

Promoting oral proficiency through art-making in Grade R

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DECLARATION

I the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Signature

12 December 2016

PREFACE

This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Masters of Education at the University of North-West. The research described herein was conducted under the supervision of Prof. J.R. Botha, Dr. A. Klopper, and Mrs. H.F. Victor at the Faculty of Education and training, School for Teacher Education and Training, North-West University, Potchefstroom, between March 2012 and December 2016.

This work is to the best of my knowledge original, except where acknowledgements and references are made to previous work. Neither this nor any substantially similar dissertations have been or is being submitted for any other degree diploma or other qualifications at any other university.

Sanja van Zyl

12 December 2016

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Finally, I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to my family for their love, unfailing encouragement and support. To my friends and to the people I met during my time in Potchefstroom and Klerksdorp, you will always live in the memories created while completing this study. Special thanks go to my mother who not only gave her love and understanding in abundance, but was always willing to help with even the most daunting tasks. Thank you for the example of hard work set by you and my father. You both truly encouraged me to reach for the stars.

I dedicate this dissertation to my sister Alicia. You will live and remain for ever beautiful in our hearts. The lives you have filled with love and laughter will remain blessed with the memories you helped to create.

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ABSTRACT

The ability to communicate (including speaking and listening) is an essential life skill for all learners, as it underpins a learner's social, emotional and intellectual development. However, Grade R learners may not always be able to effectively understand and/or speak the language used at school for classroom instruction.

This language used for classroom instruction is called the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT), and is of crucial importance to a learner's success in many areas. The LoLT involves more than the ability to communicate in everyday conversational contexts, but is specifically related to the use of language for academic purposes.

In South Africa, monolingualism is the exception rather than the norm (Olivier, Anthonissen, & Southwood, 2010). This poses several challenges to parents and teachers in selecting and using a LoLT in educational programmes (Olivier et al., 2010; South Africa, 2003). Even though mother-tongue education is seen as an educationally sound policy, the majority of South Africans prefer English and not their home language as LoLT (South Africa, 2003). A result of this choice is that many English Second Language (ESL) learners experience barriers to learning because of limited English proficiency. This may significantly delay or sometimes even permanently impede learners' academic development (De Witt, Lessing, & Dicker, 1998). It is therefore important that learners can function in the LoLT if they are to master the skills necessary to proceed to the next level or Grade.

When taking the above into consideration, a Grade R language programme which intends to incorporate oral proficiency, and specifically vocabulary enrichment, is essential. Meaningful vocabulary instruction should be facilitated, especially for learners from families where English proficiency is an issue (Hay & Fielding-Barnsley, 2007; Marvin & Wright, 1997; Schiff-Myers, Djukic, McGovern-Lawler, & Peres, 1993). The informal nature of the Grade R classroom assists in the promotion of oral proficiency and especially vocabulary enrichment through various learning activities.

These learning activities include art-making, which may promote acquisition of vocabulary. During these activities, learners may be encouraged to express themselves and to communicate freely. The process of art-making itself helps to develop cognitive skills that aid in symbolic thinking (Camnizer, 2009; Read, 2008; Shumaker, 2009).

Taking the above into consideration, it may be said that when young learners take part in art-marking activities, various senses are involved, as is the case with language activities. Participating in art-based lesson plans that incorporate language skills may appeal to various senses and learning styles, with the added possibility of enhancing oral proficiency (Read, 2008). In this study, various ways in which art-making can be utilised to promote oral proficiency, with specific reference to vocabulary enrichment, were investigated.

Keywords: art-making, Grade R, English Second Language, vocabulary, language skills, oral proficiency

OPSOMMING

Die vermoë om te kommunikeer (praat en luister inkluis) is 'n noodsaaklike lewensvaardigheid vir alle leerders, aangesien dit die grondslag lê vir 'n leerder se sosiale, emosionele en intellektuele ontwikkeling. Graad R-leerders is egter nie altyd in staat om die taal wat tydens onderrig gebruik word, effektief te verstaan en/of te praat nie.

Hierdie taal wat vir klaskameronderrig gebruik word, staan bekend as die Taal van Onderrig en Leer (TOL) en dit is van kardinale belang sodat 'n leerder sukses op verskeie gebiede kan behaal. Die TOL behels meer as die vermoë om in die alledaagse gesprekke te kommunikeer, maar het spesifieke betrekking tot taalgebruik vir akademiese doeleindes.

In Suid-Afrika is eentaligheid die uitsondering eerder as die norm (Olivier et al., 2010; South Africa, 2003). Dit bring 'n hele paar uitdagings aan ouers en onderwysers in die keuse en gebruik van 'n taal van onderrig en leer in opvoedkundige programme (Olivier et al., 2010). Alhoewel moedertaalonderrig as 'n gesonde opvoedkundige beleid beskou word, verkies die meerderheid Suid-Afrikaners Engels as TOL en nie hulle huistaal nie (South Africa, 2003). Hierdie keuse beteken dat Engels Tweede Taal (ETT) leerders hindernisse tot leer ervaar weens beperkte taalvaardigheid in Engels. Dit kan die akademiese ontwikkeling van leerders vertraag of selfs permanent belemmer (De Witt et al., 1998). Dit is dus belangrik dat leerders in staat is om in die TOL te funksioneer indien hulle die vaardighede gaan bemeester wat nodig is om na die volgende vlak of graad te gaan.

Wanneer die bogenoemde in ag geneem word, is dit duidelik dat 'n Graad R-taalprogram wat van voorneme is om mondelinge vaardigheid en spesifiek woordeskatverryking te inkorporeer, noodsaaklik is. Betekenisvolle woordeskatonderrig behoort gefasiliteer te word, veral vir leerders uit gesinne waar Engelse taalvaardigheid 'n kwessie is (Hay & Fielding-Barnsley, 2007; Marvin & Wright, 1997; Schiff-Myers, Djukic, McGovern-Lawler, & Peres, 1993). Die informele aard van die Graad R-klaskamer help met die bevordering van mondelinge vaardigheid en veral woordeskatverryking deur middel van verskeie leeraktiwiteite.

Een van die maniere waarop mondelinge vaardigheid en spesifiek woordeskat bevorder kan word, is deur middel van die gebruik van kunsskepping-aktiwiteite. Tydens hierdie aktiwiteite kan leerders aangemoedig word om hulself verbaal uit te druk en om vrylik te kommunikeer. Die proses van kunsskepping help met die ontwikkeling van kognitiewe vaardighede wat simboliese denke fasiliteer (Camnizer, 2009; Read, 2008; Shumaker, 2009).

Met inagneming van die bogenoemde, kan dit gesê word dat wanneer jong leerders aan kunsskeppings-aktiwiteite deelneem, verskeie sintuie betrokke is, net soos in die geval van taalaktiwiteite. Deelname aan kunsgebaseerde leerplanne wat taalvaardigheid inkorporeer kan verskillende sintuie en leerstyle akkommodeer, met die bykomende moontlikheid van die verbetering in verbale vaardigheid (Read, 2008). In hierdie studie is verskeie maniere ondersoek waarop kunsskeppings-aktiwiteite gebruik kan word om verbale vaardigheid te bevorder, met spesifieke verwysing na woordeskatverryking.

Sleutelwoorde: kunsskepping, Graad R, Engels tweedetaal, woordeskat, taalvaardighede, mondelinge vaardighede

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND MOTIVATION

During my time as a Grade R teacher at a private school in Klerksdorp, North West Province, it became apparent that most of the learners in my classroom were not receiving education in their mother tongue. This led to learners not understanding instructions, having difficulty communicating with peers who are not speaking the same language, and ineffective teaching in the daily learning programme. A lot of valuable instruction time was lost as learners were not participating due to a lack of oral proficiency and especially insufficient vocabulary knowledge. The ability to communicate (including speaking and listening) is an essential life skill for all learners as it underpins a learner's social, emotional, and intellectual development. As stated in Jarman (2009, p. 4): "The development and use of communication and language is at the heart of young learners' learning."

Progress has been made by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) in improving access to Early Childhood Development (ECD) provision, especially for Grade R learners (South Africa, 2008d). The initiative by the DBE to include Grade R in the General Education and Training Band suggests the importance of Grade R in laying a foundation for future learning. Therefore, Grade R teachers are expected to create a foundation on which learners can build future literacy skills (South Africa, 2003).

Grade R learners entering the first year of the Foundation Phase are generally able to understand and/or speak their mother tongue (South Africa, 2003). Most learners have also mastered the basic language structures possible in their mother tongue. In addition to using basic mother tongue language patterns, most Grade R learners also have a vocabulary of more or less three thousand mother-tongue words (Brewer, 2007). Nevertheless, they may not always be able to effectively understand and/or speak the language used at school for classroom instruction.

