on ESL learners' opportunity to learn optimally is an inflexible curriculum. This does not allow effective accommodation of ESL learners because of the time constraints attached to completing curriculum requirements. Educators are under pressure to cover curriculum content and at the same time to bridge the language proficiency gap experienced by the ESL learner. According to findings of a research study conducted by Baltus and Belhiah (2013:103-104), teacher-student content time was identified as the greatest challenge faced by ESL educators, since the teachers felt that there was not enough time for them to cover the curriculum content as well as accommodate the diverse pace and academic level at which ESL learners were functioning. It therefore seems that educators do not have the self-efficacy beliefs to assist ESL learners to bridge the language proficiency level gap they are experiencing (Nel et al., 2012:15). This could result in ESL learners always experiencing a BICS and CALP backlog and consequently not succeeding academically.

3.6.4 Socio-economic factors

Socio-economic barriers need to be investigated by analysing the interaction between physical and familial factors, e.g. malnutrition, health risks, parental stress, and limited stimulation. There is a significant relationship between the ESL learners' socio-economic environment and their ability to read and write in English (Lessing & Mahabeer, 2007:144). ESL learners from low socio-economic circumstances can have poor literacy levels because of a lack of exposure to the English language (Lessing & Mahabeer, 2007:144; Halle et al., 2012:2). Lessing and Mahabeer (2007:144) affirm that the lack of availability of books, magazines and newspapers, and educational radio and television at home, coupled with a dissonance between the communication styles at home compared to those in school, diminishes the ESL learners' chances of school success. Poverty results in poor living conditions, which limits a stimulating study environment, and in turn the ESL learner's experiential world is restricted (Lessing & Mahabeer, 2007:144). These factors impact on the ESL learner's ability to function adequately in the classroom, which leads to poor academic development and progress of ESL learners, especially in language acquisition (Nel et al., 2012).

3.6.5 Parents

Parents are the primary initial support structure of the child since their role entails the preparation of the child for school as well exposing their child to literacy-related activities during the early years (Lessing & Mahabeer, 2007:144). Bloch (2002) believes that the ESL learner's poor literacy knowledge and skills is a result of parents not adequately exposing their children to literacy-related activities and of their own low literacy level. Since many parents work long hours, are illiterate or are not educated in child development, they do not engage in conversation with their children and do not read with their children, and therefore the children fail to develop language and literacy skills (Nel et al., 2012). A consequence of this is that, besides the home language not being stimulated, the children are prevented from acquiring a second language from an early age.

3.6.6 Limited support structures

It is essential that ESL learners who are experiencing barriers are identified early and that immediate appropriate support is provided. Support for the ESL learner requires collaboration between all the role players such as parents, health professionals and specialists, educators, the Institutional Level Support Team (ILST) and the District Based Support Team (DBST). If these support structures are not readily available or not operational, the barriers that are experienced by the ESL learner will not be identified soon enough and this will cause academic backlogs and possible learning difficulties (Nel et al., 2012).

3.7 Intrinsic barriers to learning

Intrinsic barriers deal with conditions within the person. These include barriers related to medical conditions and medical disabilities such as visual and hearing impairments, cerebral palsy and neurological conditions (Nel et al., 2012:16). Although there are schools that have ESL learners who experience these barriers, the schools in the current study do not have such learners.

3.8 Conclusion

Learning does not exist in a vacuum. The learning experience is impacted upon by many intrinsic and extrinsic factors. According to Donald et al. (2002), the teaching of

ESL learners is a collective effort whose success is determined by various systems, i.e. home environment, school environment and economic and social structures. Therefore it is imperative that a link be maintained between the home and school environment especially regarding the language aspect in the learning process. There are a range of barriers that influence the success of learning and the teaching of ESL learners, as well as the need for all educators to be able to apply the basic knowledge of how to instruct learners who have not acquired the ability to use and understand English to an adequate level of proficiency (Nel, 2005: Appendix).

In the following chapter the research methodology employed will be explained.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The research study is directed at explaining and understanding the perceptions of Intermediate Phase educators of the barriers that ESL learners experience. In this chapter the research methodology is explained.

4.2 Research questions

The research design is primarily directed at clarifying the following research question:

What are Intermediate Phase educators' perceptions about the barriers to learning that occur in an ESL classroom?

4.2.1 Secondary questions and objectives

Derived from the primary research question, the following secondary research questions were formulated:

- What is the South African language in education scenario?
- What is language proficiency?
- What is ESL learning?
- What barriers to learning do ESL learners experience in the Intermediate Phase?
- What do Intermediate Phase teachers construe as barriers to learning that ESL learners' experience?
- What recommendations can be made to assist teachers in supporting ESL learners who experience barriers to learning in the Intermediate Phase?

Deduced from the secondary research questions, the matching objectives were constructed:

- To establish what the South African language in education scenario is.
- To ascertain what language proficiency is.
- To determine what ESL learning is
- To clarify what barriers to learning ESL learners experience in the Intermediate Phase.
- To determine what Intermediate Phase teachers construe as barriers to learning that ESL learners experience.
- To construct recommendations to assist teachers in supporting ESL learners who experience barriers to learning in the Intermediate Phase.

4.3 Research methodology

4.3.1 Research paradigm

The pragmatic worldview was adopted for this research. According to Creswell (2007:10), pragmatism is not committed to one system of philosophy and reality, but draws information from quantitative and qualitative assumptions when the researchers engage in their research. Thus pragmatism opens the door to multiple methods by allowing the researcher to look at many approaches for collecting and analysing data rather than subscribing to one way (e.g. quantitative or qualitative). In turn the pragmatic approach is based on abductive reasoning because it moves back and forth between the quantitative approach (primarily based on deduction) and the qualitative approach (primarily based on induction). Pragmatism therefore presents a practical and applied research philosophy (Venkatesh et al., 2013:37).

4.4 Literature review

The literature review explored English second language learning in South Africa and learning in English as a second language. A large selection of sources were consulted to produce the most reliable and objective argument that supports the various aspects of the study. The researcher consulted various research articles, scientific books as well as web data bases such as EBSCOhost in order to gain a clearer perspective of the phenomenon.

The key words used in the academic search were:

- ESL learning
- Barriers to ESL learning
- Language proficiency
- Mother tongue instruction
- Remediation and support of ESL learning

4.5 Research design

The main aim of the research study was achieved through the use of a sequential explanatory mixed methods approach.

4.5.1 Mixed methods approach

Mixed methods research can be defined as a procedure for collecting, analysing and "mixing" both quantitative and qualitative data to explain and better understand the research problem by creating correlation and further explanation of the responses within each phase of the research process (Creswell in Ivankova et al., 2007:263). The transformative potential of mixed methods has allowed researchers the opportunity to expand on their understanding of a particular phenomenon by focusing on both the magnitude (using quantitative methods) as well as participants' perceptions of those issues that affect the phenomenon (using qualitative methods) (Barnes, 2012:467). The method of cross-referencing, which forms an integral part of the mixed methods approach, strengthens and enriches the research findings because it provides the researcher with opportunities not only to quantify variables and their relationships, but also to validate, explain and inform those findings in a single study (Barnes, 2012:472). There are four mixed method designs that are most frequently used by researchers, namely the explanatory design, the exploratory design, the triangulation design and the embedded design. The current research study followed the explanatory mixed methods research design. The research study was directed by means of the implementation of a structured questionnaire (see Appendix B). This formed part of the quantitative phase. The input gained from

respondents about the barriers that ESL learners in the Intermediate Phase are experiencing were further explained and elaborated on by using semi-structured individual interviews which formed part of the qualitative phase (see Appendix D) (Ivankova et al., 2007:266).

4.5.2 Explanatory design

The explanatory design is the most straightforward mixed methods design, which involves two phases (quantitative and qualitative), with the purpose of the design being based on the use of qualitative findings to clarify and explain the quantitative results (Ivankova, 2007:266; Barnes, 2012:470). Sampling occurs at two points in this design, whereby the quantitative and qualitative data collection processes are related to each other and are not independent (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011:185). The findings gained from this design will allow complementarity and will also serve a validation function (Barnes, 2012:470).

The diagram in Figure 4.1 clearly shows the two-phase explanatory mixed methods approach in the data collection process.

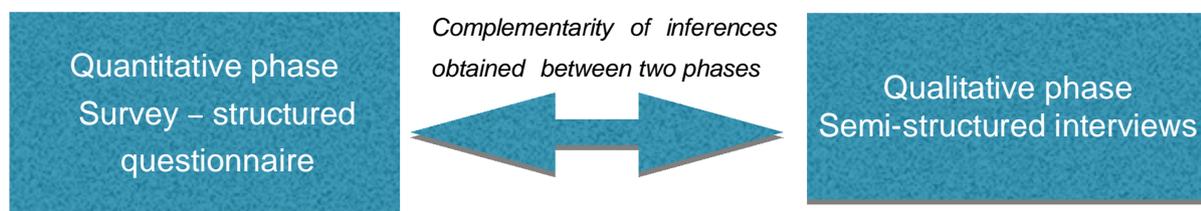


Figure 4.1: Explanatory research design

4.5.3 Quantitative phase

4.5.3.1 Survey research

Survey research provides a quantitative description of attitudes or opinions of a population (Creswell, 2007:13). The research study adopted the survey research design by using a self-structured Likert-scale questionnaire (see Appendix B). When compiling the questionnaire the researcher adhered to the following criteria (Maree & Pietersen, 2007:158):

- The appearance of the questionnaire was user friendly.

- The questionnaire was not too long.
- The statements were not threatening and followed a logical sequence.
- The researcher ensured that the language used was understood by the respondents.
- The statements were clear, unambiguous and not leading.

A very common and useful way in survey research of measuring how respondents think or feel about something is by using scales (Maree & Pietersen, 2007:167). The researcher used the Likert scale to measure the respondents' perceptions about the barriers that ESL learners experience in the Intermediate Phase. The researcher developed a structured questionnaire that was made up of statements (informed by the literature review) that would initiate responses that best answer the primary and secondary research questions. It was decided to use a four-point scale so as to prevent the respondents from opting to maintain a neutral stance in their responses. According to Maree and Pietersen (2007:167), the use of four categories forces respondents to either "agree" or "disagree", with no chance of them adopting a neutral stance. An opportunity was also given to the respondents to add comments to their responses if they felt the need to explain their response in a qualitative manner.

4.5.3.2 Quantitative data analysis

The questionnaire data was statistically organised and summarised by the statistics department of the Vaal Triangle campus of North-West University. The statistical data was then analysed and the findings were represented in graphs and tables (see Chapter five). This was done to present relationships between the responses and so that the findings could be easily read and interpreted. The researcher interpreted and reflected on the data to establish conclusions about the perceptions of the sampled population. The quantitative data results were examined and those factors which were unclear and required further explanation were identified to further guide the qualitative phase of the research and identify participants who would best help to explain the phenomenon. This interconnectivity of research methods clearly depicts the explanatory research design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011:186). According to Maree and Pietersen (2007:298), inferential statistics are used to provide meaning to

the information in order to establish conclusions about the population. The researcher analysed the statistical results, gained from the respondents (educators), about their perceptions of the barriers that ESL learners experience in the classroom. From this data analysis the researcher then identified those aspects that required further explanation, and also identified the participants who would help to explain and elaborate on the aspects that required further explanation. Conclusive evidence was found would best answer the research question.

4.5.3.3 *Validity and reliability of quantitative data*

A measuring instrument is deemed reliable and valid if it consists of a number of carefully chosen items, usually measured on some ordinal scale, such as a four-point Likert scale, that covers the necessary aspects of the construct (Maree & Pietersen, 2007:215). In this case it was the perceptions of Intermediate teachers of the barriers that ESL learners experience. The research instrument (i.e. structured questionnaire) that was administered to the participants in this research study can be deemed valid and reliable because it was analysed, edited and checked by the study supervisor; later a further analysis and check were conducted by the research unit of the Department of Education to establish the compliance of the instrument that was used in the research study. The researcher had to submit all instruments that would be administered during the research process to the Gauteng Department of Education. The Chief Education Specialist (CES) signed off the approval letter that indicated that compliance criteria had been met.

A pilot study was conducted using a small group of four educators. These educators were excluded from the actual study sample. After inputs from these educators had been received, the questionnaire was adapted to construct the statements in clearer language. After the administration of the questionnaire, a thorough analysis of the responses was done to establish whether the statements had been interpreted correctly and whether the response categories provided for the statements were suitable.

The validity of the instrument is measured against the extent to which it measures what it is supposed to measure (Maree & Pietersen, 2007:216). In the case of the

research study, the structured questionnaire administered covered the content of the particular construct (barriers of ESL learners) as informed by the literature review.

The response rate for the completion of the questionnaire was relatively successful, with an above-average response of 60%. The researcher administered 56 questionnaires, of which 34 were completed and returned.

According to the statistical analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaires, the reliability of the instrument was good, with a case-processing summary value of 97.1% validity and a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0,88 (88%), showing a moderate to high internal reliability.

4.5.4 Qualitative phase

4.5.4.1 *Phenomenological research*

According to Creswell and Plano-Clark (2011) phenomenology is a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by participants. Merriam (2009:199) concurs that the aim of adopting a phenomenological approach is to arrive at a description of divergent experiences about an occurrence. Phenomenological research was adopted as a strategy of enquiry during the qualitative phase of the research study because it is based on the premise that the researcher identified the essence of human experiences (i.e. educators' perceptions) of a phenomenon (i.e. ESL learners' barriers to learning) as described by the participants.

During this phase of the research study the researcher conducted follow-up semi-structured individual interviews with the educators. A semi-structured interview is used mainly to corroborate data. It requires the participant to answer predetermined questions while allowing the researcher to explore and probe new emerging lines of enquiry that are related to the phenomenon (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:87). A qualitative interview schedule (see Appendix D) was used to guide the interview process.

4.5.4.2 *Qualitative data analysis*

Once the semi-structured interview had taken place, the researcher transcribed all the data. The next phase of the qualitative data analysis was to categorise the data

according to preset codes (*priori* codes) as determined by the themes identified by the analysis of the quantitative data. Since the codes were developed before the data was examined, it proved useful when the researcher was seeking to expand on existing findings (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:107). These themes provided direction for what the researcher was looking for in the data (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:109). A verification of the codes was completed by checking that all the data had been categorised under the appropriate preset themes to ensure that all ideas had been captured correctly and there was no misinterpretation of the data. The researcher used the preset themes/codes to expand on the responses from the participants during the qualitative phase about their perceptions of ESL learners and the barriers experienced by them. During the qualitative data analysis process, the researcher continuously mixed the data so that the findings, obtained from different sources, could justify, validate and confirm the results, as well as to establish which components of the information supported or refuted each other.

4.5.4.3 Validity, reliability and trustworthiness of the qualitative phase

Validity, reliability and trustworthiness in qualitative research are achieved by constantly checking for accuracy of the findings through the application of certain procedures (Creswell, 2007:190).

The following procedures were conducted during the qualitative phase to ensure that the findings obtained from the participants were valid, reliable and maintained trustworthiness:

- Themes were identified from the questionnaire response in the quantitative phase, and the qualitative interview schedule was constructed from this.
- The researcher used the strategy of triangulating the data sources of information by examining evidence produced by various sources in order to build a coherent argument that helped to justify the chosen themes, and also to provide conclusive evidence that helped to explain the research question.
- Negative and inconsistent findings were also presented to add credibility to the study.

- The interview transcriptions were verified by allowing the participants to corroborate and validate the researcher's interpretations of what they had shared with her by asking for written or oral comments on the report.
- Observations were noted during the interviews to provide a clearer picture of the non-verbal communication of the participants during the interview in an attempt to provide a holistic picture of the participant as well as contextual influences.

4.5.6 The role of the researcher

The researcher is an active participant and driving force in any research study. It is therefore imperative that the researcher should actively and constantly ensure that the research procedures as well as findings are authentic, reliable and valid. The researcher's role extends beyond self and should also encompass the ability to ensure active participation from the stakeholders and the research community (Maree, 2007:298). The researcher:

- ensured that ethical consideration was adhered to by gaining permission from all stakeholders before the data collection process began (see Appendices A, C, E and F);
- gave all the participants the opportunity to decline participation in the interview. They were also asked to declare that they had not been coerced into participating in the study;
- reassured the participants, before the interview process, that all information would be used for research purposes only;
- was actively involved in the selection of participants and respondents;
- designed and compiled the questionnaire and was also involved in the development and management of time schedules for the completion of the questionnaires and the conducting of the interviews;
- did not hand out the questionnaires, but clearly explained to the principal that participation of the respondents was voluntary and informed all the respondents that their personal information would only be used as contact details in the follow-up interview;

- conducted the individual semi-structured interviews during the qualitative phase of the research process;
- transcribed and drew inferences from the findings, and carried out the triangulation of the data.

4.5.7 Population and sampling

The researcher employed non-probability sampling (or convenience sampling) during the quantitative phase. This form of sampling is employed, according to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), based on the convenience and availability of the respondents, whereas purposive sampling was used during the qualitative phase to select participants. According to Nieuwenhuis (2007:79), purposive sampling is a means of selecting participants according to predetermined criteria that are relevant to the research study. The reason why purposive sampling was selected was because the research study was primarily directed at Intermediate Phase educators who teach ESL learners.

The study population spanned four primary schools surrounding the informal settlement of the Lenasia area. The pupils in these schools are mainly ESL learners who reside in the informal settlements and whose home languages are any of the indigenous languages. The sample during the quantitative phase of the research study consisted entirely of Intermediate Phase educators at these four schools. Fifty-six ($n=56$) questionnaires were administered, of which 34 were returned ($n=34$). The percentage response was 60%, which is an above-average response. During the qualitative phase, the researcher administered a semi-structured individual interview to two Intermediate Phase educators per school, one being a content educator and the other a language educator. The reasoning behind the selection of the qualitative sample was solely to infiltrate and refine the various perspectives of the educators in order to best attempt to explain the phenomenon further and to provide a richer reservoir of information about the educators' personal experiences when interacting with ESL learners.