The language used for classroom instruction is called the "Language of Learning and Teaching" (LoLT) and is of crucial importance to a learner's success in many areas (Bashir, Conte, & Heerde, 2008; Hoff, 2005; Owens, 2004; Van Rooyen & Jordaan, 2009). The LoLT involves more than the ability to communicate in everyday conversational contexts, but relates specifically to the use of language for academic purposes. As Westby (1994, p. 341) aptly states: "In the pre-school years, learners learn to talk but as they move into school they talk to learn. In academic tasks, language is used in the service of thought."

The South African government has devoted a great deal of attention to the importance of ECD since 1994. As stated by the DBE, pre-primary education plays an important role in the development of young learners (South Africa, 2008a, 2008d). During the last two decades, there has been an increased awareness of the critical importance of early interventions worldwide. The United Nations Learners' Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) are among some of the international agencies that highlight the importance of a stimulating early childhood environment in which the foundation for later physical, psychological and social development can be laid (Guerrera, 2015; Murray & Newby, 2012; Wang, Norris, & Bero, 2015). Progress has been made by the DBE in improving access to ECD provision, especially for Grade R learners (South Africa, 2008d). The initiative by the Department of Basic Education to include Grade R in the General Education and Training Band suggests the importance of Grade R in laying a foundation for future learning. Therefore, Grade R teachers are expected to create a foundation on which learners can build future literacy skills (South Africa, 2003).

1.2 AIM OF THE STUDY

One of the ways in which oral proficiency, and specifically vocabulary, can be promoted, is by using art-making to encourage learners to express themselves and to communicate freely. The process of art-making itself helps to develop cognitive skills that aid in symbolic thinking (Camnizer, 2009; Read, 2008; Shumaker, 2009).

According to Shumaker (2009), visual art-making should be a source of enjoyment, inspiration, and most importantly, a tool for understanding and thinking. This has, in some respects, modified the function of art-making in education from one of expressive enjoyment to a thinking and learning tool.

It has become increasingly clear that art-making can offer many different benefits for learners (Darby & Catterall, 1994; Shumaker, 2009). These benefits include, but are not limited to, the teaching of diversity, creating metacognitive thinkers, and increasing learner achievement. In this study, various art-making activities were utilised to promote oral proficiency with specific focus on vocabulary enrichment.

Taking the above into consideration, visual art may also be perceived as a language. In addition to the above-stated benefits of art-making, the idea of visual art as a language underlines the notion of it as a form of communication, with the implication that visual art and alphabetisation can nurture each other (Camnizer, 2009; Shumaker, 2009). When young learners take part in art-making, various senses are involved, as is the case with language activities (Camnizer, 2009; Read, 2008). During painting, a learner can, for instance, smell the paint, see the colours, feel the

texture, listen to instructions, and communicate his¹ feelings in language as well as through the visual product. Participating in art-based lesson plans that incorporate language skills may appeal to various senses and learning styles, with the added possibility of enhancing oral proficiency (Read, 2008).

In this study, various art-making activities were utilised to promote oral proficiency, with specific focus on vocabulary enrichment. The various terms relevant to the study will be clarified next.

1.3 CLARIFICATION OF TERMINOLOGY

1.3.1 Aesthetic development

The process by which visual art is created, appreciated and evaluated is more significant than the achievements of a single learner. Therefore, learners' artwork will not be used to determine their capabilities (mental, physical or emotional). The art-making components and functions are largely circumstantial (Shumaker, 2009). Furthermore, many of the benefits that come from art-making are qualitative in nature (Darby & Catterall, 1994; Jenson, 2001; Shumaker, 2009).

1.3.2 Art viewing

Art experiences for young learners include activities designed to introduce learners to visual works of art that are high quality and developmentally appropriate in both content and presentation (Danko-McGhee, 2006; Eckhoff, 2008; Koroscik, 2001)

1.3.3 Art-making

Within the context of the Foundation Phase, art-making indicates the process of learners making visual art in a safe and tranquil setting, with the process and not the result as the focus of the learning experience (Camnizer, 2009; Kamii & De Vries, 1993; Read, 2008; Taylor, 2010). Learners' art-making will be instrumental in the instigation of conversation to encourage learners to communicate in the LoLT in an additional setting. The focus of this study was to improve learners' oral proficiency regardless of their aptitude for language, cognitive ability, or any other physical or psychological attributions.

¹ There is a tendency in literature to use male pronouns to refer to both male and female participants. This will also be applicable in this study and will not aim to include or exclude either sex through the use of male pronouns.

1.3.4 Emergent literacy skills

Emergent literacy is the overall process of learning to read and write in a natural, self-discovery manner. This process starts at birth and can continue through the preschool years into the elementary years with proper support (Richgels, 2003). Learners then continue learning these skills by being taught in most cases in a conventional manner. Literacy itself encompasses the skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing (Beaty, 2009). In particular, the role of vocabulary acquisition, being a component of oral proficiency, will be linked with speaking as an emergent literacy skill.

1.3.5 English Second Language

Due to the tendency to use the term English Second Language (ESL) learners in literature, ESL learners will also be used to refer to such learners in this study (De Vries, 2006; Hay & Fielding-Barnsley, 2007; Morgan & Meier, 2008; Nel, 2005; Saada-Robert, 2004). English Second Language (ESL) refers to English being used as the LoLT in cases where English is not the mother tongue of the learner. English Second Language (ESL) is not a school subject (e.g. First Additional Language), but refers solely to English as medium of instruction for teaching and learning.

1.3.6 Grade R learners

Grade R is also known as the Reception Year (South Africa, 2003). It refers to the Foundation Phase grade preceding Grade 1. The appropriate age for Grade R learners is between the ages of 5 and 6 (South Africa, 2001, 2003). Conversely, in some cases where learning readiness was or is an issue, learners may have already turned seven in the year that they are attending Grade R. According to the South African Schools Act of 1996 (South Africa, 1996b), schooling is compulsory for all South Africans from the age of seven (Grade 1) to the age of 15, or the completion of Grade 9. In spite of this, White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Education established a target of universal access to Early Childhood Development (ECD), and specifically to a pre-Grade 1 Reception Year (South Africa, 2001).

1.3.7 Language of learning and teaching

The Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) refers to the language used for classroom instruction (Bashir et al., 2008; De Wet, 2002; Owens, 2004). This means that learners learn school subjects, for instance mathematics, science and history, through the LoLT as determined by the specific school's language policy.

1.3.8 Oral proficiency

Oral proficiency includes the ability to communicate verbally in a functional and accurate way in the target language (Baker, 2008). Oral language proficiency refers to knowledge or use of specific aspects of oral language, including phonology, vocabulary, morphology, grammar, and discourse domains. It encompasses skills in both comprehension and expression (Pray & Jiménez, 2009). As stated by Stein (1999), learners need much encouragement and plenty of opportunities to develop their oral proficiency. The focus of this study was to encourage learners to speak more in an attempt to promote oral proficiency. This was done by giving learners more opportunities for verbal communication during safe and calm art-making activities. Learners' cognitive abilities, their intellectual capabilities, or the influence of verbal and nonverbal intelligence, were not mentioned.

1.3.9 Orthography

Orthography is the art of writing words with the proper letters consistent with standard usage in a specific language. For this study, orthography refers to the representation of the sounds of the English language by means of written or printed symbols (Goodwin, August, & Calderon, 2015; Hoff, 2005; Kim, 2016).

1.3.10 School-related themes

School-related themes indicate the specific topic being discussed in the Grade R structured activities. For instance, when the theme of the week is "The Doctor", the theme table will display different objects that are used by doctors (stethoscope, bandages, medicine, etcetera) (South Africa, 2003, 2008a, 2008b).

1.3.11 Teacher-guided activities

This refers to activities where the teacher gives step-by-step instructions to produce a product that resembles her completed example as closely as possible (Kao, 2011; Olivier, Anthonissen, & Southwood, 2010; Ramatlana & Makonye, 2012).

1.3.12 Vocabulary

Oral proficiency is a multidimensional construct which is difficult to measure (Pray & Jiménez, 2009). Therefore, particular attention will be given to vocabulary as a more measurable component of oral proficiency. The *Oxford Dictionary* defines vocabulary as a noun describing the body of words used in a language, or as the body of words known to an individual learner

(Stevenson, 2010). Vocabulary, in the context of this study, can be described as the list of English words known and correctly used by Grade R learners.

1.4 LITERATURE OVERVIEW

This study focuses on giving Grade R ESL learners the opportunity to promote their oral proficiency during safe and enjoyable art-making activities. This will be achieved by expanding vocabulary teaching and learning opportunities through art-making activities. The study will also explore how art-making activities can be used to enrich vocabulary to promote oral proficiency in Grade R. Very little research has been done to investigate the utilisation of visual art in the promotion of oral proficiency.