4.5.8 Data collection procedure

The data collection procedure followed a two-phase design, i.e. the explanatory research design. The departure point for the data collection process was to gain permission from all relevant parties (cf. Section 1.6.9) (see Appendices A, C and E). Once permission had been granted the researcher administered a structured questionnaire that was designed with a Likert-scale coding system (cf. Section 4.5.3.3). The questionnaires were hand delivered to the schools by the researcher, which were then disseminated to the respondents by the principals. The questionnaires were later collected by the researcher and submitted to the statistical department at the North-West University where they were statistically analysed. The statistical results along with the questionnaires were sent back to the researcher for further analysis and interpretation. The themes were then identified and the follow-up interview schedule was finalised according to these themes. The researcher then identified and confirmed the participants for the individual semi-structured interviews. The participants were contacted for the follow-up individual interviews and a time schedule was drawn up. The individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with adherence to specific criteria (cf. Section 4.5.4.2).

4.6 Conclusion

The research followed a sequential explanatory mixed method using a survey and phenomenological methodology. The possible challenges of the research have been taken into account (cf. Section 1.8). Despite the challenges faced by the researcher, the data gathered is considered useful. The findings and analysis of the data is discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to analyse, interpret and establish the findings gained from the quantitative as well as the qualitative phase. The analysis of the data will be explored and explained by means of a quantitative dominant crossover mixed analysis. This method of analysis according to Frels and Onwuegbuzie (2013:187) is used when the researcher seeks to answer research questions through a quantitative standpoint with the view that the qualitative data and analysis will help address the research questions to a greater extent. The quantitative data was collected with the use of a self-structured Likert-scale questionnaire, and the qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews. All the data collected during these phases was analysed with the use of themes. These themes were cross-referenced and linked with each other as well as with the literature to obtain a true reflection and explanation of the responses.

5.2 Quantitative analysis

During this phase of the data collection process, a self-structured Likert-scale questionnaire was employed (see Appendix B) using statements to ascertain the educators' perceptions about the barriers to learning that ESL learners experience in the Intermediate Phase classroom. The respondents were also given an opportunity to add comments at each question expanding on or explaining their rating. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011:186,) an important consideration is to collect enough quantitative information so that meaningful themes can be developed which can be further explained in the qualitative phase.

The study sample consisted of 56 educators who teach ESL learners. They were from four schools surrounding the informal settlement in Lenasia. Thirty-four participants completed and returned the questionnaire. The response rate was therefore 60%, which is above average.

5.2.1 Profile of the educators

In order to understand the context of the educators, it was important to determine their qualifications, teaching experience, field of teaching as well as their home languages.

Table 5.1: Number of classes the educators teach

Number of classes the educators teach	
Grade 4	13
Grade 5	20
Grade 6	16
Grade 7	14

These educators were spread over four grades, namely Grades 4 to 7. Although the focus of this study was directed at Intermediate Phase educators, some of the educators who participated in the study taught in both the Intermediate (Grades 4-6) as well as the Senior phases (Grades 7-9). The number given in Table 5.1 represents the total number of classes in each grade that the educators teach.

Table 5.2: Qualifications of the educators

Qualifications of the educators	
Diploma in Education	18
B.Ed degree	11
Master's degree in education	2
Other	3 (1 Master's in business leadership and 2 post-graduate certificates in education)

Table 5.3: Teaching experience of the educators

Teaching experience of the educators (years)	
0-10	14
11-20	5
21-30	11
31-40	4

Table 5.4: Field of teaching

Field of teaching	
Language educators only	17
Subject content and language educators	17

Table 5.5: Home languages of the educators

Home language of the educators	
English and IsiXhosa	28
Afrikaans	12
Tshivenda	15
Xitsonga	13
Sepedi	16
isiNdebele	6

Sesotho	27
Setswana	25
isiZulu	32
Siswati	8
Other	4

Twenty-eight educators specifically stipulated their home language as English as well as IsiXhosa. Most of the other educators specified all the languages that they could speak, and it seemed that they deemed them all as home languages.

5.2.2 Conclusion

All the educators who participated in the study were professionally qualified. Two had a Master's degree in Education and one a Master's degree in business leadership. This implies that they were well trained in their subject areas. A large number of the educators (20 out of 34) had over 11 years' teaching experience, which implies that they were not novices in the profession. Although these educators had probably not been formally trained in supporting ESL learners who experience barriers to learning, they would have been dealing with ESL learning in their classroom over a long period of time since the political changes in South Africa. The remainder of the educators (14 out of 34) had 0-10 years teaching experience and could have been more formally trained in their pre-service training on learners experiencing barriers to learning. Based on the fact that a vast majority of the educators were multilingual themselves, it can be deduced that their experiences and perceptions about the education of ESL language learners and the possible barriers these learners experience added a valuable contribution to this study.

5.2.3 Findings from the quantitative phase

The themes identified from the responses were:

- Home language profile of learners
- Language proficiency of learners
- Teaching and support skills of educators

- Parent involvement
- Support of the department of education
- Barriers to learning experienced by ESL learners as perceived by the educators.

5.2.3.1 Theme 1: Home language profile of the learners

Table 5.6 shows the home languages of the learners identified by the respondents.

Table 5.6: Home languages of the learners

Home languages of the learners	Home languages of the learners as identified by the educators
English	30
Afrikaans	17
Tshivenda	17
Xitsonga	14
Sepedi	18
isiNdebele	8
Sesotho	29
Setswana	28
isiZulu	33
Siswati	10
isiXhosa	28
Other	3

As indicated by the educators, the home languages of the learners they teach are very diverse and spread across all eleven official languages as well as other

additional languages such as Portuguese, Urdu and Gujarati. This implies that most of the learners are learning in their second language, namely English.

The language diversity reflected in Table 5.6 highlights the fact that South African classrooms are composed of learners with a multitude of home languages. The practicality and viability of catering for these diverse language needs within our classrooms are contentious, since although there is a language in education policy (cf. Section 2.5.) in place, the implementation thereof remains a challenge (Alexander, 2003; Mesthrie, 2006). Many educators do not have the expertise to deal with the plethora of language needs of the varying languages with which these learners enter the learning environment. As Hill (2009) states, many educators have not reached sufficient levels of knowledge as language practitioners to sustain the diverse learner language needs within the classroom (cf. Section 1.1).

5.2.3.2 *Theme 2: Language proficiency of the learners*

Theme 2 focused on the perception the educators had of their ESL learner's English as well as mother tongue language proficiency when they enter the Intermediate Phase.

5.2.3.2.1 English language proficiency

There was an interconnectivity between questions 10, 13 and 14 because these questions explored the perceptions of educators regarding the English proficiency level of ESL learners when they enter the Intermediate Phase.

Table 5.7: English language proficiency of ESL learners

Theme 2: English language proficiency of ESL learners		
<i>Question no.</i>	<i>Question detail</i>	<i>Highest % response</i>
10	When ESL learners enter the Intermediate Phase their English proficiency is adequate to be able to learn in English	61% disagree
13	ESL learners' English speaking skills are better than their writing skills when they enter the Intermediate Phase	65% agree
14	ESL learners' writing skills and reading skills are adequate when they enter the Intermediate Phase	74% disagree

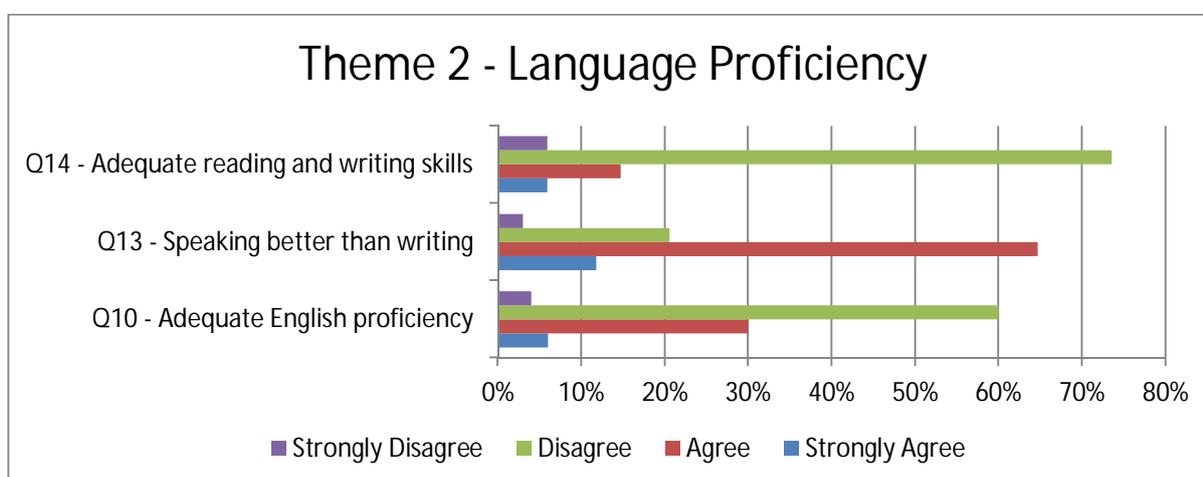


Figure 5.1: Perception of educators with regard to ESL learners' English proficiency

5.2.3.2.2 Findings from Question 10: Adequate English Proficiency

When ESL learners enter the Intermediate Phase, their English proficiency is adequate to be able to learn in English.

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
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The following responses were indicated:

Table 5.8: Question 10

<i>Strongly agree</i>	2	5%
<i>Agree</i>	10	30%
<i>Disagree</i>	20	61%
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	1	2%
<i>Total</i>	33	100%

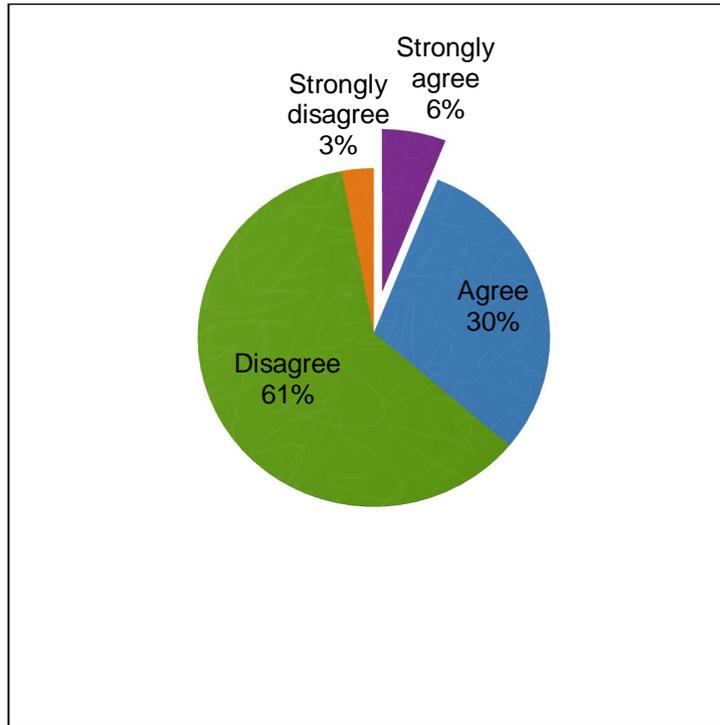


Figure 5.2: Adequate English proficiency

It is apparent from the results of question 10 that 29% (10 out of 34) of respondents agreed that ESL learners' English language proficiency is adequate when they enter the Intermediate Phase, while 61% (20 out of 34) indicated that they disagreed and seemed to believe that ESL learners do not have adequate English proficiency when they enter the Intermediate Phase. Only 5% (2 out of 34) strongly agreed and 2% (1 out of 34) strongly disagreed. One respondent did not respond to this question, hence the discrepancy in the total number of participants.

5.2.3.2.3 Findings from Question 13: English speaking skills versus writing skills

ESL learners' speaking skills are better than their writing and reading skills when they enter the Intermediate Phase.

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
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The following responses were indicated:

Table 5.9: Question 13

<i>Strongly agree</i>	4	12%
<i>Agree</i>	22	65%
<i>Disagree</i>	7	21%
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	1	3%
Total	34	100%

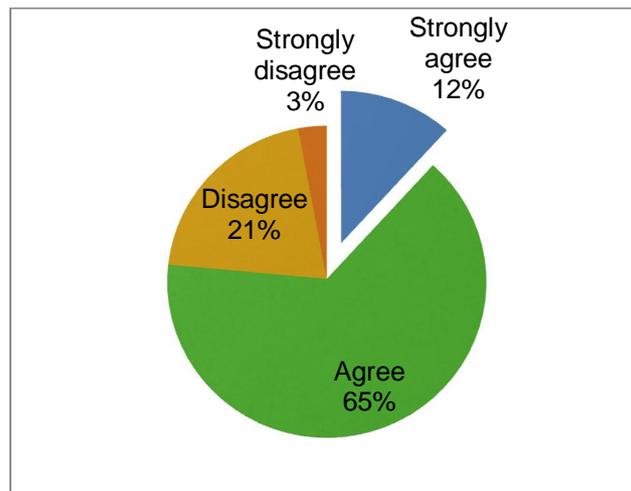


Figure 5.3: English speaking skills versus writing skills

Although 21% (7 out of 34) disagreed, a large percentage of the respondents agreed (65%, 22 out of 34) and even strongly agreed (12%, 4 out of 34) that ESL learners' speaking skills were better than their writing skills.

5.2.3.2.4 Findings from Question 14: Adequate reading and writing skills in English

Question 14: ESL learners' English writing and reading skills are adequate when they enter the Intermediate Phase.

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
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The following responses were indicated:

Table 5.10: Question 14

<i>Strongly agree</i>	2	6%
<i>Agree</i>	5	15%
<i>Disagree</i>	25	74%
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	2	6%
<i>Total</i>	34	100%

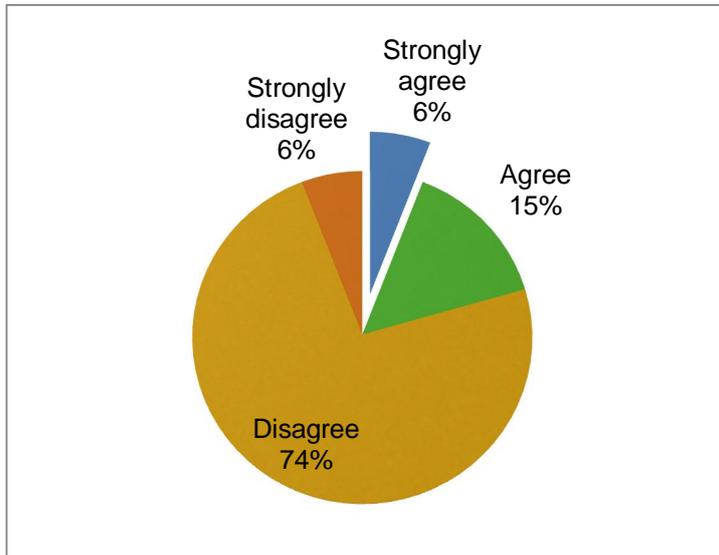


Figure 5.4: Adequate reading and writing skills in English

Over 70% of the educators disagreed (74%, 25 out of 34) and 6% (2 out of 34) strongly disagreed that ESL language learners' reading and writing skills are adequate when they enter the Intermediate Phase. Only 15% (5 out of 34) agreed and 6% (2 out of 34) strongly agreed.

5.2.3.2.5 Summative conclusion

It is apparent from the analysis of questions 10, 13 and 14 that a large percentage of the respondents were in consensus that ESL learners do not possess adequate cognitive academic language proficiency skills (reading and writing) in English when they enter the Intermediate Phase. From the comments made, it appeared that the respondents seemed to believe that ESL learners' BICS (speaking and listening skills) surpassed their CALP (reading and writing skills). Cummins (1984) confirms that conversational fluency is just the beginning step in the process of developing academic language proficiency, and is not sufficient when learners are faced with context-reduced situations, which are prevalent in the Intermediate Phase (cf. Section 3.3.1). This could result in ESL learners not being sufficiently language proficient to cope with the academic demands that they are faced with in the Intermediate Phase.

5.2.3.3 *Sub-theme 1: Mother tongue proficiency*

Questions 11, 12 and 23 are linked to each other because they explore the impact that mother tongue proficiency has on academic success when learning in a second language.