In terms of Section 29(1) of the Constitution of South Africa (South Africa, 1996a), everyone has the right to basic education. This right to basic education can only be realised if learners can understand what is being taught in the classroom to achieve and develop to their full potential. Quality education in the early childhood years is beneficial for learners' growth and development through their entire lives (South Africa, 2009).

Several studies have indicated that South African learners perform below average with regard to literacy skills. These studies include the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (Centre of Evaluation and Assessment, 2006), as well as the report on the Quality of Primary School Inputs in South Africa (Moloi & Chetty, 2011). A study by the DBE to determine the literacy skills of Grade 3 learners concluded that only 61% of tested learners are capable of reading and writing at the age-appropriate level (Centre of Evaluation and Assessment, 2006). As stated by several studies, emergent literacy skills in Grade R form the basis for future cognitive competence (Heppner, 2016; Olivier et al., 2010; South Africa, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2008c, 2011).

1.4.1 Vocabulary as a component of oral proficiency

Taking the above-mentioned into consideration, it is important to take note of the importance of learners' language ability and especially their vocabulary as a component of oral proficiency.

A learner with insufficient vocabulary might have oral proficiency problems, which may result in difficulty getting along with other learners, less confidence to connect, and an inability to form positive relations with peers (Boudreau & Hedberg, 1999; Brewer, 2007; South Africa, 2001). The social environment is almost entirely responsible for higher cognitive processes like language, memory and abstract thinking (Dimitriads & Kamberelis, 2006). Vygotsky maintained that the idea of symbolic interaction is fundamental to effective social interaction (Dimitriads & Kamberelis,

2006). Language and other semiotic resources (e.g. gestures and pictures) are used as interactions within the context of the social environment (Dimitriads & Kamberelis, 2006).

A learner with insufficient oral proficiency will also have difficulty recognising and labelling his feelings, and lacks skills necessary to express his needs, desires and interests in a confident manner, which may lead to frustration (Brewer, 2007; Ervin-Tripp, 2009).

Vocabulary instruction is even more important where the LoLT differs from the mother tongue, because learners may not be able to understand the teacher's instructions, particularly at the beginning weeks and months of Grade R (Pelletier, 1999). English Second Language (ESL) learners entering school with poor oral vocabulary skills may be even more disadvantaged (Morgan & Meier, 2008). If ESL learners have a limited vocabulary of the LoLT, valuable classroom instruction may be lost, especially with regard to reading readiness (Armbruster & Osborn, 2001; Cambourne & Brown, 1990). It is as if the acquisition of First Additional Language vocabulary seems to be a far more challenging task than the acquisition of mother tongue vocabulary.

Vocabulary is not only important for verbal communication, but also for reading with understanding (McKenna & Stahl, 2003; Sameuls, 1979; South Africa, 2003). A report by the National Reading Panel (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002) is supported by the findings of Brewer (2007), Butler, Marsh, Sheppard, and Sheppard (1885), and Wilde and Sage (2007), and it links with the above-mentioned. It is suggested that vocabulary instruction should be appropriate for the age and ability of the reader so as to lead to optimal gains in reading comprehension.

In accordance with this, the National Reading Panel (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002) states that direct vocabulary instruction aids reading comprehension. Armbruster and Osborn (2001) state that teaching specific words before reading, aids both vocabulary learning and reading comprehension. It also supports extended instruction that promotes active engagement with vocabulary and improves the learning of words.

Taking the above-mentioned into consideration, it is important to take note of the importance of learners' language ability, and especially their vocabulary, as a component of oral proficiency.

1.4.2 Vocabulary instruction for English Second Language (ESL) learners

The DBE underpins this view and indicates that in order to teach explicit vocabulary, teachers need to explain or demonstrate the meaning of words (South Africa, 2008a, 2008c). They should also give examples of the word in a sentence, encourage learners to use the word orally (by saying it aloud) in sentences of their own, and display the new words and the meanings of the words on a word wall or a chart.

Teachers should follow up on vocabulary activities to ensure that learners get ample opportunity to practise using their new words. Armbruster and Osborn (2001) indicated that specific word instruction, or teaching individual words, can deepen learners' knowledge of the meaning of words.

While much is known about the importance of vocabulary to succeed in reading, little research exists regarding the best methods or combinations of methods of vocabulary instruction, the measurement of vocabulary growth and its relation to instruction methods (Alderson, 2005). The best means of achieving good vocabulary learning is also still unclear, in part because it depends on a wide variety of factors (Alderson, 2005; Schmitt, 2008). Pelletier (1999) asserts that there is considerable speculation in literature about the ways in which learners acquire vocabulary. These speculations range from broad-based theories of intellectual development, such as those of Piaget and Vygotsky, and information processing, which address the structure of cognitive development, to minute process theories of cognition, such as connectionism or parallel distributed processing (Fox & Riconscente, 2016; Kirch, 2014; Onchwari, Onchwari, & Keengwe, 2016; Pelletier, 1999; Piaget, 2011). Research indicates that dependence on a single vocabulary instruction method will not result in optimal learning, but that various instruction methods should be used in a balanced way to promote optimal learning (Armbruster & Osborn, 2001; Hart & Risley, 1999; Weizman & Snow, 2001).

1.4.3 Combining approaches to vocabulary teaching and learning

Participating in art-making programmes can enhance learners' literacy skills directly and indirectly. Arts in the early years, if done purposefully, can be a surplus of literary experiences for the learner (Camnizer, 2009; Eisner, 1998; Hart & Risley, 1999; Jenson, 2001; Klein, 1991; Read, 2008; Shumaker, 2009; Winters, 2004). For instance, a learner will pick up a crayon to scribble with long before he picks up a pencil to write. These scribbles are not just random marks on a paper (Taylor, 2010; Wachowiak & Clements, 2001). Young learners are exploring cause and effect, working on fine motor skills (i.e. the muscles that help them to hold increasingly more delicate/complex objects and control them accurately), as well as hand-eye coordination (Taylor, 2010). Secondly, visual art can encourage observation. Childhood visual art education can help to train learners to observe the beauty around them and to not take it all for granted. The

observational aspect of visual art is important, since this can help learners use words, adjectives and nouns to describe what they see (Camnizer, 2009; Cathy, 2003; Jenson, 2001; Klein, 1991; Koroscik, 2001; Koster, 2009; McNiff, 1986). It can, among other things, encourage the identification of colours and reinforce the names of shapes (Aerila & Rönkkö, 2015; Ahlskog-Björkman & Björklund, 2016; Brown, Benedett, & Armistead, 2010; Camnizer, 2009).

For very young learners, art-making is also a sensory exploration activity. They enjoy the feeling of a crayon moving across paper and seeing a blob of coloured paint grow larger. Kamii and De Vries (1993) argued that exploring materials in visual art activities is very important because it is through exploration that learners build knowledge of the objects in the world around them. As learners grow and develop, their art-making activities move beyond exploring with their senses and begin to involve the use of symbols. Learners begin to represent real objects, events and feelings in their artwork. Drawing becomes an activity that allows them to symbolise what they know and feel. It is a crucial outlet for learners whose vocabulary (written or verbal) may be limited (Cabell, Justice, McGinty, DeCoster, & Forston, 2015; De la Roche, 1996; Kim, 2016; Rahn, Coogle, & Storie, 2016; Olivier et al., 2010; Schmitt, 2008). This early use of symbols in artwork is very important because it provides a foundation for learners' later use of words to symbolise objects and actions in formal writing. Using symbols in visual artwork can, in this way, be linked with what is known in literature as "semiotics" (Aerila & Rönkkö, 2015; Du Plooy, 1986; Taylor, 2010; Tobin, 1990; Sotiropoulou-Zormpala, 2016). Literature defines semiotics as the study of symbols, and includes almost all symbolic forms (Du Plooy, 1986; Cloete, 1992; Tobin, 1990). A drawing has the same communicative power as a linguistic text, both of which have the ability to communicate ideas (Aerila and Rönkkö, 2015; Du Plooy, 1986; Nutbrown, 2013; Öztürk & Erden, 2011; Piasta, 2016; Plüddemann, 2015; Tobin, 1990).

1.5 ANTICIPATED RESEARCH PROBLEM

The primary problem was that learners did not understand what was being taught in Grade R because of inadequate oral proficiency skills. The major question that this study addressed was: "How can art-making activities be utilised to promote oral proficiency?".

The following secondary problems arose from the primary problem:

- How does a learner's vocabulary influence their oral proficiency?
- Why is vocabulary and oral proficiency important for emergent literacy skills of Grade R learners?
- How can art-making activities be utilised for the enrichment of vocabulary in Grade R?