Table 5.11: Mother tongue proficiency of ESL learners

Sub-theme: Mother tongue instruction		
<i>Question no.</i>	<i>Question detail</i>	<i>Highest % response</i>
11	ESL learners are proficient in their home language when they enter the Intermediate Phase	70% agree
12	ESL learners' lack of proficiency in their home language contributes to their lack of academic progress	50% disagree
23	ESL learners must be proficient in their mother tongue before they are taught an additional language	49% agree

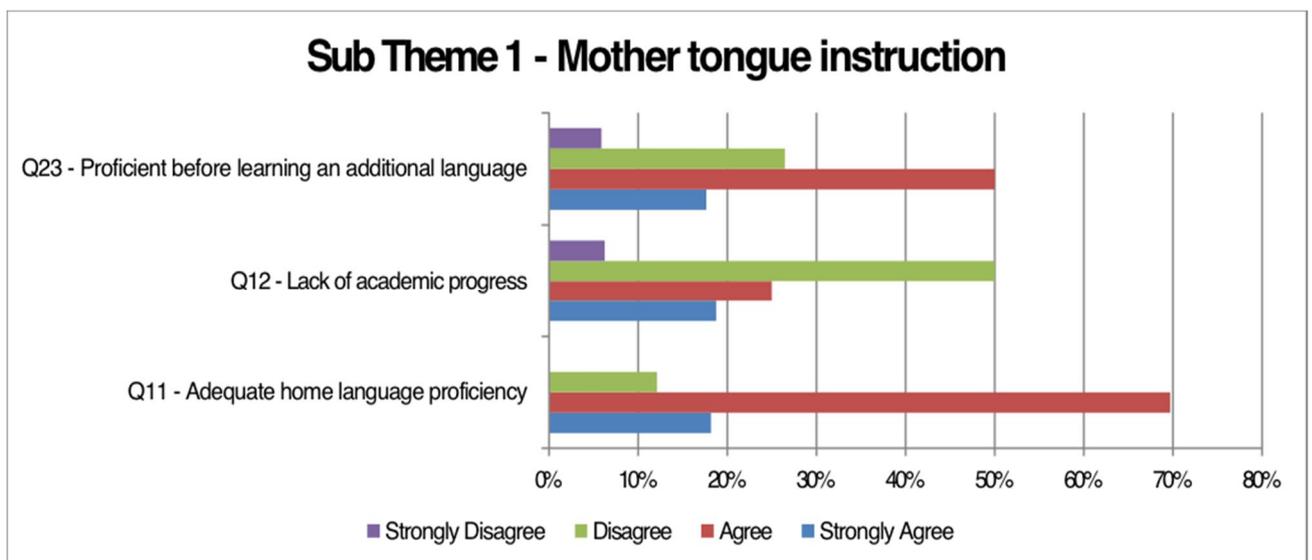


Figure 5.5: Perceptions of educators with regard to ESL learners' mother tongue proficiency

5.2.3.3.1 Findings from question 11: Language proficiency in the home language

ESL learners are proficient in their home language when they enter the Intermediate Phase.

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
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The following responses were indicated:

Table 5.12: Question 11

<i>Strongly agree</i>	6	18%
<i>Agree</i>	23	70%
<i>Disagree</i>	4	12%
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	0	0%
Total	33	100%

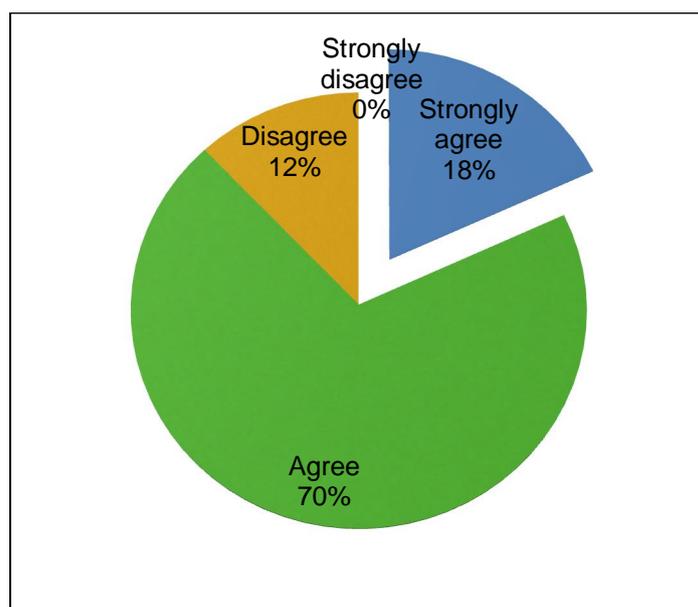


Figure 5.6: Adequate proficiency in home language

In response to question 11, as reflected in the Figure 5.6, most of the respondents (70%, 23 out of 34) agreed and 18% (6 out of 34) strongly agreed that ESL learners are proficient in their home language when they enter the Intermediate Phase. Only 12% (4 out of 34) of the respondents disagreed that learners are proficient in their mother tongue when they enter the Intermediate Phase. One respondent failed to provide a response to the question. However, the elaborations of the respondents in the comments section of the questionnaire indicated that the educators believed that most ESL learners were more proficient in BICS rather than CALP in their mother tongue (this will be elaborated on in the qualitative phase discussion). Prior research found that ESL learners must have a strong CALP in their mother tongue in order for them to successfully transfer linguistic skills, i.e. reading and writing skills, to the second language (cf. Section 3.3).

5.2.3.3.2 Findings from question 12: Poor proficiency in the mother tongue contributes to lack of academic progress

ESL learners' lack of proficiency in their mother tongue contributes to their lack of academic progress.

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
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The following responses were indicated:

Table 5.13: Question 12

<i>Strongly agree</i>	6	19%
<i>Agree</i>	8	25%
<i>Disagree</i>	16	50%
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	2	6%
<i>Total</i>	32	100%

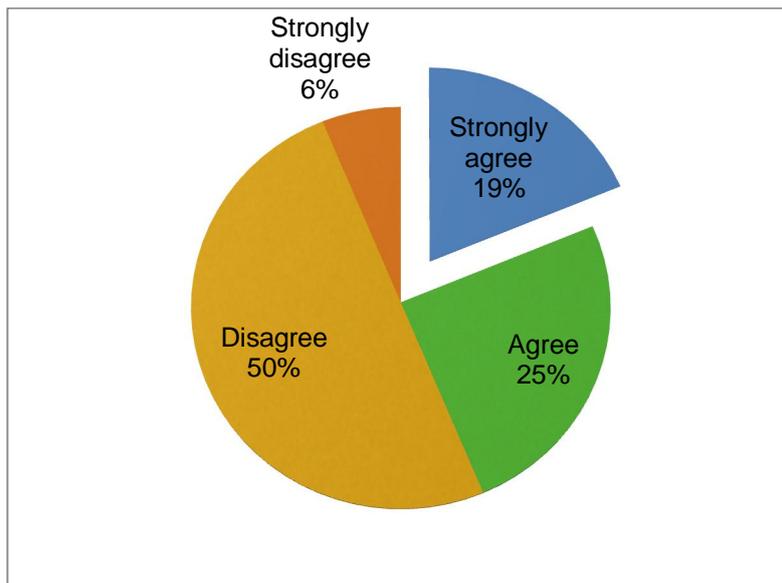


Figure 5.7: Lack of proficiency in the mother tongue contributes to academic failure

Half of the respondents (50%, 16 out of 34) disagreed and two (6%) respondents strongly disagreed that ESL learners' lack of proficiency in their mother tongue was a deterrent for being academically successful, while 25% (8 out of 34) agreed and a further 6% (2 out of 34) strongly agreed that the learners' lack of proficiency in their mother tongue leads to academic failure. Two of the 34 respondents failed to respond to this question.

5.2.3.3.3 Findings from question 23: Proficiency in the mother tongue as a prerequisite to additional language acquisition

ESL learners should be proficient in their mother tongue before they learn an additional language.

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
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The following responses were indicated:

Table 5.14: Question 23

<i>Strongly agree</i>	6	18%
<i>Agree</i>	17	50%
<i>Disagree</i>	9	26%
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	2	6%
<i>Total</i>	34	100%

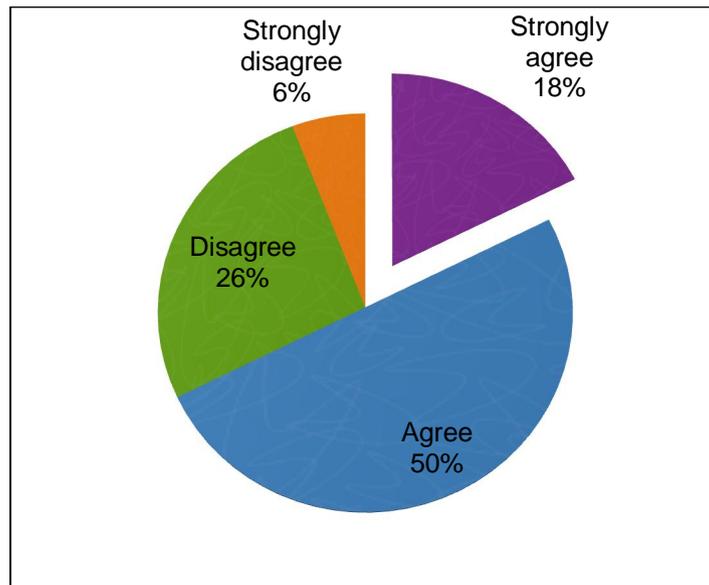


Figure 5.8: Proficiency in the mother tongue as a prerequisite for additional language acquisition

In response to question 23, 50% (17 out of 34) of the respondents agreed and 18% (6 out of 34) strongly agreed that ESL learners need to be proficient in their mother tongue before they can successfully acquire an additional language. A contrast in response was received from 26% (9 out of 34) of the respondents who disagreed, and a further 6% (2 out of 34) strongly disagreed that learners' proficiency in their mother tongue was a prerequisite for additional language acquisition.

5.2.3.3.4 Summative conclusion

There seems to be little association between the responses concerning the educators' perceptions about the English language proficiency level of ESL learners when they enter the Intermediate Phase and the importance of mother tongue proficiency for the learners' academic success. Although the respondents believed that ESL learners have an inadequate CALP English proficiency when they enter the Intermediate Phase, it appears that many of them did not think that adequate proficiency in the mother tongue was needed to achieve academic success. Mostly, however, they viewed mother tongue proficiency as a prerequisite for the acquisition of an additional language. The contradiction in response to questions 12 and 23 made the researcher sceptical as to whether the educators had a clear understanding of the importance of mother tongue proficiency for ESL learners' general academic development and success. The importance of the mother tongue

is echoed by many researchers, namely Ouane and Glanz (2011:28), Case et al. (2005), Van Staden (2011), Jordaan (2011) and Yazici et al. (2010), who all believe that the retention of mother tongue instruction during at least the first six years of primary school (late-exit model) is extremely beneficial for making possible the effective transfer of cognitive and academic competences from the mother tongue to the second language (cf. Section 2.4.3). A large percentage of the respondents judged their ESL learners' mother tongue as proficient, although this appeared to be applicable only to BICS. Since the learners from the schools in this sample learn in English from Grade 1, it is difficult for the educators to judge the CAPS ability of their learners in their mother tongue. However, it is still a concern that educators probably lack knowledge of the importance of mother tongue proficiency for successful academic achievement when learning in a second language. This supports the research results of Garcia and Tyler (2010) and Worthington et al. (2011), who state that the task of supporting ESL learners is complicated by the fact that most educators do not have adequate training and knowledge with regard to the barriers ESL learners can experience, especially when their mother tongue development is not established (cf. Section 3.5.3).

5.2.3.4 Theme 3: Teaching and support skills

The questions that are grouped under theme 3 were directed at establishing the perception that Intermediate Phase educators have of their own teaching and support skills, other subject content educators, parents and departmental support initiatives.

Table 5.15: Teaching and support skills of Intermediate Phase educators

Theme 3: Teaching and support skills of language educators, subject content educators, parents and departmental support initiatives		
<i>Question no.</i>	<i>Question detail</i>	<i>Highest % response</i>
• 15	• Can teach ESLs who are not language proficient	• 65% agree
• 16	English language teachers in the Intermediate Phase are adequately trained to teach ESL learners how to speak, read and write in English	• 56% agree
• 17	• Difficult to support ESL learners with barriers to learning	• 50% agree
• 18	• Do have the necessary skills to support ESL learners with barriers to learning	• 44% disagree
• 19	• Can apply strategies to adapt the curriculum	• 79% agree
• 20	• Can apply strategies to adapt assessment	• 68% agree
• 21	• Other content educators can support ESL learners to	• 65% agree

	understand their subject concepts	
• 22	• Code switching is an effective tool when teaching ESL learners	• 67% agree
• 26	Intermediate Phase educators are adequately equipped to assist ESL learners who are experiencing linguistic barriers to acquire the necessary linguistic tools (cognitive academic language skills) needed to access the academic curriculum	• 33% agree, 33% disagree
• 28	• Department of Education support initiatives are adequate	• 53% disagree

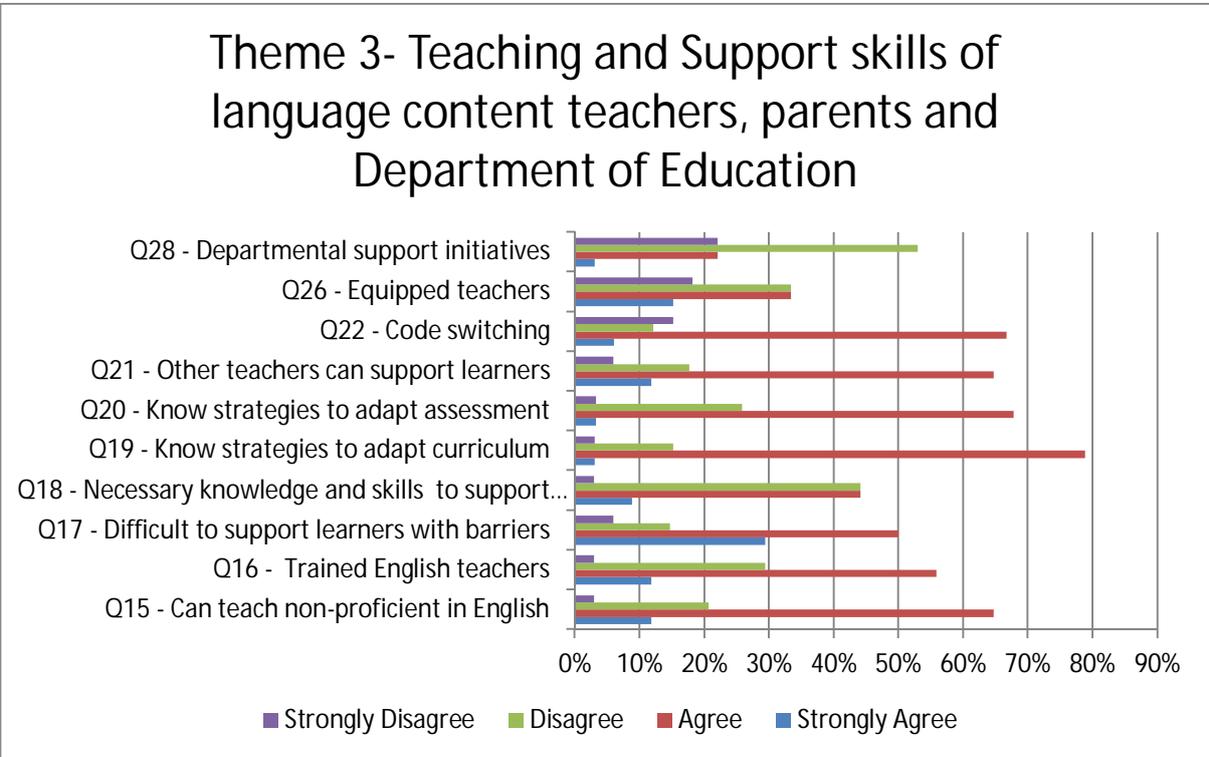


Figure 5.9: Teaching and support skills of language and content educators, parents and departmental support initiatives

5.2.3.4.1 Sub-theme 1: Teaching skills

5.2.3.4.1.1 Findings from question 15: Competence to teach non-proficient ESL learners

I can teach ESL learners who are not English language proficient.

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
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The following responses were indicated:

Table 5.16: Question 15

<i>Strongly agree</i>	4	12%
<i>Agree</i>	22	65%
<i>Disagree</i>	7	21%
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	1	3%
<i>Total</i>	34	100%

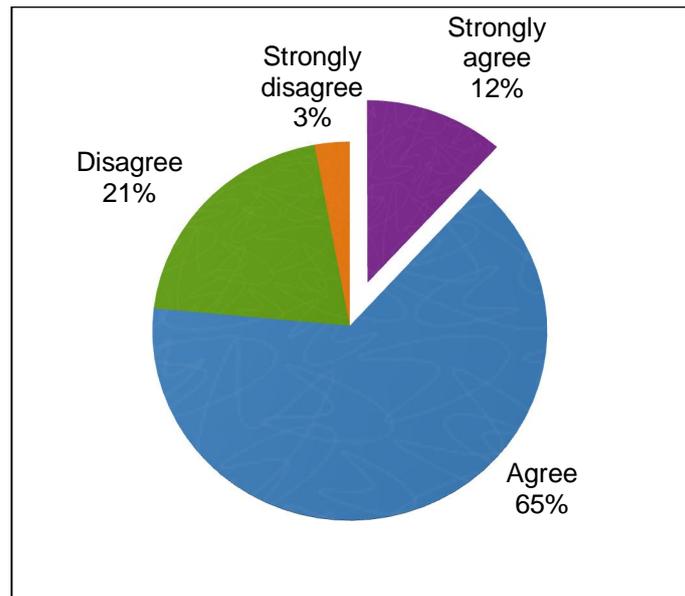


Figure 5.10: Own competence in teaching non-proficient ESL learners

In response to question 15, as reflected in Figure 5.10, 65% (22 out of 34) agreed and 12% (4 out of 34) strongly agreed that they could teach ESL learners who are non-proficient in English. By contrast, 21% (7 out of 34) disagreed and 3% (1 out of 34) strongly disagreed that they were competent to teach non-proficient ESL learners.

5.2.3.4.2 Sub-theme 2: Adequate training

5.2.3.4.2.1 Findings from question 16: Training of English language educators to teach ESL learners

English languages educators in the Intermediate Phase are adequately trained to teach ESL learners how to speak, read and write in English.