1.6 AIM OF THE STUDY

Ultimately, this research wanted to determine whether art-making activities can be utilised to promote oral proficiency in Grade R. Emergent literacy skills lay the foundation for reading skills and learning. Learners with poor oral proficiency skills need to be exposed to as much new vocabulary teaching and learning as possible in order to promote oral proficiency and to help them develop to their full potential. Due to my involvement with Grade R ESL learners, I experienced on a weekly basis that ESL learners did not understand classroom instruction and struggled to participate during group activities. I therefore wanted to get involved in research on how to promote oral proficiency, and how art-making activities can be utilised to develop Grade R learners' oral proficiency skills.

The objectives of this research were to:

- explore how art-making can be utilised to enrich vocabulary to promote oral proficiency in Grade R;
- determine how learners' vocabulary influences their oral proficiency;
- establish the influence of Grade R learners' oral proficiency on their emergent literacy skills; and
- explore how art-making can be utilised to enrich vocabulary to promote oral proficiency in Grade R.

1.7 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

Different methods were used to collect data, as discussed in Chapter 5.

The data was collected by means of a rubric and observational (running) records of each learner. These field notes were made continuously throughout the observation process of learners' oral proficiency during art-making activities.

An individual case study approach was followed to investigate the use of art-making to promote oral proficiency in Grade R. I used the case study approach to explore and describe how art-making can support vocabulary enrichment in Grade R, as I was interested in describing and explaining events and experiences rather than the identification of cause-effect relationships.

The aim of this case study was to describe a specific case where art-making activities were used to promote oral proficiency. Learners were used as the subjects of the case analysis and I served as an instructor of vocabulary as well as an observer of learners' actions. My aim was not to make statements only about the concrete cases, but rather to study it because it was an instructive

example of a more general problem. As stated by Flick (2009), case studies can capture the process under study in a very detailed and exact way. Case studies are not restricted due to an intended comparability and are able to fully use the potential of certain methods (Willig, 2008).

The following resources were used during the study:

1.7.1 Academic literature

Academic literature that relates to the research problem were consulted. Various databases including, but not limited to EBSCOhost (ERIC & Academic Search Premier) and ScienceDirect, were used in the search for relevant literature relating to the research problem and the goal of the research. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) state that the review of relevant literature describes theoretical perspectives and previous research findings regarding the problem at hand. Its function is to “look again” at what others have done in areas that are similar, though not necessarily identical to my own area of investigation.

1.7.2 Primary data

Primary data are unpublished and obtained directly from participants or organisations, such as reports, correspondence, etcetera. However, it could also be published in the form of a letter in a newspaper. This type of data is often the most valid, the most illuminating, and the most truth-manifesting (Bouma & Ling, 2004; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Mason, 1996; Nieuwenhuis, 2007). To compile impartial and accurate primary data, the following tools were utilised during the study:

1.7.2.1 Observations

Observation is the systematic process of recording the behavioural patterns of participants without necessarily questioning or communicating with them. Using observations to collect data enabled me to be flexible and I could have used unforeseen data sources as they occurred. The qualitative researcher may make observations, either as a relative outsider or as a participant observer, as it was in the case of this study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Silverman, 2000; Willig, 2008).

1.7.3 Semi-structured interviews

Interviews can yield a great deal of useful information. Interviews in a qualitative study are rarely

as structured as the interviews conducted in a quantitative study. Instead, they are either open-ended or semi-structured (Barone & Eisner, 2011; Bouma & Ling, 2004; Flick, 2009; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Open-ended questions were used for these interviews to help explore views and opinions of the participants. An advantage of open-ended questions was that I gained unforeseen information, such as progress noticed by parents. The pre- and post-programme interviews were semi-structured interviews with Grade R learners.

1.7.3.1 Rubrics

A rubric can be defined as a scoring guide used to evaluate the quality of students' constructed responses. Rubrics usually contain evaluative criteria, quality definitions for those criteria at particular levels of achievement, and a scoring strategy. They are often presented in table format and can be used by teachers when marking, and by students when planning their work (Bouma & Ling, 2004; Flick, 2009; Henning, 2004; Nieuwenhuis, 2007).

A scoring rubric is an attempt to communicate expectations of quality around a task. In many cases, scoring rubrics are used to delineate consistent criteria for grading (Bouma & Ling, 2004; Mason, 1996; Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Silverman, 2000).

A rubric was used during the pre- and post-programme interviews to assist with data collection. The rubric was used to record the presence or absence of behaviour. I also included important information. These notes might have had an impact on the information recorded that day and might have cued me to re-evaluate the information on the rubric. A sample of the pre- and post-programme interview rubric is displayed in Table 1-1.

Table 1-1: Pre- and post-programme interview rubric

Score	1	2	3	4	5
Confidence	Learner displayed little confidence during interview. Learner needed support of a friend or class teacher	Learner displayed little confidence during interview. Learner did not need support of a friend or class teacher	Learner displayed some confidence during interview without support of a friend or class teacher.	Learner displayed some confidence during interview. Learner asked for word or question not understood to be repeated	Learner spoke with confidence and was eager to communicate
Vocabulary	Only nodded No verbal response	One-word answers	Use of code-switching in sentences	Use of incorrect word sounding similar to appropriate words	Correct use of all English words
Sentence structure	No verbal response	One-word answers	Incorrect grammar and tenses	Incorrect grammar or tenses	Correct grammar and tenses
Fluency of speech	No verbal response	One-word answers with hesitation	Short sentences with hesitation and stuttering	Short sentences with hesitation or stuttering	Fluent speech

1.7.3.2 Field notes

The ways in which field notes are taken during an observational study is very much a personal decision developed over time as the researcher becomes more experienced in observing (Flick, 2009; Jansen, 2007; Mason, 1996; Silverman, 2000). However, all field notes generally consist of two parts:

- Descriptive information, in which you attempt to accurately document factual data (e.g., date and time), and the settings, actions, behaviours, and conversations that you observe; and
- Reflective information, in which you record your thoughts, ideas, questions and concerns as you are conducting the observation (Barone & Eisner, 2011; Henning, 2004; Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Silverman, 2000).

The field notes not only focused on the actions, but also on the situation, and tried to describe the action in the context in which it occurred. My field notes were used to gather information relevant to this study. The report helped to identify issues, concerns, and the influence that art-making activities had on learners' oral proficiency during the project.

The following recording tools were used in the collection of data to support the field notes:

1.7.3.2.1 Audio recordings

Audio recordings of the learners while speaking to the teacher or other learners had been made. This was important to obtain baseline data when the study first started, and again when learners participated in a variety of speaking activities.

1.7.3.2.2 Video recordings

Video recordings were made of the art-making process. These recordings were done to ensure accurate transcribing of the research process. A video recording of the learners speaking to the teacher or other learners has also been made. Video recordings will not be made available due to sensitive ethical issues.

1.7.3.2.3 Photographs

A digital camera was used to take photographs of learners during various activities. These photographs were used to support information gathered by means of the field notes, and were not considered a measuring tool. The main purpose of the photographs was to capture the final product of each visual art-making activity.

1.7.4 Crystallisation

Crystallisation was achieved by using multiple methods of data collection and analysis in order to validate the results (Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2007; Nieuwenhuis, 2007). These methods included observations, semi-structured interviews, field notes, audio and video recordings as well as photographs. Each data collection method served as a unique source of information on the subject of study, namely the way art-making can be utilised to promote oral proficiency in Grade R.

These various dimensions could be compared to the different shades of a crystal. According to Richardson (cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 245), the world exists of “far more than three sides”. These multidimensional forms enable a deeper understanding about the topic of study. Figure 1-1 illustrates the various data collection methods that were used.

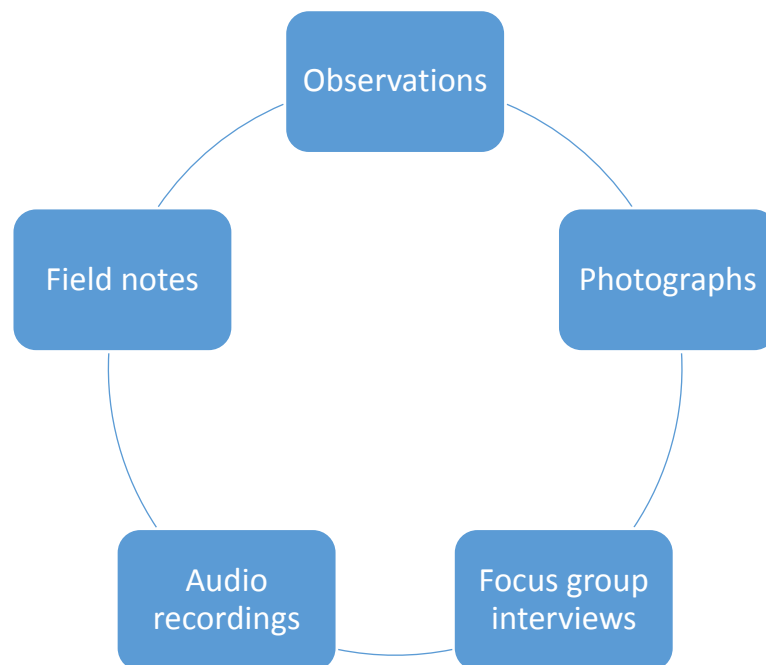


Figure 1.7-1: Data collection methods used to ensure crystallisation of data

1.7.5 Selection of the site and social network

For this study, two Grade R classes at a multicultural private school in Klerksdorp in the North West Province were chosen to be observed. Each Grade R teacher at the school was a qualified professional that had received training at a recognised institution. The school as well as its ECD programme is registered with the DBE.

Classroom 1 had 22 Grade R learners aged between 5 and 6 years old. Classroom 2 had 24 Grade R learners aged between 5 and 6 years old. In both classes, the learners spoke various languages and some had little understanding of English.

The learners were taught in a sturdy brick classroom. The classroom had teaching aids: all items were used to their full potential, and there was free movement indoors with enough space for activities. There were enough educational toys and posters, as well as apparatus for indoor play activities. The terrain was fenced off and had a teacher-controlled gate with restricted access. The outside area was safe with ample equipment for motor and social development. The various jungle gyms, swings and sandboxes were in a good condition and safe to use. The toilet facilities were recently renovated with added basins and running water.

1.7.6 Participant selection

In case studies, sampling is purposeful and methodological, and is based on open case-sensitive approaches, like the field notes for collecting the data (Flick, 2009). In this research study, the population was drawn from Grade R learners at a private school in the North West Province (Dr Kenneth Kaunda District). Purposeful sampling was used – a procedure in which I identified and located individuals who were knowledgeable about the phenomenon, or in the case of this study, learners who might have lacked oral proficiency and needed support to achieve reading readiness. The aim of purposeful sampling was not to involve many randomly selected participants, but a few information-rich key participants who could provide many insights about the topic. To this end, in-depth individual dialogues took place between the participants and me. The formation of these dialogues took pragmatic reasons into consideration: selecting a homogeneous group; keeping the group small; the limitation of costs and time; and easy access for me as I resided and worked in this region at the time.

The purposeful selection of individuals enabled me to obtain data by letting participants share their experiences of the study. Convenience sampling entailed the selection of learners that were already available; therefore, a purposeful sample from two Grade R classes at a registered private school in Klerksdorp, North West Province, was used in this study.

It was communicated during the course of the study that parents felt the need to discuss learners' progress. These discussions provided insight into learners' progress in oral proficiency during day-to-day activities at home.

1.7.6.1 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Grade R learners who were identified by teachers as having oral proficiency difficulties were

considered for study. Each teacher was asked to nominate as many learners as possible whom they felt could benefit from the study. The criteria for nominating learners were: (1) learners had to be first or second language English speakers; (2) learners had to be in Grade R, and between the ages of 5 and 6; (3) learners who had been diagnosed with hearing, speech or intellectual barriers were not eligible to participate; (4) learners had to display signs of oral proficiency problems; and (5) learners had to have permission from their parents to participate in the study.

Thirty-five (n=35) parents expressed an interest. Signed informed consent forms were received back from only twenty-one (n=21) parents. The twenty-one (n=21) learners in two Grade R classes in the same school were included in the study. The group comprised of learners speaking the following languages: three English (n=3), nine Setswana (n=9), six Sesotho (n=6), one Afrikaans (n=1), one Czech (n=1), and one isiXhosa (n=1). Each learner was given the opportunity to participate following informed consent from the parents, and was also given the choice to withdraw from the study at any given time.

1.7.7 Researcher's role

I acted as an observer and participant during vocabulary instruction and art-making activities. The learners of parents who had given informed consent for participation in the study were observed. I also acted as an interviewer and conducted interviews with the learners, and recorded observations. Within the interpretative field of study, my role entailed being an active participant as interviewer, which included forming a vital part of the data (Barone & Eisner, 2011; Henning, 2004; Flick, 2009; Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Silverman, 2000; Willig, 2008). During the art-making process and recording of observations of oral interaction between learners, my role was to observe and listen carefully, and to continuously abide by all ethical guidelines. In this study, my functional role entailed the role as transcriber and data analyst with regard to the oral interaction and specifically the vocabulary usage of learners. In addition, I fulfilled the role of designer, teacher and analyst of the rubrics and field notes. I was also involved in organising art-making activities based on the theme discussed each week, consistent with the school's learning programme.

1.8 CONTENT ANALYSIS

Content analysis was used to analyse data when I made use of field notes, open-ended question interviews or focus groups to collect data. By using qualitative content analysis, I investigated and described the observations, semi-structured interviews, parent discussion interviews, and observations. Qualitative content analysis is a detailed and systematic examination of content, and focuses on the interpretation and understanding of participants' perspectives during the

research. The method aims to find patterns and themes in the collected data (Barone & Eisner, 2011; Flick, 2009; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2007; Willig, 2008).

As proposed by Leedy and Ormrod (2005) as well as Nieuwenhuis (2007), the information was organised and categorised by looking for similarities and differences that would help to confirm or refute the theory. I made use of observations to categorise the data and themes that came forth from the semi-structured interviews.

The information was sorted according to aspects such as how many of the new words were used during activities, and how learners' confidence improved with regard to speaking English. I then drew conclusions about the findings.

1.8.1 Validity of data

The term "data validity" refers to the way in which the inquirer can persuade the reader that the findings of the study are worth paying attention to and that the research is of high quality. Validity refers to the degree to which the reader can be convinced that the findings did indeed occur as I say they did (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Mason, 1996; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Silverman, 2000). I strived to produce findings that are believable and convincing, also presenting negative or inconsistent findings to add to the credibility of the study. The rubrics and field notes were assessed by the supervisor and co-supervisor of the study to ensure that it is adequate for measuring what it was supposed to measure. This process facilitated content validity. I strived to eliminate any bias that might have been brought to the study by constantly reflecting on the research process. Interpretivistic studies are subjected to personal and community elements. The aim was not necessarily to generalise, but an opportunity to investigate the possibility of applying methods used in this study to a specific community with similar circumstances.

1.9 ETHICAL CONDUCT AND APPROACH

The guidelines and procedures of the Ethics Committee of the North-West University were followed for the duration of the research. The following ethical principles as outlined by Bouma and Ling (2004) and Henning (2004), were followed:

- all information was handled as confidential, stored securely, and was processed with consistency;
- participants had the opportunity to make an informed decision whether they wanted to participate in the study, and they were ensured that they could withdraw from the study at

any given time;

- written informed consent had been obtained from the school as well as from the parents of learners who were interested in participating in the study before data collection commenced;
- all participants were handled with respect and compassion, and participants were not influenced negatively;
- the rights and feelings of participants were always considered as sensitive, and participants were approached with care to ensure that they did not suffer any losses because of the study. No potential conflict of interest was foreseen.

1.10 CHAPTER DIVISION

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 1 provides a general overview of the study, including an introduction and rationale of the study. This chapter also contains the research problem, research questions, purpose of the research, and definitions of concepts.

Chapter 2: Conceptual framework and literature review

Chapter 2 provides a literature exploration about information on oral proficiency in the Foundation Phase context. It also offers a review on vocabulary instruction in the multicultural context of South Africa. The chapter further explores the appropriate visual art activities for learners aged 5 to 6 years old.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

This chapter describes the research process in depth, including the research design and methodology that were followed in the this study.

Chapter 4: Practical art-making sessions, data collection and interpretation of data

This chapter gives an overview of how visual art activities were structured. Furthermore, the chapter reflects on the pre-programme baseline assessments, how data was collected for the study as well as interview notes and reflective discussions. It also offers overall patterns of change in oral proficiency and vocabulary. The chapter further introduces individual patterns of change in oral proficiency and vocabulary through individual case studies.

Chapter 5: Summary, conclusion and recommendations

In Chapter 5, the results of the study are summarised and conclusions drawn from the study are presented. Limitations and recommendations for additional research are also discussed.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE OVERVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will focus on the theoretical framework and literature review. The study was conducted to address the notion that oral proficiency can be promoted by using art-making as a core teaching tool. To investigate and suggest ways in which teachers can develop the oral skills of Grade R children, I had to be informed about the development and acquisition of language in the child.

This chapter commences with a discussion about the development of language, with Piaget's developmental processes as basis. This will be followed by a discussion on the four stages of cognitive development, with an emphasis on the pre-operational stage as focus of the study. Thereafter, the importance of vocabulary and oral proficiency as an emergent literacy skill will be described. This chapter also offers a review on vocabulary instruction strategies in the Foundation Phase in the multicultural context of South Africa. Semiotics as visual language representation and age-appropriate visual art activities (which have the potential to enhance oral proficiency) for Grade R learners aged 5 to 6 years old, will further be explored. The chapter will be concluded with a discussion on the stages of artistic development and age-appropriate art activities through which oral proficiency can be promoted.