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
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The following responses were indicated:

Table 5.17: Question 16

<i>Strongly agree</i>	4	12%
<i>Agree</i>	19	56%
<i>Disagree</i>	10	29%
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	1	3%
<i>Total</i>	34	100%

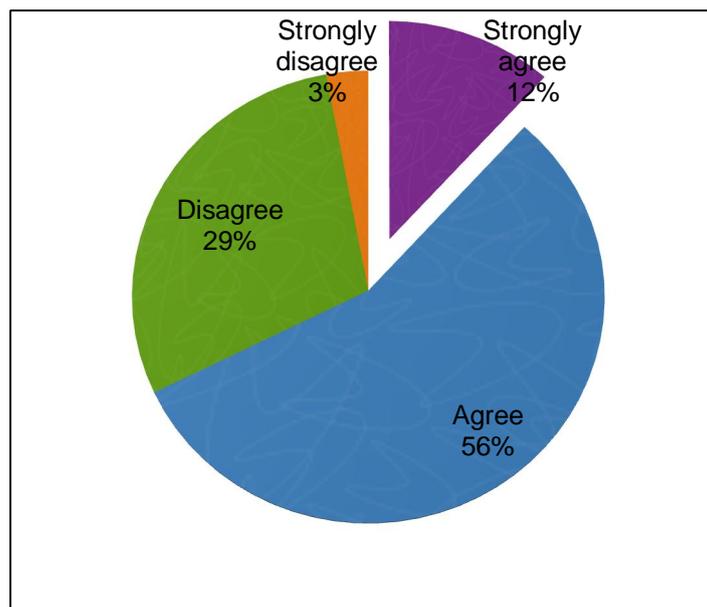


Figure 5.11: Training of English language educators to teach ESL learners

As reflected in Figure 5.11, 56% (19 out of 34) agreed and 12% (4 out of 34) strongly agreed, while 29% (10 out of 34) disagreed and 3% (1 out of 34) strongly disagreed that they were adequately trained to teach ESL learners how to speak, read and write in the English language.

5.2.3.4.3 Sub-theme 3: Support skills

5.2.3.4.3.1 Findings from question 17: Competency of educators to support ESL learners who experience barriers to learning

It is difficult for me to support ESL learners when they experience barriers to learning

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
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The following responses were indicated:

Table 5.18: Question 17

<i>Strongly agree</i>	10	29%
<i>Agree</i>	17	50%
<i>Disagree</i>	5	15%
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	2	6%
<i>Total</i>	34	100%

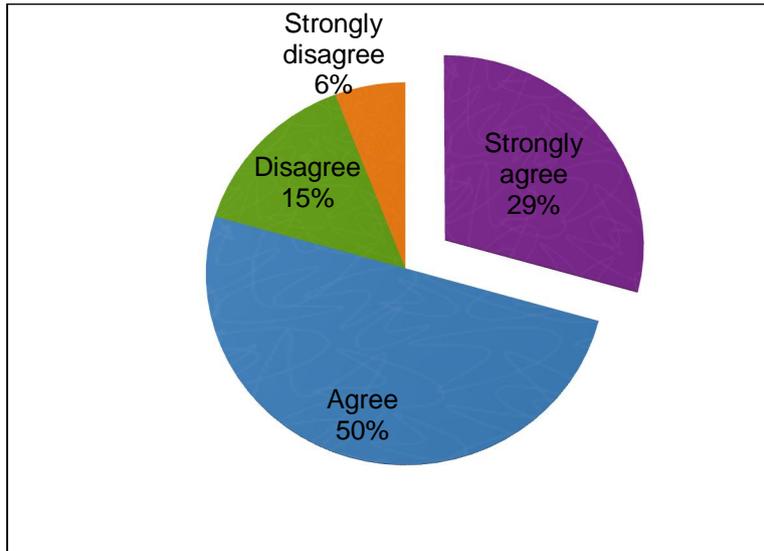


Figure 5.12: Competency of educators to support ESL learners who experience barriers to learning

In response to question 17, a large percentage of the respondents (50%, 17 out of 34) agreed and 29% (10 out of 34) strongly agreed that they experienced difficulty in providing support to ESL learners with barriers. A small percentage (15%, 5 out of 34) disagreed and 6% (2 out of 34) strongly disagreed, and therefore indicated that they could support ESL learners with barriers.

5.2.3.4.3.2 Findings from question 18: Knowledge and skills of teachers to support ESL learners who experience barriers to learning

I have the necessary knowledge and skills to support ESL learners who experience barriers to learning.

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
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The following responses were indicated:

Table 5.19: Question 18

<i>Strongly agree</i>	3	9%
<i>Agree</i>	15	44%
<i>Disagree</i>	15	44%
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	1	3%
<i>Total</i>	34	100%

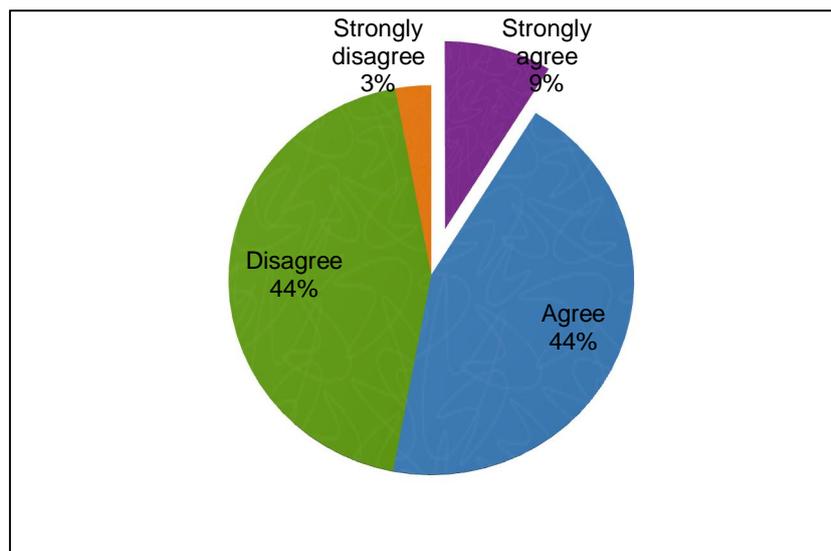


Figure 5.13: Educators' opinion of own knowledge and skills to support ESL learners with barriers

In response to question 18, almost half of the respondents (44%, 15 out of 34) agreed and 9% (3 out of 34) strongly agreed that they had the necessary knowledge and skills required to support ESL learners, while an equal percentage (44%, 15 out of 34) disagreed and 3% (1 out of 34) strongly disagreed that they had the necessary knowledge and skills to support ESL language learners.

5.2.3.4.3.3 Findings from question 19: Knowledge of strategies to adapt the curriculum

I know strategies to adapt the curriculum to assist ESL learners in the classroom.

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
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The following responses were indicated:

Table 5.20: Question 19

<i>Strongly agree</i>	1	3%
<i>Agree</i>	26	79%
<i>Disagree</i>	5	15%
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	1	3%
<i>Total</i>	33	100%

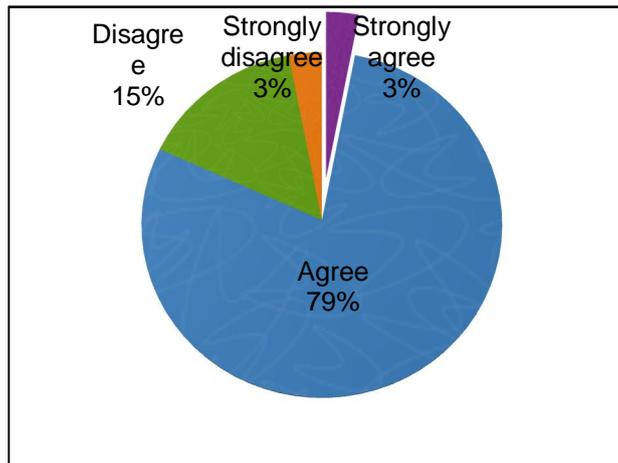


Figure 5.14: Ability to adapt the curriculum to assist ESL learners in the classroom

There was consensus in response to question 19, where 79% (26 out of 34) of the respondents were in agreement and a further 3% (1 out of 34) strongly agreed that they had strategies to adapt the curriculum to assist the ESL learner in the classroom. However, on the other hand, 15% (5 out of 34) of the respondents disagreed and another 3% (1 out of 34) strongly disagreed that they were able to implement strategies of curriculum adaptation. One of the respondents failed to respond to the question.

5.2.3.4.3.4 Findings from question 20: Knowledge of strategies to adapt assessment

I know strategies to adapt assessment to assist ESL learners in the classroom.

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
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The following responses were indicated:

Table 5.21: Question 20

<i>Strongly agree</i>	1	3%
<i>Agree</i>	21	68%
<i>Disagree</i>	8	26%
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	1	3%
<i>Total</i>	31	100%

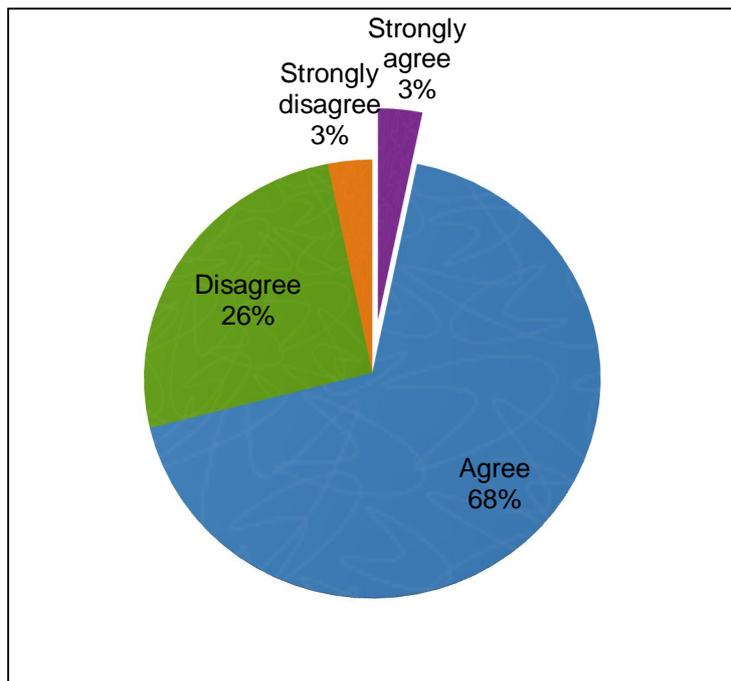


Figure 5.15: Knowledge to adapt assessment to assist ESL learners in the classroom

In response to question 20, as reflected in Figure 5.15, 21 out of 34 (68%) and 1 out of 34 (3%) respondents agreed that they knew strategies to adapt assessment to assist ESL language learners in the classroom. A small percentage of 26% (8 out of 34) disagreed and 3% (1 out of 34) strongly disagreed that they knew strategies to

assist ESL learners in the classroom. Three of the 34 respondents failed to respond to this question.

5.2.3.4.3.5 Findings from question 21: Competency of subject content educators to support ESL learners to understand concepts

Other content area educators can support ESL learners to understand their subjects' concepts.

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
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The following responses were indicated:

Table 5.22: Question 21

<i>Strongly agree</i>	4	12%
<i>Agree</i>	22	65%
<i>Disagree</i>	6	18%
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	2	6%
<i>Total</i>	34	100%

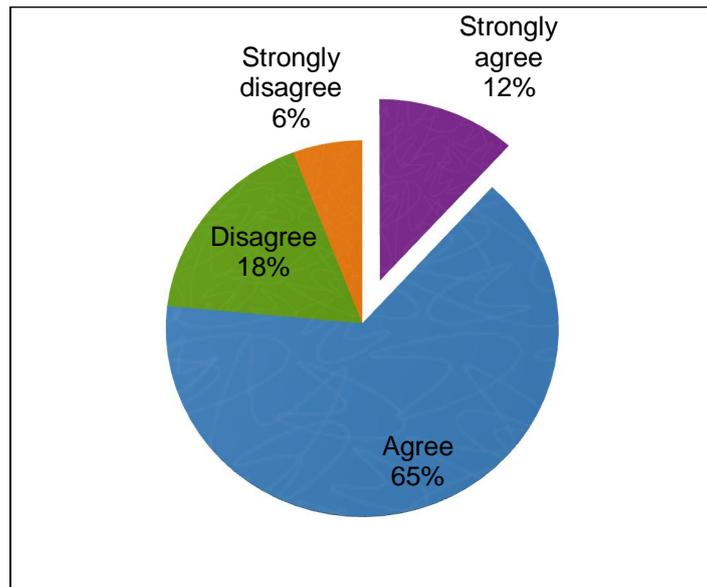


Figure 5.16: Competency of subject content educators to support ESL learners with concept understanding

As reflected in Figure 5.16, 65% (22 out of 34) of the respondents agreed and 12% (4 out of 34) strongly agreed that content educators had the necessary skills to support ESL learners to understand their subject concepts, while 18% (6 out of 34) disagreed and 6% (2 out of 34) strongly disagreed that content area educators could support ESL learners with concept understanding.

5.2.3.4.3.6 Findings from question 22: Code switching

Code switching is an effective tool when teaching ESL learners.

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
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The following responses were indicated:

Table 5.23: Question 22

<i>Strongly agree</i>	2	6%
<i>Agree</i>	22	67%
<i>Disagree</i>	4	12%
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	5	15%
<i>Total</i>	33	100%

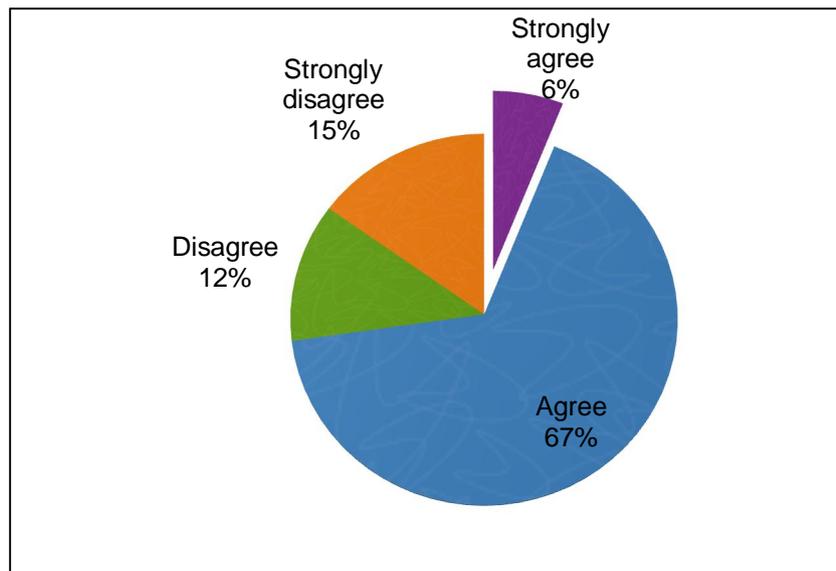


Figure 5.17: Code switching as an effective tool

A large percentage of respondents (67%, 22 out of 34) agreed and 6% (2 out of 34) strongly agreed that code switching was an effective tool when teaching ESL learners. Only 12% (4 out of 34) disagreed and 15% (5 out of 34) strongly disagreed that code switching was an effective tool. One respondent failed to answer the question.

5.2.3.4.3.7 Findings from question 26: Competency of Intermediate Phase educators to assist ESL learners with linguistic barriers

Intermediate Phase educators are adequately equipped to assist ESL learners who are experiencing linguistic barriers to acquire the necessary linguistic tools needed to access the curriculum.

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
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The following responses were indicated:

Table 5.24: Question 26

<i>Strongly agree</i>	5	15%
<i>Agree</i>	11	33%
<i>Disagree</i>	11	33%
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	6	18%
<i>Total</i>	33	100%

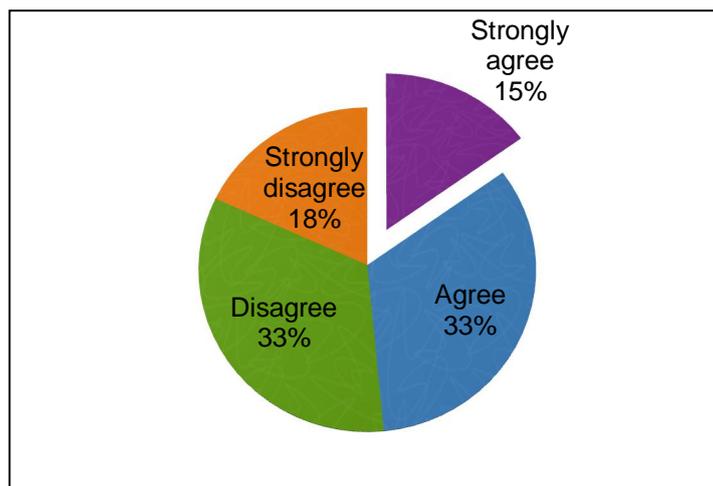


Figure 5.18: Competency of Intermediate Phase educators to assist ESL learners with linguistic barriers

An equal percentage of the respondents (33%, 11 out of 34) agreed and disagreed that Intermediate Phase educators were adequately equipped to assist ESL learners to acquire the necessary linguistic skills needed to access the curriculum. These findings do not compare exactly with previous research results of Baecher et al. (2013), who discovered that, because educators are faced with the dual task of teaching both the language and the subject content in their classes, many struggle with addressing their learners' language needs in content-based environments (cf. Section 3.6.1). Research conducted by Rapetsoa and Singh (2012) reiterates that an educator's task becomes even more complicated when they are expected to teach ESL learners with learning disabilities – most educators do not have adequate training. As a result, many ESL learners are also at risk of being misdiagnosed as learners with special educational needs (LSEN), because educators in ESL settings find difficulty in determining whether academic problems stem from low linguistic proficiency or from a general learning impairment (cf. Section 3.6.1).

5.2.3.4.3.8 Findings from question 28: Department of Education's support initiatives

Departmental support initiatives are productive in addressing the barriers experienced by ESL learners

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
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The following responses were indicated:

Table 5.25: Question 28

<i>Strongly agree</i>	1	3%
<i>Agree</i>	7	22%
<i>Disagree</i>	17	53%
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	7	22%
<i>Total</i>	32	100%

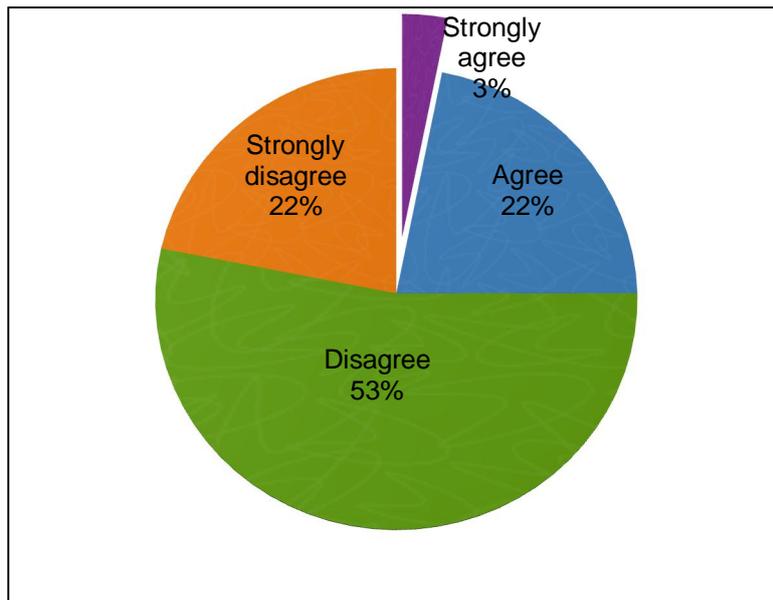


Figure 5.19: Perceptions of educators about support initiatives of the Department of Education

Over half of the respondents (53%, 17 out of 34) disagreed and 22% (7 out of 34) strongly disagreed that departmental support initiatives were adequate, while only 22% (7 out of 34) agreed that departmental support initiatives were in place. The reason for this could be that the focus of the Department is principally on content coverage (Engelbrecht et al., in press), which results in an inflexible curriculum

where educators are pushed to complete the curriculum at the expense of providing support to the ESL learner. This could result in ESL learners always experiencing a BICS and CALP backlog and consequently not succeeding academically (cf. Section 3.6.3). The present findings seem to be consistent with other research findings that inappropriate support as well as the absence of collaboration between support services could result in the ESL learner experiencing academic backlogs and possible learning difficulties (cf. Section 3.6.6). Two of the 34 respondents failed to respond to this question.

5.2.3.4.3.9 Summative conclusion

What is interesting about this data is that there seems to be a conflicting response from participants in question 17, where 10 out of 34 (29%) respondents strongly agreed and 17 out of 34 (50%) agreed that they found it difficult to support ESL learners who experience barriers to learning as they did not have the necessary skills to support them. This is in contrast to the response received by the respondents in questions 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 26 regarding their competency to support ESL learners, adapt the curriculum and assessment and deal with linguistic barriers: the majority of the respondents agreed that they had good levels of competency in these areas. A possible explanation for the discrepancy in the responses could be attributed to a number of factors: the educators may have been over-stating their own self-efficiency so they would not be viewed as barriers to the learning experience of ESL learners, or it could be the result of not fully understanding the support process and what it entails. The latter explanation would corroborate the findings by Hill (2009), who highlights the fact that educators do not understand what they need to assess, how to assess learning processes, or how to design integrated learning support programmes (cf. Section 3.5.3). This contradiction in the responses will be further elucidated in the qualitative phase of the data analysis.

Although a large percentage of the respondents (67%, 22 out of 34) agreed and 6% (2 out of 34) strongly agreed that code switching was an effective tool for teaching ESL learners, it is assumed that it will be a challenging practice at the sampled

schools. There is such a wide range of home languages between the educators and the learners that comprehensive code switching would be difficult to apply.

5.2.3.5 Theme 4: Parent involvement

Theme 4 was directed at establishing the language choice that most parents prefer as well as the impact that parent involvement or the lack thereof has on ESL learners' academic success and the perceptions of educators as to why this is the case.

Table 5.26: Parent involvement in ESL learning

Theme 4: Parent involvement		
<i>Question no.</i>	<i>Question detail</i>	<i>Highest % response</i>
24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most parents prefer that their children learn in English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 57% agree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents are involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 44% disagree

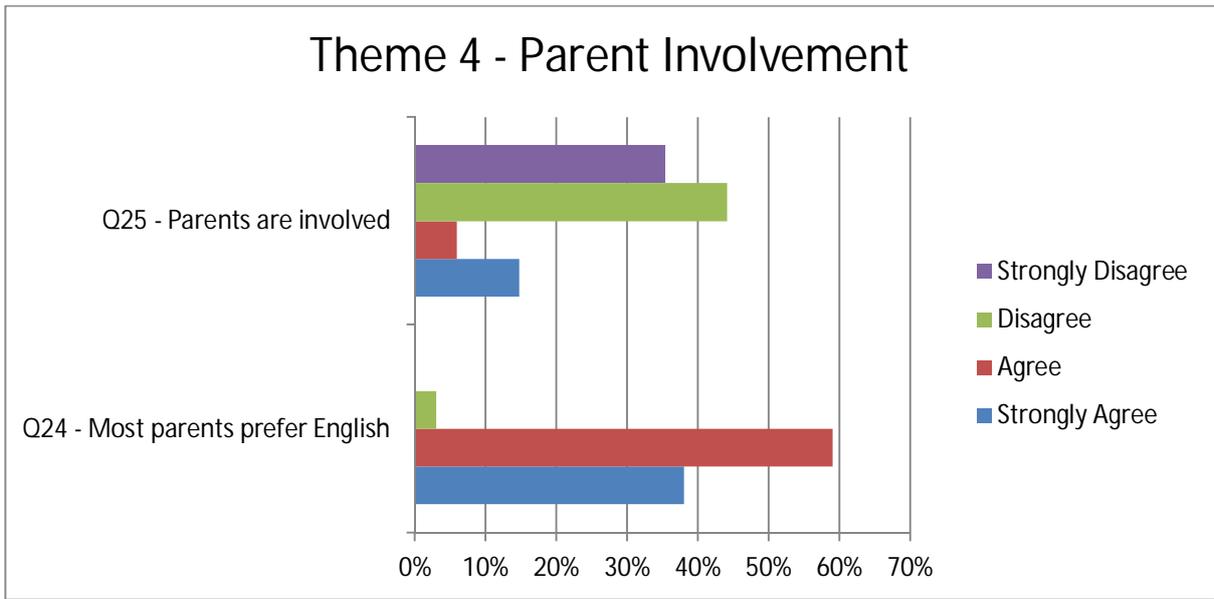


Figure 5.20: Parent involvement

5.2.3.5.1 Findings from question 24: Preference of parents regarding English as the LOLT

Most parents in your school prefer that their children learn in English.

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
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The following responses were indicated:

Table 5.27: Question 24

<i>Strongly agree</i>	13	38%
<i>Agree</i>	20	59%
<i>Disagree</i>	1	3%
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	0	0%
<i>Total</i>	34	100%

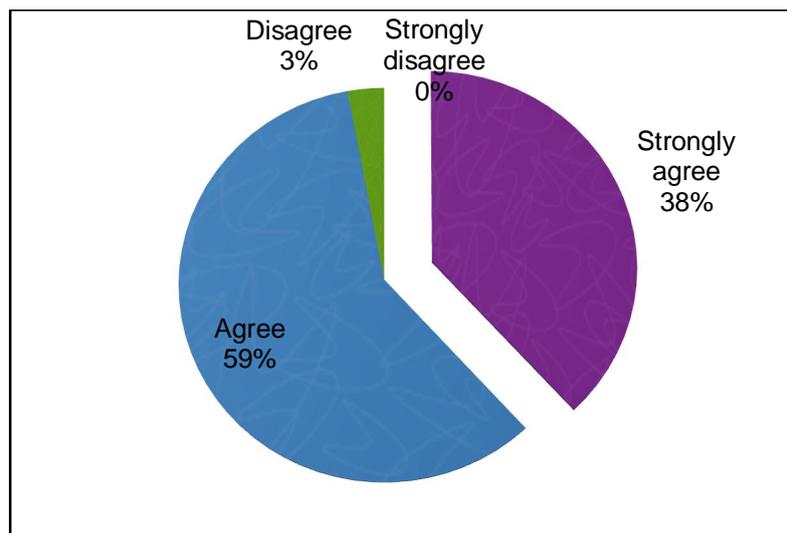


Figure 5.21: Preference of parents regarding English as the LOLT

Over half of the respondents (59%, 20 out of 34) agreed and 38% (13 out of 34) strongly agreed that parents preferred their children to learn in English, while only 3% (1 out of 34) disagreed that parents preferred that their children learn in English. Many of the comments that followed the participants' response were that parents viewed the English language as a prestigious language and they believed that it would stand their children in good stead in the future. The findings of the current study are consistent with those of Posel and Casale (2010), who state that the

reasons for this are that parents consider English to be the language that will afford their children the greatest success and status in life (cf. Section 2.4.2).

5.2.3.5.2 Findings from question 25: Parents’ involvement in supporting their children

The parents of ESL learners are actively involved in supporting their children to be proficient in English.

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
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The following responses were indicated:

Table 5.28: Question 25

<i>Strongly agree</i>	5	15%
<i>Agree</i>	2	6%
<i>Disagree</i>	15	44%
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	12	35%
<i>Total</i>	34	100%

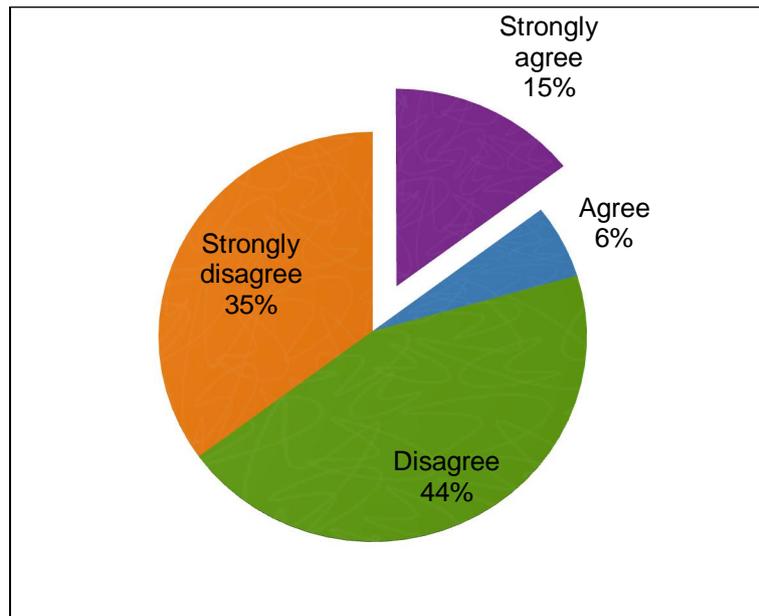


Figure 5.22: Involvement of parents

The present study found that a large percentage of the respondents (15 out of 34, 44%) disagreed, and 12 out of 34 (35%) strongly disagreed that parents were actively involved in supporting their children to be proficient in the English language. These findings mirror those of previous studies conducted by Lessing and Mahabeer (2007), who suggest that the ESL learners' "lack of literacy" is a result of poor parental initiatives to expose their children to literacy-related activities as well as their own low literacy level. In turn, the learning of a second language is not reinforced at home. Nel et al. (2012) explain that ESL learners primarily reside in homes where their parents work long hours; they are illiterate or are not educated in child development (cf. Section 3.6.5). Consequently, these parents fail to engage in conversation with their children, nor do they read with their children, and therefore they fail to develop adequate language and literacy skills for learning. In the comments section, many respondents stressed that there was no evident continuance of the learning of the English language at home due to poor parental involvement. Others felt that this discontinuance was a result of illiteracy among many parents (cf. Section 3.6.4).

5.2.3.5.3 Summative conclusion

The responses as well as the consequent comments obtained from the educators expressed their perceptions regarding the choice that parents make about the

language in which their children will learn as well as the influence that parents have on the academic success of their children. It is quite clear that the vast majority of the respondents believed that parents' choice of English as the language of instruction for their children was based primarily on the fact that it is viewed as the lingua franca worldwide. This response supports the research findings of Mncwango (2009), Kaschula (1999) and Mesthrie (2006) (cf. Section 2.4.2). The problem that stems from this choice, although valid in the opinion of the parents, is that many parents do not become personally involved in assisting their children to acquire adequate proficiency in the LOLT, their children's second language.

5.2.3.6 Theme 5: Barriers to learning

Theme 5 examined questions that dealt with intrinsic and extrinsic barriers that ESL learners are faced with.

What do you think are the main causes of barriers to learning of ESL learners? (Please tick. You may tick more than one)

Table 5.29: Barriers experienced by ESL learners

	Comments
<p>Language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ability to perceive word sounds - the ability to understand the structure of language and its grammar - the ability to understand vocabulary and meaning; acquisition of reading skills 	

<p>Social environment - conflict between home and school culture</p>	
<p>Economic factors - nutritional deficiencies due to lack of financial resources</p>	
<p>Lack of educational resources - insufficient classroom support due large learner numbers as well as insufficient academic resources to assist ESL learners</p>	
<p>Cognitive ability - neurological disorders of basic psychological processes which manifest in difficulties in acquiring speaking, reading and writing skills</p>	

<p>Familial causes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lack of parental involvement in support of language acquisition - insufficient provision of opportunities and additional exposure at home to the English language 	
<p>Other:</p>	

The following responses were indicated:

Table 5.30: Question 27

Language	51% (18/34)
Social environment	46% (16/34)
Economic factors	40% (14/34)
Lack of educational resources	43% (15/34)
Cognitive ability	34% (12/34)
Familial causes	49% (17/34)
Other	

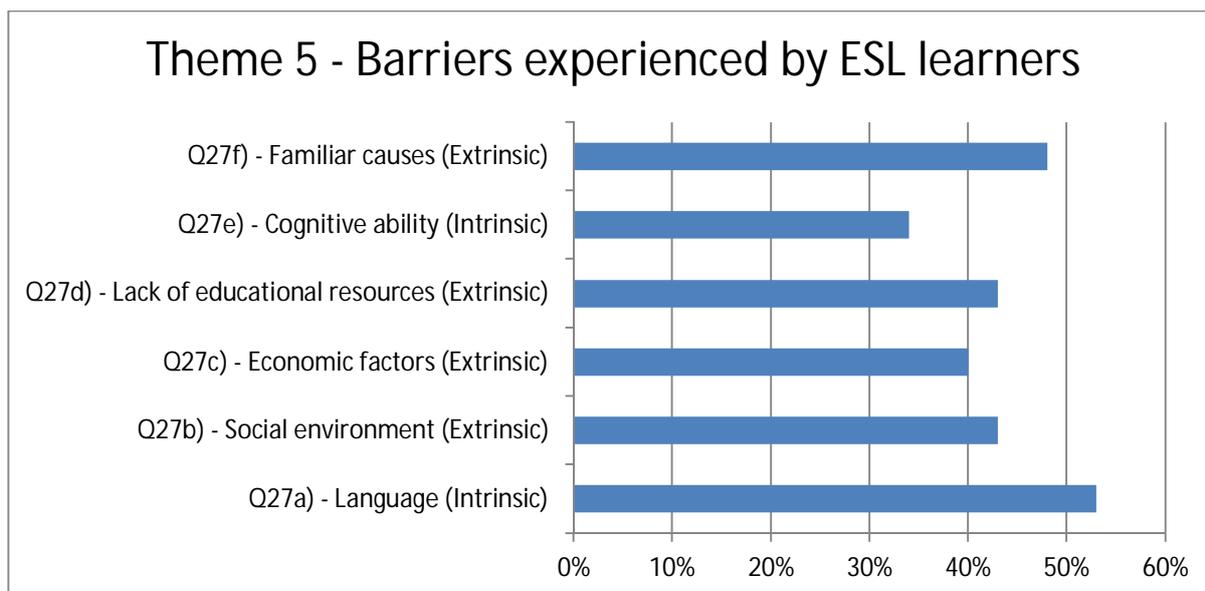


Figure 5.23: Barriers experienced by ESL learners

5.2.3.6.1 Summative conclusion

On analysis of Figure 5.23, it can be seen that the respondents viewed language as one of the major causes by far of barriers to learning faced by ESL learners. Over 50% (52%, 18 out of 34) of the participants identified inadequate language skills i.e. the ability to perceive word sounds, the ability to understand language and grammar and the ability to understand vocabulary, as the primary cause of barriers to the acquisition of a second language. These findings further support statements by Nel et al. (2012) who emphasised that ESL learners experience difficulty hearing the English phonological system because it differs from that of their mother tongue; they experience barriers to comprehension because sound/letter relations and letter combinations in their mother tongue differ vastly from those of English (cf. Section 3.5.2). Although a small number of the respondents (12 out of 34, 34%) indicated that barriers experienced by ESL learners could be attributed to neurological disorders, interesting findings presented themselves from the educators' follow-up comments. Many of them linked neurological barriers to insufficient CALP skills – they believed that the one seemed to influence the other. These findings corroborate the findings presented by Shore and Sabatini (2009) that show that 80% of ESL learners with learning disabilities experience difficulty with CALP (cf.3.5.2). As reflected in question 27b (social environment) in Table 5.29 more than 40% (16 out of 34) of the participants identified the conflict between the home environment and

school as a contributing barrier to the learning of ESL learners. These results match those observed in earlier findings by Helrich et al. (2011) that proved that inadequate acknowledgement of the ESL learners' culture could be viewed as a major deterrent to English learning (cf. Section 3.5.3). In response to question 27c (economic factors), only 40% (14 out of the 34) respondents viewed nutritional deficiencies as a result of insufficient financial resources as a contributing barrier. Just over 40% (15 out of 34) of the respondents felt that insufficient support was due to large learner numbers in classrooms and insufficient resources to assist ESL learners. These findings support previous research by Halle et al. (2012) and Hashim et al. (2014), who established that overcrowded classrooms contribute to the ineffective delivery of the curriculum because many educators find it difficult to manage the large classroom numbers and accommodate the ESL learner. As a result, these learners are inadequately supported (cf. Section 3.6.2). A small number of respondents (30%, 12 out of 34), in response to question 27e (cognitive ability), perceived the learners' cognitive ability as a barrier to learning. It is important to mention that the study sample did not contain many learners who were cognitively impaired, which could explain this result. From Figure 5.23 it can be seen that 47% (17 out of 34) of the respondents, in response to question 27f (familial causes), identified familial causes (lack of parental involvement, lack of support with language acquisition, insufficient opportunities for exposure to the English language) as a significant barrier that hampers the progress of ESL learners. The present findings also confirm those of Lessing and Mahabeer (2007), who ascertained that there was a significant relationship between ESL learners' socio-economic environment and their ability to read and write in English, and that many educators viewed the low socio-economic status of the ESL learner as an impediment because the environment, coupled with the poor literacy levels of ESL learners' parents, tended to cause the ESL learner to lack exposure to the English language (cf. Section 3.6.4).