To initiate this discussion and to contextualise the research, the language acquisition of the young child will first be explained.

2.2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF LANGUAGE

For the five to six years before learners enter school, they develop oral language foundations that will affect them for the rest of their lives. In the best circumstances, learners have ample opportunity to hear good language models, to interact with others, and to speak. I used Piaget's developmental processes as basis for the ensuing argument. These processes are significant in Grade R and beyond Grade R, and will therefore provide a framework as basis for the development of oral language of Grade R learners (Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwana, 2002; Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwana, 2010).

2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Vygotsky and Piaget's constructive theory grounds this study. According to the social constructive theory of Vygotsky, a person's biological composition determines only basic elements of a person's human development, and is the social environment almost entirely responsible for higher cognitive processes like language, memory and abstract thinking (Dimitriads & Kamberelis, 2006; Vygotskiĭ, Rieber, & Hall, 1998; Vygotsky, 1974, 1986). Vygotsky maintained that the idea of symbiotic interaction is fundamental to effective social interaction. Language and other symbiotic resources (for example gestures and pictures) are used as interactions within the context of the social environment (Dimitriads & Kamberelis, 2006).

Urie Bronfenbrenner's theory on development from an ecosystemic perspective links with that of Vygotsky. Bronfenbrenner noted that the social context that the learner finds himself in (including the social-economic circumstance, way of life, cultural values and traditions as well as world view), has a remarkable influence on the development of learners. Bronfenbrenner states that the interaction between different levels of the social system of a specific social context has an influence on the learner's development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Onchwari, Onchwari, & Keengwe, 2016).

2.3.1 Piaget's theory of development

Piaget's theory of cognitive development is a comprehensive theory about the nature and development of human intelligence. This theory deals with the nature of knowledge itself and how humans gradually come to acquire, construct, and use it. Piaget's theory is mainly known as a developmental stage theory (Fox & Riconscente, 2016; Gallagher & Reid, 2002; Piaget, 1972, 1974; Piaget & Inhelder, 2008).

To Piaget, cognitive development is a progressive reorganisation of mental processes resulting from biological maturation and environmental experience. He believed that children construct an understanding of the world around them, experience discrepancies between what they already know and what they discover in their environment, then adjust their ideas accordingly. Moreover, Piaget claimed that cognitive development is at the centre of the human organism, and language is contingent on knowledge and understanding acquired through cognitive development. Piaget's earlier work received the greatest attention (Fox & Riconscente, 2016; Piaget, 1974; Inhelder & Piaget, 1958; Piaget & Inhelder, 2008). Child-centred classrooms and "open education" are direct applications of Piaget's views. Despite its huge success, Piaget's theory has some limitations that he also recognised: for example, the theory supports sharp stages rather than continuous development (Gallagher & Reid, 2002; Kirch, 2014; Piaget, 2006; Piaget & Inhelder, 2008).

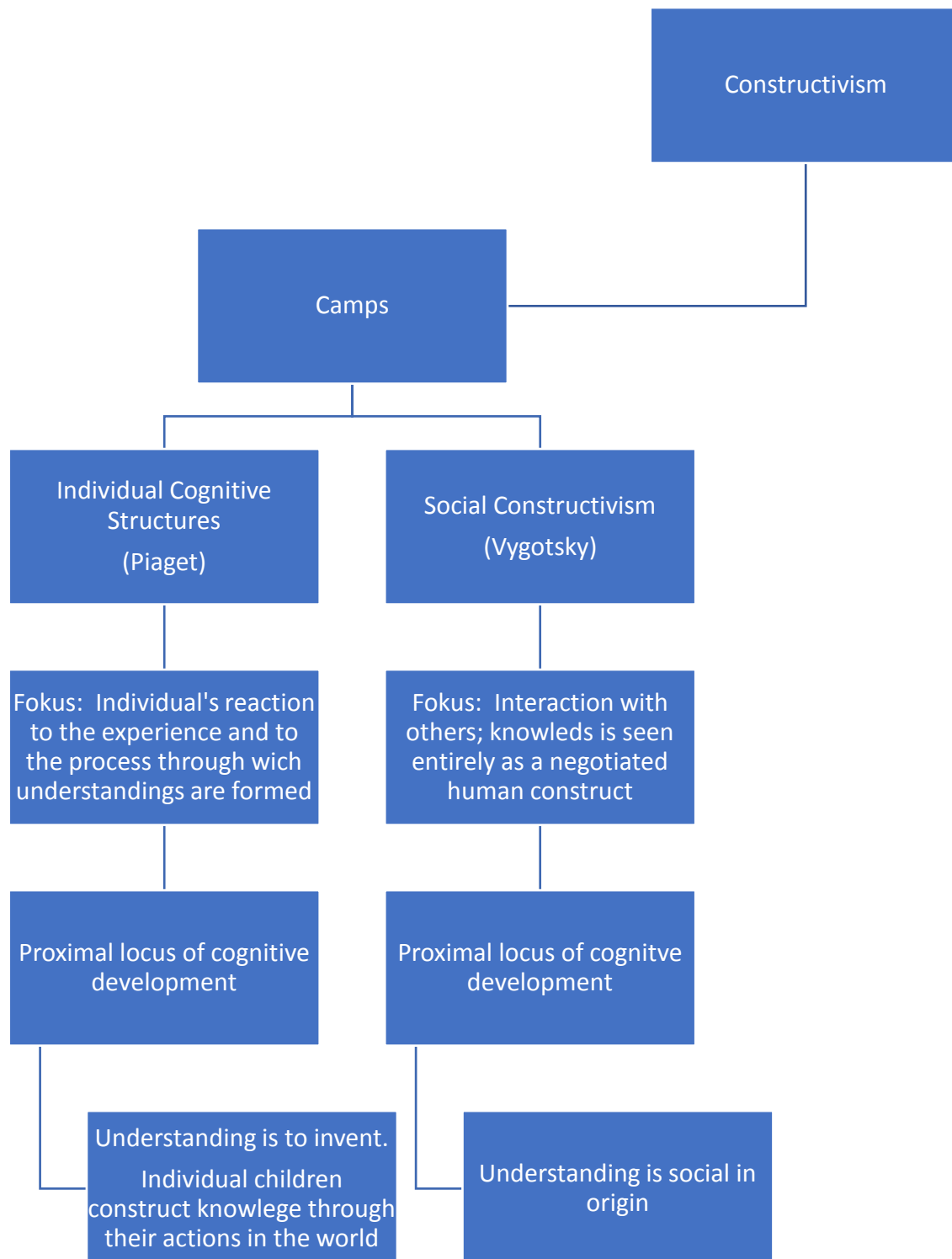


Figure 2-1: Constructivism diagram

2.3.2 Schemas

A schema describes both the mental and physical actions involved in understanding and knowing. Schemas are categories of knowledge that help us to interpret and understand the world. In Piaget's view, a schema includes both a category of knowledge and the process of obtaining that knowledge. As experiences happen, this new information is used to modify, add to, or change previously existing schemas (Piaget, 2006, 2011; Piaget & Inhelder, 2008). For example, a child may have a schema about a type of animal, such as a dog. If the child's sole experience has been with small dogs, a child might believe that all dogs are small, furry, and have four legs. Suppose then that the child encounters an enormous dog. The child will take in this new information, modifying the previously existing schema to include the new observations (Fox & Riconscente, 2016; Inhelder & Piaget, 1958; Piaget, 2011).

2.3.3 Assimilation and accommodation

Through his study of the field of education, Piaget focused on two processes, which he named assimilation and accommodation. In Piaget's view, assimilation meant integrating external elements into structures of lives or environments, or those we could have through experience. Assimilation is how humans perceive and adapt to new information. It is the process of fitting new information into pre-existing cognitive schemas (Piaget, 2006). Assimilation is how new experiences are reinterpreted to fit into or assimilate with old ideas. It occurs when humans are faced with new or unfamiliar information and refers to previously learned information to make sense of it. In contrast, accommodation is the process of taking new information in one's environment and altering pre-existing schemas to fit in the new information. This happens when the existing schema (knowledge) does not work and needs to be changed to deal with a new object or situation (Inhelder & Piaget, 1958; Piaget & Inhelder, 2008). Accommodation is imperative because it is how people will continue to interpret new concepts, schemas, frameworks, and more. Piaget believed that the human brain has been programmed through evolution to bring equilibrium, which is what he believed ultimately influences structures in the internal and external processes through assimilation and accommodation (Piaget, 2006, 2011).