A further explanation of the data obtained during the quantitative phase will be discussed in the following qualitative phase.

5.3 Qualitative analysis

The interview schedule (see Appendix D) was guided by thirteen semi-structured questions drafted from the responses gained from the questionnaires in the quantitative phase. The purpose of the qualitative phase was to elaborate and expand on those quantitative findings deemed unclear. Therefore there is a difference in the themes compared to the quantitative phase.

The researcher interviewed eight educators from the four particular schools, including content and language educators, all of whom had participated in the quantitative phase. The findings were transcribed by the researcher. According to Nieuwenhuis (2007:104), the transcribing of data by the researchers themselves allows them to include non-verbal cues, as authentically experienced, whereas if the data is transcribed by a typist there is no guarantee that all the communication cues will be included.

The themes of the qualitative phase are as follows:

- English language proficiency
- Teaching and support skills of the educators, parent involvement and departmental support initiatives
- Mother tongue proficiency
- Language choice

5.3.1 Theme 1: English language proficiency

The following sub-themes were identified within the theme:

Table 5.31: English language proficiency

Theme 1	English language proficiency
Sub-themes	
1. The educators' understanding of language proficiency	

Theme 1	English language proficiency
2. The coping skills of ESL learners regarding the language demands in the Intermediate Phase	

5.3.1.1 The educators' understanding of language proficiency

During the quantitative phase the researcher found a discrepancy in the responses regarding the perception of the respondents of ESL learners' language proficiency, in both English and the mother tongue. Most of the respondents believed that ESL learners were proficient in their mother tongue with regard to BICS when they entered the Intermediate Phase, but not proficient in English regarding BICS and CALP. Therefore the researcher considered it necessary to establish whether the educators understood the meaning of language proficiency. The following descriptions were provided:

"To use a language, to be able to use a language and to understand the language that you are using" (language educator).

"I would say someone who is able to read, write, speak, understand in any language" (language educator).

"I believe that you must be able to express yourself both verbally and also be able to do well in writing when it comes to language" (language educator).

"Being able to read, write and communicate with understanding" (content educator).

"I think it is the ability of an individual to speak or perform in an acquired language and to use a language for a variety of purposes, including speaking, listening, reading and writing" (content educator).

All eight participants were able to provide a basic explanation of what it means to be language proficient. This refutes any doubts that the researcher had about whether the educators understood what being language proficient meant. However, it also supports the assumption that understanding what language proficiency means does not necessarily mean that one is competent to provide support when barriers are

encountered in the classroom. This is reflected by the participants in response to the question in Section 5.2.3.4, where the majority of the participants echoed feelings of incompetence when dealing with ESL learners and the barriers they experienced. Msimanga and Lelliott (2014) state that many educators, who are themselves English second language speakers (cf. Section 5.2.1.) as is the case in this study, struggle to communicate with ESL learners who have limited English language proficiency (cf. Section 3.6.1). Thus it is essential, in order for the educator to provide effective teaching and learning opportunities for their ESL learners, that they should first gain command and advanced proficiency of the language of instruction before they can attempt to engage effectively with the learners (cf. Section 3.6.1).

5.3.1.2 Coping skills of ESL learners regarding the language demands in the Intermediate Phase

Two of the interviewees argued that ESL learners can cope to a certain extent with the demands of the curriculum in the Intermediate Phase, while others (6 out of 8) felt that they cannot cope at all. These findings clarify the discrepancies in the quantitative responses (cf. Section 5.2.3.2.2), where 30%, although the minority, believed that ESL learners have adequate English proficiency when they enter the Intermediate Phase, while 61% believed that ESL learners do not have the necessary English proficiency to cope in the Intermediate Phase. The following statements further explain the rationale behind the participants' arguments and the reasoning behind why they feel ESL learners do not have adequate language proficiency to cope with the language demands in the Intermediate Phase.

"I'm saying yes, our learners can cope with all the subjects if we get the language correct" (language educator).

"To a certain extent he will be able to cope because I mean we are using Bloom's Taxonomy where we are asking them different leveled typed questions and especially when it comes to the higher levels...when you ask them what do they think...or give me your opinion...or what would happen if...these learners are not able to tell you many of them will just leave it blank" (language educator).

"Some of them can, but most of them can't, because they are not encouraged at home to speak or read English material" (language educator).

"Not in the beginning, it takes time for the learner to come to grips with the rules of the English language" (content educator).

"No, most of them cannot cope with the demands of the LOLT in the Intermediate Phase, they are from different backgrounds with different languages, sometimes they don't get the necessary guidance in their homes as far as language is concerned, they only use it at school" (content educator).

"No they cannot. Many learners that enter the Intermediate Phase have difficulties in reading and writing. This poses a big problem in the classroom and slows down their learning process" (content educator).

The arguments put forth by the participants further explain and confirm the findings from the quantitative phase (cf. Section 5.2.3.6.1). The participants believed that the ESL learners' ability to cope with the language demands of the curriculum was influenced by the learners' not receiving the necessary guidance at home as far as language was concerned since they are not encouraged to speak or read English material. As a result, ESL learners have difficulty coping with higher-order cognitive questions and this could slow down their learning process. These findings support those of Bloch (2002), who believes that the ESL learner's poor literacy knowledge and skills is a result of parents not adequately exposing their children to literacy-related activities as well as their own low literacy level (cf. Section 3.6.5).

5.3.2 Theme 2: Teaching and support skills of educators, parents and departmental support initiatives

The following sub-themes have been identified within the theme:

Table 5.32: Teaching and support skills

Theme 2	Teaching and support skills of language educators, content educators, parents and departmental support initiatives
Sub-themes	
1. Content educators also being language educators	
2. Skills of educators in assessing, diagnosing and supporting ESL learners who experience barriers to learning	
3. Strategies for support	

5.3.2.1 Content educators also being language educators

There was strong consensus among all the participants that subject content educators should also be viewed as language educators and that all educators, irrespective of whether they teach content or a language, should be language proficient in the LOLT.

"No, that goes without saying...it has to be" (language educator).

"Well, we all speaking in English. I mean I'm teaching Afrikaans and I'm explaining everything in English so we are even though we are content teachers. Definitely ... we have to be language teachers together with being content teachers" (language educator).

"I think it works both ways because, well, if you dealing with a language there has to be content as well, and I think every teacher in their own right is a language teacher because of the fact that they are teaching children ... it's through the medium of language and so that means that it works both ways" (language educator).

"That's very important ... every teacher in the Intermediate Phase should be language proficient" (So do you think that they should be able to teach a child how to read?) "Yes, definitely" (language educator).

"Since we also teach the content in English ... I think the teachers must also be given the chance of being language teachers ... we use the same language when asking questions in class" (content educator).

"I feel all teachers should have a good command of the LOLT taught at his/her school"(content educator).

"I feel that content teachers also being language teachers benefits children in many ways ... it helps improve their reading, writing and speaking ... however, the job of teaching content and supporting students to learn the content is a big enough job without the added responsibility of taking on language teaching" (content educator).

The interviewees clearly stated the importance of educators being proficient in the LOLT as well as being able to demonstrate the ability to address language barriers in

their classroom. These responses support prior research findings by King and Chetty (2014:42), Msimanga and Lelliott (2014:1160) and Farahnaz (2011), who have emphasise that many educators lack confidence in their level of English proficiency, and this may limit their ability to teach and mediate through the medium of the target language, namely English (cf. Section 3.6.1). Consequently educators themselves can also create barriers to learning for their ESL learners as a result of their limited proficiency in the LOLT.

5.3.2.2 Skills of educators in assessing, diagnosing and supporting ESL learners who experience barriers to learning

When the participants were presented with the question of providing an objective opinion of their and other's ability to assess, identify and support ESL learners, six out of eight participants stated that they were not equipped to deal with the multitude of barriers that ESL learners were experiencing.

"Speaking for myself...I don't think I am equipped ... right ... and then when I see stuff that the teachers give me that was supposed to be written in English ... and they are not competent. Sometimes I get work from teachers and I see that they are not even proficient in English ... just judging from that ... spelling errors that they make and ... remarks that they make on reports and things like that. I'm saying that if you are making those errors, how are you going to correct those errors for the children?" (language educator).

"Educators have very little skill in this regard ... I feel there should be proper training of teachers in regard to being bilingual, especially in having the skill in assessing, diagnosing and supporting ESL learners with language barriers" (follow-up from the questionnaire where teachers said that they were equipped to deal with language barriers. Do you think this is a true reflection of their capabilities?) "I don't think it is a true reflection ... I think the teachers really need to be trained to help learners with regard to language" (language educator).

"We do lack the necessary skills and we also don't have enough time for ESL learners" (content educator).

"I think that teachers are not really trained to deal with these barriers. The numbers are too large to handle. A remedial teacher would make the task easier" (content educator).

"No, I don't feel we are skilled in this area; however, even though I'm faced with these challenges I try and adapt my lessons to cater for all learners' learning needs" (content educator).

"I think teachers ... you know we are very multi- tasked in that way ... I would say. We "suss" out the class, we find out from the learners who speak the particular language ... we tend to use the buddy system. We get a child who speaks that language and who is also proficient in English and then we ask that learner to help the one who is struggling along so in that way we cover that ground to a certain extent because that learner who is an ESL would at some point bring himself up to par as far as English is concerned" (content educator).

"This I find to be a big problem because I believe when it comes to language barriers it's not only the duty of the teacher ... you know a lot of work needs to be done at home as well, but it's a major problem ... I tell you it's ... very difficult, especially coming into the Intermediate Phase because all these skills that need to be taught are done in the early Foundation Phase, and if the child cannot cope with it at that level it is very difficult for the child to overcome those barriers ... you can try, but in most cases it is not so easy because if they cannot read in the junior primary they cannot read in the senior phase" (content educator).

One of the participants failed to answer the question and seemed to "beat about the bush" when answering the question. Another participant did not directly admit her inefficiency in dealing with ESL learners in the Intermediate Phase; however, she did admit that it was difficult for an ESL learner to overcome barriers to learning. In the quantitative phase it seemed that respondents mostly believed that they are able to teach, assess and support ESL learners who are experiencing barriers (cf.5.2). During the interviews most of the participants (7 out of 8) reported that it was difficult to assess their teaching ability, their assessing and their support of ESL learners. This could confirm the argument presented by the researcher in the quantitative phase (cf. Section 5.2.3.4.3.9) underlining the fact that educators could misjudge

their competency as a result of not wanting to be viewed as a barrier to the learning experience of the ESL learner. It could also be a result of not fully understanding what adapting teaching and support entails when addressing barriers that ESL learners experience (cf. Section 5.2.3.4.3.9). These findings support the statements of Van Staden (2011) and Nel et al. (2012) that state that the misdiagnosis of ESL learners as learners with special educational needs (LSEN) could be the result of the difficulties that educators experience in determining whether academic problems stem from low linguistic proficiency or from a general learning impairment (cf. Section 3.6.1). Educators must be able to adapt instruction to make the content of the school curriculum accessible to ESL learners to enable them to move towards new skills, concepts and levels of understanding so that they can improve academically (Gibbons in Lucas, Villegas & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008). However, to achieve this, they need to be adequately trained in the appropriate knowledge and skills. Van Rooyen and Jordaan (2009:272) maintain that because of inadequate training, educators struggle to meet language-related needs of learners and also lack the specific methodological skills to promote effective learning of academic language.

5.3.2.3 *Strategies for support*

There seemed to be a common view among the interviewees about the lack of departmental support procedures as well as inappropriate support structures within the school. Only one of the eight educators interviewed expressed feelings of satisfaction with the quality of support provision within and outside school. Others felt that some procedures were in place, but they were not sufficient to assist them. These findings add to those of the quantitative phase, where many of the respondents identified the absence of support structures and viable departmental support as factors contributing to the exacerbation of the problem of ESL learners experiencing barriers to learning (cf. Section 5.2.3.4.3.8). What was also evident among all the interviewees was the frustration and not knowing how to support ESL learners who are experiencing barriers to learning. This was echoed throughout their responses.

"No, they are not. Coming to remediation and things like that ... I am steeped in the need to drive the content. I have to drive the syllabus. I don't think I am equipped ... you know, with those special skills to actually teach a child to read or getting the phonics right because I take it for granted that when they come to the Intermediate Phase those things have been covered already ... I am now passing the literature and the nuances of a language and things like that" (language educator).

"Definitely not ... the Department is only good at demanding things; they are not there for support. All they are worried about is for the work to get done. If you take CAPS for instance ... I see no difference between CAPS and the old apartheid system because they are frustrating the learner and teacher. Support is a big expectation ... the Department is forgetting that we are human beings, not machines" (language educator).

"You know, when it comes to the language, I think it is not just the fact that it is a second one to them, but when you talk about experience and what one goes through ... sometimes these children have a mental block, but if it is the language that is a problem one can cope and help the child ... you know, by bringing them individually and showing the different concepts about phonics and sentences and things like that, but if they have a problem which is more than just a language barrier ... it becomes very difficult" (language educator).

"I don't think so ... I think teachers really need to be helped either by the Department" (So the Department is not providing any support?) "Not really" (language educator).

"There are no procedures in place, nor educators who are skilled to help the learners. Learners also have problems with understanding the language" (content educator).

"It is of vital importance to gear them to cope with the requirements of the Intermediate Phase. Some procedures are in place but it is a problem taking into account the large class rolls" (content educator).

"Yes, procedures are in place" (satisfied educator).

The availability of sufficient support structures and adequate support processes have been found by other studies (Nel et al., 2013) to be problematic as well. Since participants in this study did not feel adequate to support ESL learners who experience barriers to learning, this could result in those learners not achieving their optimal potential despite their not having a learning disability.

5.3.3 Theme 3: Mother tongue proficiency as a requirement for academic success for ESL learners

Table 5.33: Mother tongue proficiency

Theme 3	Mother tongue proficiency as a requirement for academic success for ESL learners
Sub-themes	
1. Mother tongue instruction	
2. Mother tongue as a hindrance	
3. Opinion on mother tongue proficiency	
4. Opinion on additive bilingualism	

5.3.3.1 Mother tongue instruction

It appears that the participants realised that mother tongue instruction could be the better option as medium of instruction for ESL learners to ensure academic success, because it is the language that they use from birth and is easier for them to relate to. These findings support other research studies (Nel et al., 2012:110) which found that ESL learners who had achieved the normal linguistic developmental milestones in their mother tongue and who had well-established academic, linguistic and cognitive skills could usually easily transfer these skills to a second language (cf. Section 3.4). However, many of the participants believed that since English is an international language they need to be proficient in it despite the fact that it is a foreign language for the learners.

"I don't see anything wrong with mother tongue instruction ... but I firmly believe that English ... because it is an international language ... I feel that people need to be proficient in language ... in English as a language"(language educator).

"I believe that children should learn and their language of learning and teaching should be their mother tongue because they understand it because they speak it on a daily basis and it is taught to them from the time they are born ... from the time they learn to speak and when they get to school the LOLT is a foreign language and they do have difficulty" (language educator).

"It is good for the child to be taught in his mother tongue ... The child relates to his mother tongue better than to the second language" (content educator).

5.3.3.2 Mother tongue as a hindrance

The participants mentioned that they believed that since the LOLT is English, learners should be encouraged to practice the language as often as possible and be careful not to allow the mother tongue to become a "crutch" because this could hamper their ability to learn English. One of the subject content participants indicated that the mother tongue could be a hindrance in the learning process and as a result ESL learners are not able to master concepts and perform well in English. These perceptions refute the findings of Madiba (2012:20), who maintains that the adoption

of a second language before developing a strong foundational language proficiency across languages and grades is essential (cf. Section 2.3.4).

"This a debate that is not as simple as it seems ... being an English teacher I would discourage the mother tongue, purely for my selfish reasons, okay ... because I want them to excel in English so what I'm saying there ... pump the English language all the time, TV, radio, newspapers ... That's all, they must use it all the time ... practice makes perfect ... okay, but when it comes to understanding something you need the mother tongue influence to explain to the child what you mean in English." (Should there be a longer period of exposure to the mother tongue?) "No, I think it would make the learning of the new language more difficult because your mother tongue becomes a crutch so whenever you find it difficult with the new language you must switch to the mother tongue" (language educator).