Piaget's understanding was that assimilation and accommodation cannot exist without the other. They are two sides of a coin. To assimilate an object into an existing mental schema, one first needs to consider or accommodate the particularities of this object to a certain extent (Inhelder & Piaget, 1958; Piaget, 2011; Piaget & Inhelder, 2008). For instance, to recognise (assimilate) an apple as an apple, one must first focus (accommodate) on the contour of this object. To do this,

one needs to roughly recognise the size of the object. Development increases the balance or equilibration between these two functions. When in balance, assimilation and accommodation generate mental schemas of the operative intelligence. When one function dominates over the other, they generate representations which belong to figurative intelligence (Inhelder & Piaget, 1958; Onchwari et al., 2016; Piaget, 1974, 2006).

2.3.4 Equilibrium

Equilibration is the force which moves development along. Piaget believed that cognitive development did not progress at a steady rate, but rather in leaps and bounds. Equilibrium occurs when a child's schemas can deal with most new information through assimilation. However, an unpleasant state of disequilibrium occurs when new information cannot be fitted into existing schemas (assimilation) (Fox & Riconscente, 2016; Gallagher & Reid, 2002; Piaget, 1972, 2011; Piaget & Inhelder, 2008).

Equilibration is the force which drives the learning process as we do not like to be frustrated and will seek to restore balance by mastering the new challenge (accommodation). Once the new information is acquired, the process of assimilation with the new schema will continue until the next time we need to make an adjustment to it (Gallagher & Reid, 2002; Piaget, 1972, 2006; Inhelder & Piaget, 1958; Piaget & Inhelder, 2008). In a Grade R class, a teacher could provide art activities to help children to deal with the environment and to establish equilibrium between the thoughts and the environment. To establish which category fits a Grade R learner, I needed to expand on the cognitive stages of development, which will be discussed next. A brief overview of Piaget's stages of cognitive development will be discussed next.

2.3.5 Piaget's stages of development

Piaget's four stages of intellectual (or cognitive) development are as follows (Fox & Riconscente, 2016; Gallagher & Reid, 2002; Inhelder & Piaget, 1958; Kirch, 2014; Onchwari et al., 2016; Piaget, 1972, 1974, 2006, 2011; Piaget & Inhelder, 2008):

- Sensorimotor: Birth to the ages of 18–24 months
- Pre-operational: 18–24 months to early childhood (age 7)
- Concrete operational: Ages 7–12
- Formal operational: Adolescence to adulthood

Piaget acknowledged that some children may pass through the stages at different ages than the averages noted above, and that some children may show characteristics of more than one stage

at a given time. However, he insisted that cognitive development always follows this sequence, that stages cannot be skipped, and that each stage is marked by new intellectual abilities and a more complex understanding of the world (Craig, 1992; Dunn & Craig, 2012).

2.3.5.1 Sensorimotor stage (Birth to 2 years)

The main achievement during this stage is object permanence – knowing that an object still exists, even if it is hidden. It requires the ability to form a mental representation (i.e. a schema) of the object. In this first stage, children's schemata (different maps constructed about their world) are based on sensorimotor experiences. Children touch, see, hear, taste and smell things, and as they start moving around to explore the world, these schemata become more complex (Craig, 1992; Dunn & Craig, 2012). During this stage, children are able to represent external objects internally in their mind and they will start to imitate someone. Important for this study, is that oral language becomes possible during this stage as words like "baba" is an internal representation for baby, an external object. The pre-operational stage follows the sensorimotor stage (Craig, 1992; Dunn & Craig, 2012).

2.3.5.2 Pre-operational stage (2 to 7 years)

The pre-operational stage includes the target group for this study, namely Grade R learners. According to Donald et al. (2002), thinking, imagining and problem-solving skills develop faster for children in this stage (ranging between the age of 2 to 7). During this stage, young children can think about things symbolically. This is the ability to make one thing – a word or an object – stand for something other than itself. Donald et al. stipulates that in this stage children are able to work with images and symbols which are the "inner representation of outer reality" (Donald et al., 2002, 2010). Thinking is still egocentric, and the infant has difficulty taking the viewpoint of others (Donald et al., 2002, 2010). Children in this stage do not see the world as it is, and form a different view of their own. This egocentric speech can fall into three different categories (Piaget, 1972, 1974, 2006; Inhelder & Piaget, 1958; Piaget & Inhelder, 2008):

- repetition, where words and syllables are repeated by children without real engagement in talk with anyone. Children talk merely for the pleasure of talking;
- monologue, where children talk to themselves as if they are thinking aloud; and
- dual or collective monologue, in which an outsider is associated with the action or thought. It is, however, not expected from the outsider to understand or attend to this action, due to the fact that his point of view is not considered by the child in this age group.

The categories above illustrate that the language used in this stage is on the egocentric behaviour in the pre-operational stage. The important part a teacher plays in this stage is clear. Teachers can, for instance, deliberately use words and syllables which learners can repeat. Monologues could then flow from words and syllables which were internalised by listening to caregivers.

Craig (1992) argues that children in the pre-operational stage have the ability to use symbols as language, but also mentions that these children initially find it difficult to distinguish between the object and the symbol representing it. Additionally, Craig (1992) distinguishes between two categories in the pre-operational stage, namely the preconceptual stage (2–4 years) and the intuitive or transitional stage (5–7 years). The target group in this research were in the intuitive or transitional stage. The inability to distinguish between physical, mental and social reality is typical of children in this stage. A typical example would be a child who believes that anything that moves, such as a tree blowing in the wind, is alive and will obey its commands. This cognitive pattern is referred to as “animism”.

The next stage, the concrete operational stage, will be briefly described next.

2.3.5.3 Concrete operational stage (7 to 11 years)

Piaget considered the concrete operational stage a major turning point in the child's cognitive development, because it marks the beginning of logical or operational thoughts (Fox & Riconscente, 2016; Inhelder & Piaget, 1958; Piaget, 2006; Piaget & Inhelder, 2008). This means the child can work things out internally in their heads (rather than physically trying things in the real world). Children can conserve number (age 6), mass (age 7), and weight (age 9). Conservation is the understanding that something stays the same in quantity even though its appearance changes.

The last stage is referred to as the formal operational stage and will be discussed briefly.

2.3.5.4 Formal operational stage (11 years and older)

The formal operational stage begins at approximately age 11 and lasts into adulthood. During this time, people develop the ability to think about abstract concepts, and logically test hypotheses (Alter-Muri, 2002; Chan & Zhao, 2010; Matthews, 1998; Van Haaften, 2003).

Craig critiques Piaget's theory for his lack of attention to the role perception plays when learning

(Craig, 1992). Craig (1992, p. 171) states that infants learn not only by doing, but also by seeing, as “... they select and organise sensory information by means of perception”.

It is clear that the cognitive developmental stages play an important role in the acquisition of oral skills and oral proficiency. The importance of vocabulary and oral proficiency as emergent literacy skills, will be discussed next.

2.4 THE IMPORTANCE OF VOCABULARY AND ORAL PROFICIENCY

Over the past decade, reading and literacy have been in the forefront of educational research, policy and practice. Specifically, a great deal of attention has been paid to the importance of emergent literacy skills. Research has shown conclusively that these emergent literacy skills are strong predictors of future reading success (Olivier et al., 2010; South Africa, 1997, 2009, 2011; Torgesen, 1997; Vervaeke, McNamara, & Scissons, 2007).

Despite the vast amount of research about literacy skill development, researchers vary in their use of terminology. Examples of the terminologies are: early literacy, pre-literacy, and emergent literacy (Beaty, 2009; Bialystok, 1997; Boudreau & Hedberg, 1999; Gillon, 2000; Justice, 2006; Morgan & Meier, 2008; Saada-Robert, 2004; South Africa, 2008c). The term “emergent literacy” seems to be preferred by several authors, and will therefore be used in this study.

2.5 ORAL PROFICIENCY AS AN EMERGENT LITERACY SKILL

Vocabulary is an important part of oral proficiency. One cannot use words correctly and with confidence if you do not know or understand them. The words that should be known to communicate orally can be described as oral vocabulary (August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005; Champion, Hyter, McCabe, & Bland-Stewart, 2003; Weizman & Snow, 2001). Successful vocabulary curricula increase learners’ word knowledge by approximately 300 words a year (Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986, cited in Carlo et al., 2004). While such gains are not unimportant, they are hardly sufficient to close the gap between vocabulary skills of ESL and mother tongue learners, which is estimated to be as high as 6 000 words at school entry (Hart & Risley, 1995, cited in Carlo et al., 2004). Learners reading in their mother tongue have already learned in the order of 5 000 to 7 000 words before they begin formal reading instruction in school (August et al., 2005).