"Many learners are only able to read, speak and write in their mother language ... this hinders their learning process and it has a great influence on the language they are taught in. They are not able to master concepts and perform well" (content educator).

5.3.3.3 Opinion on mother tongue proficiency

The participants believed that even if ESL learners are proficient in their mother tongue it will not support the LOLT.

"It's good that they're proficient in their mother tongue, but it does not really encourage the ESL in the language that he is being taught in" (content educator).

The participants confirmed their opinion from the quantitative phase that ESL learners could communicate well in their mother tongue, i.e. BICS, but that writing and reading skills could be problematic (cf. Section 5.2.3.2.4). One participant added that they were not proficient in any language, because even their mother tongue was a kind of slang.

"... I don't know what's their proficiency level in the mother tongue. I spoke to other teachers when I was in the high school and asked them, like for example, if you take Zulu or Xhosa as a subject, is there is a higher standard grade ... like in the old days

we used to have higher grade and standard grade and many of them told me, no, there is just Zulu or Xhosa ... so what I'm saying here is as far as communication goes I don't think they have a problem in the mother tongue. But I don't think they have been exposed to the writing of the mother tongue because it's ... I mean how many years that it has been discontinued" (language educator).

"In a lot of cases they can speak the language very well but when it comes to written work they have a problem because ... it's what they are taught at home and speak to each other, but they don't really have proficiency" (language educator).

"Their home language level is very high because they speak their mother tongue at home and amongst themselves, even at school in the classroom and during breaks" (language educator).

"They can speak their language, and mind you the language that they speak in our schools is not even the proper Zulu or Sotho ... they substitute a lot of the words for the slang because when you ask them what did he say or what did she say? they are not able to tell you directly. They not proficient in any language" (language educator).

"ESL learners' proficiency level of their mother tongue is not good, most of the learners speak languages that are mostly used in the areas where they live and this is usually a slang version of their mother tongue or a combination of different tongues of language" (content educator).

One participant judged ESL learners' mother tongue proficiency as good despite their poor home circumstances. She also asserted that parents' inability to speak English had a major impact on the learners' learning.

"I think ESL learners' proficiency in their mother tongue is excellent despite the fact that they come from poverty-stricken homes and their parents themselves are unable to speak English, which has a major impact on the learner" (content educator).

5.3.3.4 Opinion on additive bilingualism

The participants seemed to think that being bilingual could be advantageous to learning. However, they assert that English must be a language that all learners

should know, because it is the lingua franca worldwide. Most of the educators (5 out of 8) maintained that an additive approach to bilingualism was positive aspect; however, they did not view the additive approach as learning in the mother tongue and English as the additional language, but rather learning in English with the addition of another language.

"No, the lingua franca of this country is English and internationally ... it is English and I'm speaking purely from an English perspective. I think we are actually doing the child a service by inculcating English ... so I'm saying ... no, it is not a problem. If he has his mother tongue and we are still driving the English language agenda ... I say it is to his benefit" (language educator).

"I think bilingualism has positive effects on children's linguistic and educational development ... it provides a lot of opportunities for children to expand the functions for which they use a language. It benefits the learner's communication and language structure" (content educator).

In conclusion it appears that the participants did not have a clear understanding that a well-developed mother tongue is important for ESL learners to learn a second language and consequently learn successfully in that language. Research (Ouane & Glanz, 2011:28; Case et al., 2005; Van Staden, 2011; Yazici et al., 2010) has confirmed that ESL learners who have a well-established mother tongue achieve academically better (cf. Section 2.4.3).

5.3.4 Theme 4: Choice of LOLT by parents

The following sub-themes have been identified within the theme:

Table 3.34: Language choice of parents

Theme 4	Choice of LOLT by parents
Sub-themes	
1. Perspective on parents' ability to choose the language of instruction	

5.3.4.1 Perspective on parents' ability to choose the language of instruction

All the participants were in agreement that parents have the right to choose the LOLT which their children must be taught in. All of them also expressed understanding of why the parents choose English as the LOLT. However, many of the participants modified their answer with an additional explanation of the implications of the language choice. One of the participants explained that the choice of a LOLT should be restricted to parents whose children are in the Foundation Phase only and not to parents whose children are entering the Intermediate Phase and have come from schools where the LOLT was not English. Other participants felt that the language choice made by parents may not be the right one, and although parents want their children to be taught in the English language they do not provide their children with the necessary support and language exposure at home and consequently there is a break in learning. These findings provide a further explanation to the quantitative phase about the underlying reasons behind parents' language choice (cf. Section 5.2.3.5.1).

"... I don't know if I have a view on this but I can say ... parents have the right. I can't question that. I'm saying then again the schools in SA ... we are gearing the child for the international community ... and English should be the way to go." (But is there a discontinuance between home and school?) "No, I don't think that parents are supporting us here. I think the parents are sending them to school ... hopefully ... and that ... my child is there, he should learn and he would prosper thereafter ... but the support from the parents, like I said, as soon as the child comes home they switch to the mother tongue ... I" (language educator).

"... yes, parents can be given the choice. I think a lot of parents nowadays know ... they understand the importance of English as an international language and not just as a national language, so they would want their children to learn in English. In our school, for example, a lot of the parents stated English as the language of teaching and learning, even though some of them can't speak the language" (language educator).

"... it becomes a problem because with the language we are talking about, when it comes to English, every parent wants their children to learn English because it's an

international language and they believe that by knowing English they would be able to get job ... they would do well in whatever field they decide to go into ... but it is not really the right choice at times" (language educator).

"Every parent has the right to choose through what medium their children should be taught ... but that decision must be made when they are in the Foundation Phase not the Intermediate Phase" (content educator).

"I think they should be able to choose the language that their children should be taught in, since most of the time they are the ones who are supposed to supervise their children's work ... homework" (content educator).

"Parents have the right to choose ... but at times it would be better for the child to be taught in his home language" (content educator).

"Most parents feel that their children should be taught in English ... we as educators face many difficulties as learners should be taught in English as it is the first language of communication taught in South Africa" (content educator).

The perceptions of educators regarding the reasons behind the language choice of many parents support those held by many researchers. Posel and Casale (2010) state that most parents believe that English is the best choice for their children because it is viewed as the lingua franca internationally (cf. Section 2.4.2). Mncwango (2009) states that parents choose to send their children to schools where the LOLT is English because they believe that these schools are better resourced and that future success is guaranteed if one is proficient in the English language (cf. Section 2.4.2).

5.3.5 Theme 5: Barriers to learning

The following sub-themes have been identified within the theme:

Table 5.35: Barriers to learning

Theme 5	Barriers to learning
Sub-themes	
1. Causes of a learner's poor language proficiency	
2. Main barrier that influence ESL academic success	

5.3.5.1 Causes of a learner's poor language proficiency

Almost all the participants viewed language as the main barrier that ESL learners experience. These findings support those gained in the quantitative phase (cf. Section 5.2.3.6.1). Some of the causes of ESL learners' poor language proficiency, identified by the participants, are large classroom numbers, lack of exposure to the language, lack of reading and exposure to the written word, poor parental involvement, illiterate parents and poor socio-economic backgrounds. All the participants identified these extrinsic barriers as major causes impacting negatively on the ESL learner's learning experience. They also voiced their concern of the learners' inadequate English language proficiency when they enter the Intermediate Phase, and believed that it was due to a lack of a foundational knowledge of the English language. They expressed sympathy, but also felt frustration for the circumstances surrounding the learning and teaching environment of the ESL learner.

"Lack of reading ... lack of exposure to the language. Parents' role is almost non-existent. When these children go back to wherever they come from ... the mother tongue is being used in 90% of the cases. In fact, although we have LOLT at our school, when these children communicate with each other it is in the mother tongue" (language educator).

"I would say this is now because the people who are not able to speak, read, write or understand English are people who are not exposed to the language from a young age. If they start from a young age ... obviously it will help them as they grow into adults. Their home environment influences the school progress. Some of them tend

to speak more in their mother tongue than in English and this actually hampers the learners progress" (language educator).

"I think the main reason is the home language and there is not a lot of reading taking place as well. One can gain more knowledge and be proficient when you read and are vocal"(language educator).

"Most learners use English at school only ... and at home they use their mother tongue ... sometimes there is no basic foundation in English, even from our pre-schools" (content educator).

"Not having the basic foundation in the English language ... for example phonics, reading skills, comprehension skills in the Foundation Phase" (content educator).

"Many children are raised in poverty ... those with limited proficiency in English, those from homes where the parents' reading levels and practices are low, and those with speech, language and hearing handicaps are at increased risk of poor proficiency in the English language" (content educator).

"I think that extrinsic factors because ... as many of our learners come from a poor economic background their living conditions are at poverty level and because of the lack of proper conditions ... this does affect their academic success" (content educator).

These findings support those of other researchers such as Nel et al. (2012) and Lessing and Mahabeer (2007), who stress the importance of not overlooking the socio-economic factors and lack of parental involvement because they all impact on the ESL learning experience (cf. Sections 3.6.4 and 3.6.5). Hashim et al. (2014) confirm that schools should manage the numbers of ESL learners in a class as this has a direct relation to the quality of education provided to these learners (cf. Section 3.6.2).

5.4 Conclusion

From the data analysis it is obvious that educators believe that many ESL learners do experience barriers to learning, but it seems that most of them still think that

English is the best choice of LOLT. The final summative discussions and conclusions will be presented in the next chapter.

In Chapter six the findings of the research study will be discussed in detail. The limitations experienced during the research process will be discussed, and recommendations for future studies will be made.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter summaries of the previous chapters are presented, focusing on the key issues that were discussed. The final conclusions with regard to the different research questions are provided, limitations are highlighted and recommendations are made.

6.2 Summaries of chapters

6.2.1 Summary of Chapter One

Chapter one outlined the rationale behind the research study. This study focused on the perceptions of educators about the barriers that ESL learners experience in the Intermediate Phase. The primary intention of the research study was directed at identifying some of the factors, as well as barriers, that impact on the learning environment of the ESL learner in order to understand the learning experience of the ESL learner better so as to help all stakeholders to provide a better quality of education for ESL learners in the future.

6.2.2 Summary of Chapter Two

Chapter two was directed at investigating the history of language education in South Africa as well as the policies that have influenced language implementation from the apartheid to the post-apartheid era (cf. Sections 2.2 and 2.3). In this chapter the researcher also clarified the rationale behind the language choice made by parents (cf. Section 2.4.2.). A discussion on mother tongue education was presented (cf. Section 2.4.3), and the issue of additive bilingualism was explored (cf. Section 2.4.4). It has also been established in the literature that many South African learners are learning in English, their second language, and this results in challenges to optimal learning for these learners (cf. Section 2.4.5.). Key findings from the literature review in this chapter indicate that language in education in South Africa has a political history. It is recommended by policies and researchers that additive bilingualism is the better choice where the mother tongue is maintained as the LOLT and a second

language is learned additionally. However, parents choose English, even though it is their children's second language, because they believe it will ensure their success in the academic world and the world of commerce.

6.2.3 Summary of Chapter Three

Chapter Three outlined the factors that influence learning in English as a second language. In this chapter language proficiency was conceptualised and the impact that inadequate language proficiency has on ESL learners' learning experience was explored. The language acquisition process was also explored, in particular the importance of language proficiency across the curriculum. The relation between home language/mother tongue and second language proficiency was emphasised as it provides an explanation of the impact of mother tongue proficiency on second language acquisition. External barriers such as educators themselves, large classroom numbers, an inflexible curriculum, socio-economic factors, parent support and inadequate support structures, all of which influence learning in a second language were addressed as well (cf. 3.6).

6.2.4 Summary of Chapter Four

This chapter explained the research methodology and process. The research questions were presented and the explanatory mixed method was motivated as the choice of method. The chapter also illuminated the validity and reliability of the data collection process and the instruments used in the research study (cf. Sections 4.5.3 and 4.5.4). The role of the researcher was clarified (cf. Sections 4.5.5) and the population and sampling were explained (cf. Section 4.5.6).

6.2.5 Summary of Chapter Five

Chapter Five presented the data analysis and the researcher's interpretations of the findings obtained. The profiles of the educators who took part in the research study were provided. An in-depth analysis of the quantitative data was undertaken to establish the perceptions of educators teaching ESL learners with regard to English language proficiency, mother tongue proficiency, teaching and support skills, parent involvement and barriers to learning (cf. Section 5.2.3). The qualitative data was used to expand on the findings of the quantitative phase. Preset themes were used as determined from the literature review so as to ensure that all data was captured

correctly and there were no misinterpretations of the data (cf. Section 4.5.4.2). The preset themes used were English language proficiency, teaching and support skills of educators, parents and departmental support initiatives, mother tongue proficiency as a requirement for the academic success of ESL learners, choice of LOLT by parents and barriers to learning (cf. Section 5.3).

6.3 Conclusive results

The findings of this study will now be summarised under headings of the research questions.

6.3.1 Research question 1: What is the South African language scenario?

In South Africa there are eleven official languages which, according to the South African Constitution, should all hold equal weight and as such must be accommodated in the country's educational system (cf. Section 1.1). The policies that determine the language of education in South Africa are the Constitution, which declares that every individual has the right to use the language of their choice in order to participate in their cultural life (cf. Section 2.3.1); the National Education Policy Act of 1996, which empowers the Minister to determine the national policy for language in education, and which is guided by the promotion of multilingualism (cf. Section 2.3.2); the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, which empowers the schools' governing bodies to determine the language policy of the school (cf. Section 2.3.3); and the Language in Education policy (LiEP) (1997) which supports additive bilingualism and stipulates that parents can exercise their right to choose the language of teaching and learning (cf. Section 2.3.4). The government of South Africa promotes an additive approach to bilingualism, in which many learners are expected to learn in their mother tongue with the addition of a second language, which is usually English since it is regarded as the lingua franca of the world (cf. Section 2.4.1). However, in many schools ESL learners are being taught in English at Home Language (HL) level, because it is the LOLT of the school, a scenario evident in the current research study (cf. Section 5.3.3.4). This is a result of parents choosing English as the LOLT for their children, even if it is their second language. As a result, many schools are not practicing the additive approach to bilingualism. According to Barnes (2004) and Nel (2005), the mother tongue should be used until

learners have attained academic language proficiency in their mother tongue while learning a second language, i.e. additive bilingualism (cf. Section 2.4.4). Because of this, many learners are faced with trying to acquire English proficiency while already using English as the LOLT in all areas (Heugh, 2008) (cf. Section 2.4.5). Since language, cognitive skills and academic achievement are interwoven, limited English proficiency will affect the academic performance of the ESL learner (Theron & Nel, 2005) (cf. Section 3.2). The exposure of ESL learners to a learning environment in which they are primarily being taught in English is a situation that is supported by parents and teachers alike because they view English as the language of prestige (cf. Section 5.2.3.5.1). According to the findings of the present research study, many educators believe that although parents prefer their children to be taught in English (cf. Section 5.2.3.5.3), they do not facilitate advancement of the language at home by providing their children with the necessary support and exposure to the language (cf. Sections 5.3.4.1 and 2.4.1).

6.3.2 Research question 2: What is ESL learning?

ESL learning can be understood as learning through the English language, which is a second language to the learner (Cummins & Hornberger, 2008) (cf. Section 5.9).

ESL learning should be based on a strong foundation in the mother tongue before a second language is acquired. Heugh (2008), Manyike and Lemmer (2010), Hugo (2008) and Madiba (2010) assert that learners should not be expected to make the transition from their home language to learning in English before they have developed a strong foundational academic language in their mother tongue. The findings of this study have established that educators do not consider that a lack of mother tongue proficiency impacts on ESL learners' academic progress (cf. Section 5.2.3.3.2). However, for educators to be able to support ESL learners in acquiring proficient BICS and CALP, skills it is important for them to understand the significance of a well-established mother tongue (cf. Sections 5.2.3.3.4 and 5.3.3.3.2).

6.3.3 Research question 3: What is language proficiency?

In the context of coping in an academic environment, language proficiency in essence is the learners' ability to be competent in cognitively demanding and

context-reduced situations, without displaying dependence on situational cues but rather relying on their own knowledge of the language itself, i.e. CALP (cf. Section 3.2). According to the perceptions of many educators who took part in this study (cf. Section 5.2.3.2.5), ESL learners do not display language proficiency in the LOLT, namely English, when they enter the Intermediate Phase. The educators believe that ESL learners' BICS skills apparently surpass their CALP skills, and consequently they cannot cope with the language demands that they are faced with in the Intermediate Phase (cf. Sections 5.2.3.2.5 and 5.3.1.2). These findings are in agreement with those of Cummins and Yee-Fun (2007), who has assert that even if ESL learners have acquired conversational fluency and decoding skills in English, they are still a long way from an adequate language level performance in academic language proficiency (cf. Section 3.2). The findings of Heugh (2008) further support this theory that most South African learners never acquire the required level of proficiency in English to achieve academic success because they are unable to apply skills such as linguistic, conceptual and procedural knowledge related to the content area of the second language (cf. Section 2.4.5).

6.3.4 Research question 4: What are the barriers to learning that ESL learners experience and the perceptions of educators about these barriers?

This study found that there are many factors that influence ESL learners' learning experience as well as their ability to acquire an additional language, which in this case is their LOLT. The barriers, as perceived by educators, can be summarised as follow:

- Both educators and learners from the sampled schools have a broad range of home languages. This could result in many communication barriers between the teachers and the learners. Hill (2009) maintains that educators do not have the knowledge, as language practitioners, to accommodate the diverse language needs in the classroom (cf. Section 5.2.2). Another implication of the various home languages is that many of the educators and learners are English second language speakers, which could cause barriers to learning since the LOLT is English and the level of English proficiency could be a problem (cf. Section 5.3.2). Farahnaz (2011) states that the lack of confidence

that educators show in their level of English language proficiency may limit their ability to teach and mediate through the target language (cf. Section 3.6.1).

- Code switching was identified as an effective tool when teaching ESL learners. However, this could be a challenging practice at the sampled schools. There are such a wide range of home languages between the educators and the learners that comprehensive code switching would be difficult to apply.
- It is asserted by the educators who took part in this study that ESL learners in the Intermediate Phase have limited proficiency in the LOLT, which impacts negatively on their learning. It could result in learners not comprehending educators' explanations and instructions sufficiently, and also cause them to struggle to understand assessment tasks. As Heugh (2008) states, ESL learners' undeveloped language skills prevent them from mastering the concepts typical of a particular subject (cf. Section 2.4.5). Nel et al. (2012) add that a limited understanding of the LOLT makes it difficult for the ESL learner to understand the meaning of new and unfamiliar words, which is essential for the learning of new subject content (cf. Section 3.5).
- The speaking and listening skills (BICS) of ESL learners in their LOLT are judged to be better than their reading and writing skills (CALP). On an Intermediate Phase level, where the CALP skills become more demanding, this could affect their academic progress adversely since educators require learners to have the ability to read and write proficiently. Inadequacy in CALP, according to Cummins (1984), limits ESL learners' ability to tackle abstract concepts, which in turn leads to their being unable to successfully engage in more cognitively demanding activities in the Intermediate Phase (cf. Section 3.4).
- The Intermediate Phase educators who took part in this study did not seem to fully understand the importance of mother tongue proficiency, which ensures that ESL learners develop adequate academic proficiency in their second language, which is the LOLT. Nel et al. (2012) maintain that ESL learners who have normal linguistic milestones in their mother tongue and have well-

established academic, linguistic and cognitive skills can easily transfer these skills to the second language (cf. Section 3.4).

- Although the educators were qualified as educators, they generally did not feel that they had the knowledge and skills to support ESL learners who experience barriers to learning with regard to assessment and curriculum adaptations. According to Stoddart et al. (2002), most teachers, irrespective of years of teaching experience, are novices at teaching a second language in the context of subject instruction (cf. Section 1.1). It also seemed that the educators did not have a clear understanding of what support for these learners entails. It also appeared that they were not receiving support from the Department of Basic Education through support initiatives or strategies to help these learners. The educators felt that the Department placed the emphasis on the need to drive the curriculum content (cf. Section 5.3.2.3) without providing much support to educators who do not know how to support ESL learners (cf. Sections 5.3.2.2 and 5.2.3.4.3.8). One consequence of educators not being able to support ESL learners might be that many of these learners are wrongfully labeled as learners with learning disabilities.
- Parental support was clearly indicated as a significant barrier. The educators believed that parents themselves tend to struggle with English and consequently they do not further their children's proficiency in English at home, which in turn complicates the educators' task of ensuring that optimal learning takes place. This is echoed in the research findings of Lessing and Mahabeer (2007), who state that many ESL learners, when they come from a home environment that does not provide them with the necessary tools to communicate in English, cannot form a link between known and unknown knowledge because of their limited English vocabulary and knowledge that should serve as a foundation. Lessing and Mahabeer (2007) reiterate that ESL learners from low socio-economic circumstances can have poor literacy levels because of a lack of exposure to the English language (cf. Section 3.6.4).
- Many of the learners at the sampled schools come from challenging socio-economic circumstances with limited financial resources and poor nutritional care. Lessing and Mahabeer (2007), Halle et al. (2012) and Nel et al. (2012)

assert that not having sufficient financial resources could limit the ESL learner's exposure to reading material, and not having sufficient or appropriate nutritional care could affect their concentration. Both these factors could aggravate ESL learners' ability to learn optimally (cf. Section 3.6.4).

- In order for ESL learners to be able to access the curriculum effectively, their linguistic behaviour and communication styles need to be clearly understood and catered for by educators (Nel et al., 2012) (cf. Section 3.6.1). Large classroom numbers were also identified as an obstacle to address this. It seems that many educators find it difficult to manage the large classroom numbers and accommodate the ESL learner, which contributes to the inadequate support of these learners.

6.4 Limitations and possible shortcomings of the study

The fact that a small sample size was used in this research study precludes generalisation of the findings to a wider population of educators. Although there was 60% return rate of the questionnaires, some of the respondents failed to provide a response to some of the questions in the questionnaire.

6.5 Recommendations

- The Department of Basic Education and schools need to ensure that ESL learners are language proficient at a level that allows them to function at CALP level before they enter the Intermediate Phase.
- Additive bilingualism must be encouraged, especially in the early years of schooling, where the mother tongue is used as the LOLT and English is learned additionally. However, it is important that the learners' BICS and CALP skills in English should be sufficiently developed to prevent them from experiencing barriers to learning when English becomes the LOLT in the Intermediate Phase.
- Educators across the curriculum need to acquire skills to support ESL learners to become proficient in subject language.

- There must be awareness of the need for mother tongue proficiency and the impact it has on second language acquisition.
- Although language choice is the parents' prerogative, the Department of Basic Education needs to create greater awareness among parents and educators that mother tongue proficiency is essential for learners to acquire competency in English as the LOLT in order for them to achieve academically.
- The Department and schools need to create awareness among parents of the importance of providing support and exposure to the English language at home.
- The Department of Basic Education must rethink the curriculum content so that provision can be made for the ESL learner who is experiencing barriers in the Intermediate Phase.

6.6 Recommendations for further research

In view of the fact that the present research study's scope was limited to the perceptions of a small sample of educators about the barriers experienced by ESL learners in the Intermediate Phase, the following topics are recommended for further research:

- Further research by higher education institutions to determine the extent to which they equip educators to provide support for ESL learners who are experiencing barriers to learning, especially when they enter the Intermediate Phase.
- Further research by higher education institutions to introduce training curriculums where the acquiring of indigenous languages is required.
- Since the present research study was limited to the Lenasia area only, further research can be done in other districts in order to obtain a clearer picture of the barriers that ESL Intermediate learners are faced with.
- Further research on educators' English proficiency who are teaching ESL learners.

- Further research on the extent to which content educators are equipped to identify the language barriers of an ESL learner and are able to provide the relevant support.

6.7 Conclusion

This research study has explored the perceptions of Intermediate Phase educators regarding the barriers to learning that ESL learners experience. It is obvious that these educators are aware that many barriers to learning exist that could prevent ESL learners from progressing academically. However, it seems that they do not have the knowledge and skills to support these learners. As a consequence, these learners' achievement of their optimal academic potential could continue to be a challenge for them.

APPENDIX A

NUMBER: _____



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT
VAAL TRIANGLE CAMPUS

Title: Intermediate Phase educators' perception about the barriers to learning that occur in an ESL classroom

Dear Participant,

You are hereby cordially invited to participate in the following research project:

Intermediate Phase educators' perception about the barriers to learning that occur in an ESL classroom

The main purpose of this project is to establish the perceptions of an Intermediate Phase educator about the barriers to learning that occur in an ESL (English Second Language) classroom. The main aim of the study is to gain some clarity of the perceptions of Intermediate Phase educators regarding the challenges of having learners learn in their second language in their classroom. Feedback gained from this research study could inform future policies, development and support for educators teaching ESL learners.

Participation will require you to complete a self-structured questionnaire in which basic questions related to your knowledge and experiences regarding the teaching of ESL learners in the Intermediate Phase will be included. Participation will also include participation in a semi-structured interview that will take place at a later stage. Teachers will be selected through the use of purposive sampling technique for participation in this interview. Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw your participation at any time.

Confidentiality: Each participant will receive a participation number at the commencement of the research project that will serve as reference throughout the period of participation; however, your name and address will be required for the

follow-up semi-structured interview, which will be used strictly for access purposes and will not be used as quoted sources. This is to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

Please be assured that the information obtained from the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews will be held in safekeeping, for access by the project researchers only.

No direct benefits will accrue and no compensation will be paid to participants for their participation in the project. The results of this research project will be reported to the Department of Education, and will be submitted for publication in accredited journals.

This research project has been submitted to the North-West University's Ethics Committee and been approved.

Should you have any queries regarding this research project, please contact Mrs Devaranie Latchman at 083 425 3464 or Professor Mirna Nel at 016 910 3095 (during office hours).

Consent:

I _____ have read the above-mentioned and understand the nature of my participation in this research project and hereby agree to participate.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX B



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT
VAAL TRIANGLE CAMPUS

Dear Teacher

I am a Master's student in Learning Support at the Vaal Triangle Campus, North-West University. It will be greatly appreciated if you would complete all the questions on this questionnaire. You are welcome to add a comment to some questions. All the information gained will remain strictly confidential and will only be used for research purposes, so please ensure that your response is honest at all times.

Kind regards

Mrs D Latchman

A. Biographical Details

Please complete the following biographical details:

1. School Name: _____
2. Name and Surname: _____
3. Residential Address: _____
4. Years of teaching experience in the Intermediate Phase:

5. Please indicate the subjects that you are teaching: _____
6. Please indicate the grades you teach: _____
7. Please indicate your own home language/s:

8. Please indicate your teaching qualifications:

9. Please indicate the home languages of the learners that you teach. (Tick with an x; you may tick more than one)

English	Afrikaans	Tshivenda	Xitsonga	Sepedi	IsiNdebele
Sesotho	isiXhosa	Setswana	isiZulu	Siswati	
Other:					

Please read the following questions carefully and only tick one option. It would be appreciated if you could add a motivation for your answer.

10. When ESL learners enter the Intermediate Phase their English proficiency is adequate to be able to learn in English.

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	----------	-------	-------------------

Comment: _____

11. ESL learners are proficient in their home language when they enter the Intermediate Phase

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	----------	-------	-------------------

Comment: _____

12. An ESL learner's lack of proficiency in his/her mother tongue contributes to their lack of academic progress.

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	----------	-------	-------------------

Comment: _____

13. ESL learners' English speaking skills are better than their writing and reading skills when they enter the Intermediate Phase.

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	----------	-------	-------------------

Comment: _____

14. ESL learners' English writing and reading skills are adequate when they enter the Intermediate Phase

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	----------	-------	-------------------

Comment: _____

15. I can teach ESL learners who are not English language proficient.

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	----------	-------	-------------------

Comment: _____

16. English language teachers in the Intermediate Phase are adequately trained to teach ESL learners how to speak, read and write in English.

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	----------	-------	-------------------

Comment: _____

17. It is difficult for me to support ESL learners when they experience barriers to learning.

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	----------	-------	-------------------

Comment: _____

18. I have the necessary knowledge and skills required to support ESL learners who experience barriers to learning.

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	----------	-------	-------------------

Comment: _____

19. I know strategies to adapt the curriculum to assist ESL learners in the classroom.

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	----------	-------	-------------------

Comment: _____

20. I know strategies to adapt assessment to assist ESL learners in the classroom.

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	----------	-------	-------------------

Comment: _____

21. Other content area teachers can support ESL learners to understand their subjects' concepts.

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	----------	-------	-------------------

Comment: _____

22. Code switching is an effective tool when teaching ESL learners.

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	----------	-------	-------------------

Comment: _____

23. ESL learners should be proficient in their mother tongue before they learn an additional language.

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	----------	-------	-------------------

Comment: _____

24. Most parents of children in your school prefer that their children learn in English.

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	----------	-------	-------------------

Comment: _____

25. The parents of ESL learners are actively involved in supporting their children to be proficient in English.

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	----------	-------	-------------------

Comment: _____

26. Intermediate Phase educators are adequately equipped to assist ESL learners who are experiencing linguistic barriers to acquire the necessary linguistic tools (cognitive, academic and language skills) needed to access the academic curriculum.

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	----------	-------	-------------------

Comment: _____

27. What do you think are the main causes of barriers to learning of ESL learners?
 (Please tick, you may tick more than one)

	Comment
<p>Language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ability to perceive word sounds - the ability to understand the structure of language and its grammar - the ability to understand vocabulary and meaning; acquisition of reading skills 	
<p>Social environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - conflict between home and school culture 	
<p>Economic factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - nutritional deficiencies due to lack of financial resources 	
<p>Lack of educational resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - insufficient classroom support due large learner numbers as well as insufficient academic resources to assist ESL learners 	

<p>Cognitive ability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - neurological disorders in basic psychological processes which manifest in acquisition difficulties in speaking, reading and writing skills 	
<p>Familial causes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lack of parental involvement - support with language acquisition - insufficient provision of opportunities with additional exposure, at home, to the English language 	
<p>Other:</p>	

28. Departmental support initiatives are productive in addressing the barriers experienced by ESL learners.

Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	----------	-------	-------------------

Please describe these support initiatives:



Title: Intermediate Phase educators' perceptions about the barriers to learning that occur in an ESL classroom

MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Research has revealed the importance of mother tongue instruction and the impact that proficiency in the mother tongue has on the ability to competently acquire language proficiency in an additional language. Since the education policy stipulates the promotion and maintenance of an additive approach to bilingualism, it is important that we ascertain at what stage our ESL learners are really language proficient in order for them to cope with the language demands of our curriculum, especially in the Intermediate Phase. Bearing in mind the increase in the failure rate of ESL learners as well as their inability to read when they enter the Intermediate Phase, my study is directed at establishing the educators' perceptions of their efficacy when dealing with ESL learners who enter the Intermediate Phase as well as the barriers to learning that these learners are experiencing and the impact that second language acquisition has on an ESL learner's academic success. My findings will lead to a better understanding of ESL learners in the Intermediate Phase so as to ensure that their learning experience is a positive one.

This research project has been submitted to the North-West University's Ethics Committee and has been approved. The data collection process will not infringe on the contact time of learners.

Should you have any queries regarding this research project, please contact Professor Mirna Nel at 016 910 3095 (during office hours).

Consent:

I, _____, the Principal of _____,
have read the above-mentioned and understand the nature of the educators'
participation in this research project and hereby agree that my school participates in
the study.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX D

NUMBER: _____



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT
VAAL TRIANGLE CAMPUS

Themes

- **Language proficiency**
- **Support from language and content teachers, the Department of Education**
- **Mother tongue instruction**
- **Language choice**

Qualitative Phase

Interview Schedule

- What is your understanding of being language proficient?
- What do you think could be the underlying cause/s of poor proficiency in the English language?
- What is your view on mother tongue instruction and its influence on second language acquisition?
- What do you understand about an additive approach to bilingualism? How do you feel about this approach?

- Do you think that ESL learners should rather be taught in their mother tongue for a longer period rather than only in the Foundation Phase? Why?
- What is your view on parents being able to make a choice about the language that their children should be taught in?
- What is your perspective on content teachers also being language teachers?
- What is your view on ESL learners' proficiency level of their mother tongue?
- Do you think that the ESL learner can cope with the language demands of the LOLT in the Intermediate Phase?
- Which intrinsic and extrinsic barriers to learning do you feel influence the ESL learner's academic success?
- What is your view on an Intermediate Phase educator's skills in assessing, diagnosing and supporting ESL learners with language barriers?
- What is your view regarding remediation and support for ESL learners in the Intermediate Phase? Are necessary procedures in place? And if they are in place, tell me about them.
- Do you feel that you are adequately trained to deal with the barriers that ESL learners experience?

APPENDIX E



GAUTENG PROVINCE

Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

For administrative use:
Reference no: D2014 / 361

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	14 February 2014
Validity of Research Approval:	14 February to 3 October 2014
Name of Researcher:	Latchman D.
Address of Researcher:	79 Hydrangea Avenue Lenasia Extension 2 1829
Telephone Number:	011 855 9982 / 083 425 3464
Fax Number:	011 857 1354
Email address:	devaraniel@gmail.com
Research Topic:	Intermediate Phase educators' perceptions about the barriers to learning that occur in an ESL classroom
Number and type of schools:	FOUR Primary Schools
District/s/HO	Johannesburg Central and Johannesburg South

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

Makhado
2014/02/17

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Knowledge Management and Research

9th Floor, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2001
P.O. Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2000 Tel: (011) 355 0506
Email: David.Makhado@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.ggg.gov.za

APPENDIX F



PO Box 1174, Vanderbijlpark
South Africa, 1900

Tel: 016 910-3111
Fax: 016 910-3116
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Educational Sciences
Tel: 0169103095
Fax: 016910378
Email: Mirna.Nel@nwu.ac.za

Mrs Latchman

24 October 2014

Ethics approval

Hereby an extract from the Ethics committee's minutes whereby approval for your study has been granted:

5.1 The following application for ethics clearance can be removed from the action list since all outstanding issues have been resolved:

FH-BE-2013-0017

Candidate: D Latchman

Supervisor: Prof M Nel

Title: Intermediate Phase educators' perception about the barriers to learning that occur in an ESL classroom.

Yours sincerely

Prof Mirna Nel

Associate Professor



9 Dec 2013

Dear Prof M Nel,

ETHICS CLEARANCE APPROVED

This letter serves to indicate that your ethics application was approved in principle by the VTC Ethics Sub-Committee for Basic and Educational Sciences of the Faculty of Humanities:

Faculty application number: FH-BE-2013-0017

Project Leader: Prof M Nel

Applicant: D Latchman

Project title: Intermediate Phase educators' perception about the barriers to learning that occur in an ESL-classroom

Meeting date: 28 Nov 2013

Kindly remember to forward outstanding documents (if applicable) to the chairperson of the ethics sub-committee. In the case of post graduate research, please remember to submit your proposal to Ms. D. Claasens (Ext: 103441) for approval and title registration by the Faculty Board.

The VTC Ethics Sub-Committee wishes you well with your research project.

Yours sincerely



Chrizanne van Eeden

Chair: VTC Ethics Sub-Committee: Basic and Educational Sciences.

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