Oral language provides the building blocks for literacy. Oral language also plays an essential role in a learner’s developing thoughts. The constructivist cognitive psychologists, Piaget (1983, cited in Du Toit & Kruger, 1991; Wachowiak & Clements, 2001; Winters, 2004) and Vygotsky (1978, cited in Du Toit & Kruger, 1991; Hall, 2011) emphasised this relationship of speech and learning,

and recommended that learners work interactively in pairs or groups to solve problems (Wachowiak & Clements, 2001). Helping young learners acquire new vocabulary will assist them in verbalising thoughts, emotions and concepts related to what they see and what they create (this includes aesthetic development) (August et al., 2005; Farkas & Beron, 2004; Koster, 2009; Weizman & Snow, 2001). As stated by Vygotsky, the social environment is almost entirely responsible for higher cognitive processes like language, memory and abstract thinking (Dimitriads & Kamberelis, 2006; Kirch, 2014; Vygotsky, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978). For Vygotsky, the role of interacting within one's social and cultural group is central to understanding how the learner develops and learns (De Melendez, Beck, & Fletcher, 2000; Fox & Riconscente, 2016; Kirch, 2014; Onchwari et al., 2016). Vygotsky also stated that young learners develop symbolic thought through play (Fox & Riconscente, 2016; Kirch, 2014; Koster, 2009; Vygotsky, 1978). Language and other semiotic resources (e.g. gestures and pictures) are used as interactions within the context of the social environment (Chandler, 2007; Hopperstad, 2008; Kendon, Sebeok, & Umiker-Sebeok, 1981; Krampen, Oehler, Posner, Sebeok, & Von Uexküll, 2013; Sebeok, 2001).

A learner with insufficient vocabulary might have oral proficiency problems, which may result in difficulty getting along with other learners, having less confidence to connect, and an inability to form positive relations with peers (Boudreau & Hedberg, 1999; Brewer, 2007; South Africa, 2001). It is therefore imperative that the grade R teacher realises the importance of a daily programme in which oral skills can be practised and promoted in order to lay a foundation on which future learning can be built.

2.6 GRADE R AS FOUNDATION FOR FUTURE LEARNING

Children at risk for reading failure fall behind very early in the process of learning to read. Therefore, they can be identified in Grade R or even earlier. Poor readers do not catch up unless we intervene with intensive instruction (Bus, 2003; Holt, 2009). Bus (2003) argues that strong early intervention programmes minimise the number of learners who are going to fall behind. Success begins with early identification of children at risk.

The indication might be that if learners in a Grade R classroom do not have the ability to understand what is being taught, their constitutional right to basic education is not realised (South Africa, 1996a, 1996b, 1997, 2001, 2008c, 2009, 2011).

Emergent literacy skills in Grade R form the basis for future cognitive competence (South Africa, 2003). Findings suggest that in general, learners who performed well with regard to literacy skills in preschool years, also performed well in Grade 3 (Armbruster & Osborn, 2001; Doyle & Bramwell, 2006; Hay & Fielding-Barnsley, 2007; Olivier et al., 2010; Phillips, Gorton, Pinciotti, &

Sachdev, 2010; Pray & Jiménez, 2009; Saada-Robert, 2004; Schutte, 2005). Similarly, those learners who performed poorly in the preschool years, also performed poorly in Grade 3 (Armbruster & Osborn, 2001; Kirby, Parilla, & Phiffer, 2003; Vervaeke et al., 2007). As oral language is the principal means for learning new information in the Grade R setting, oral language difficulties might impact on academic achievement (Boudreau & Hedberg, 1999; Schutte, 2005). Vygotsky (1986, p. 26) noted that “learners not only speak about what they are doing, their speech and action are part of one and the same complex psychological function”. It is through talking, discussing, listening and problem-solving that learners develop new concepts, skills and competencies. Learners need activities that give them something to talk about (Diazgranados, Borisova, & Sarker, 2016; C. Edwards, 2014; L. C. Edwards, 2006; Kim, 2016; Piasta, 2016).

According to Carlo et al. (2004) and the National Reading Panel (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002), there is a high correlation between oral vocabulary instruction and reading comprehension. This correlation will be discussed next.

2.7 CORRELATION BETWEEN ORAL VOCABULARY AND READING COMPREHENSION

A once prevalent “reading myth” is that learning to read, like learning to speak and to understand spoken language, is natural. Throughout educational history, some educators have argued that children will learn to read if they are read to, are surrounded by books, and have a purpose for reading (Adams, 1990; Holt, 2009; McKenna & Stahl, 2003; Van Kleeck & Stahl, 2003; Vervaeke et al., 2007). However, reading research contradicts the idea that most learners learn to read as naturally as they learn to talk (Holt, 2009). Although reading is quite effortless to some learners, others may struggle to read words on a page and/or comprehend them (Holt, 2009; Kirby et al., 2003; McKenna & Stahl, 2003; Morgan & Meier, 2008; Richgels, 2003; Sameuls, 1979; Van Kleeck & Stahl, 2003; Winters, 2004). The human brain has evolved over hundreds of years to support the development of spoken language, and humans have been communicating with spoken language for at least 100 000 years (Dimitriads & Kamberelis, 2006; Holt, 2009; Kirch, 2014; Koroscik, 2001; Ramatlapana & Makonye, 2012; Sebeok & Danesi, 2000). Keep in mind, therefore, that the human brain has not had sufficient time to evolve structures and pathways that are adapted specifically for written language processing (Holt, 2009).

Inability to read is the major reason learners are referred to special education for learning disabilities. Approximately 80–85% of all learners classified as “learning disabled” have a primary problem with a language-related reading skill (Bialystok, 1997; Carlo et al., 2004; De Witt et al., 1998; Holt, 2009; Kitajima, 2016; McKenna & Stahl, 2003; McLean, Sparapani, Toste, &

Mcdonald, 2016; Olivier et al., 2010; Richgels, 2003; Stahl, 1997; Tindal, Nese, Stevens, & Alonzo, 2016).

Learners' responses to literature in their earliest years of life, long before they enter school and before they communicate through conventional uses of language, are rooted in the expectations they have developed for books and reading (Chan & Sylva, 2015; La Brocca & Morrow, 2016; Pretorius & Spaull, 2016; Strauch-Nelson, 2012; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002).

In a meta-analysis conducted by the National Reading Panel (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002), the following areas were found to relate consistently and most strongly to later reading achievement: (i) alphabet knowledge (i.e. receptive or expressive knowledge of the individual letters of the alphabet, as well as phoneme-grapheme awareness); (ii) phonological awareness (i.e. sensitivity to the sound structure of spoken language, in particular on phoneme level); and (iii) oral proficiency (this includes syntactic, lexical and narrative abilities). While these emergent literacy skills stretch over all learning areas, the focus of this study will fall on the vocabulary of Grade R learners as a measurable component of oral proficiency.

Oral language provides the building blocks for literacy (Baker, 2008; Kent et al., 2014; Kim & Wagner, 2015; Palacios & Kibler, 2016). A learner with insufficient oral proficiency will have difficulty recognising and labelling his feelings, and lacks skills necessary to express his needs, desires and interests in a confident manner, which may lead to frustration (Brewer, 2007; Butler & Hakuta, 2009; Karlsen, Geva, & Lyster, 2016; Vanderwood, Tung, & Checca, 2014).

A well-developed oral language also helps a learner acquire print knowledge. For example, oral vocabulary helps a young reader, seeing a word for the first time, to understand what he or she is reading. Thus, good oral language skills are a prerequisite for becoming a proficient reader because of the necessity for a learner to comprehend (Baker, 2008; Morgan & Meier, 2008; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002). As oral language is the principal means for learning new information in the Grade R setting, oral language difficulties might impact on academic achievement. Vygotsky (1986, p. 25) noted that "learners not only speak about what they are doing, their speech and action are part of one and the same complex psychological function". It is through talking, discussing, listening and problem-solving that learners develop new concepts, skills and competencies. Learners need activities that give them something to talk about (Edwards, 2006).

According to the Centre of Evaluation and Assessment (2006), as well as August et al. (2005),

there is a high correlation between oral vocabulary instruction and reading comprehension. The National Reading Panel (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002) suggests that more experimental studies are needed in this promising area, because it bridges early reading skills development and later comprehension training. The National Reading Panel (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002) also states that vocabulary is key in learning to make the transition from oral to written forms, whereas reading vocabulary is crucial to the comprehension processes of a skilled reader. Cambourne and Brown (1990) state that teaching specific words before reading, aids both vocabulary learning and reading comprehension. It also supports extended instruction that promotes active engagement with vocabulary and improves word learning.

Vocabulary is not only important for verbal communication, but also for reading with understanding (Elley, 1989; McLean et al., 2016; Schmitt, 2008). This notion is supported by findings by McKenna and Stahl (2003), as well as Wilde and Sage (2007).

Stahl (1997) and Sameuls (1979) noted that reading is a cognitive action that depends on exceptional reading fluency, vocabulary and pre-knowledge. Champion et al. (2003) also state that learners need a substantial vocabulary to learn how to read and to comprehend what they are reading. Therefore, it may be said that vocabulary has a direct influence on how much of the text that is being read is understood.

2.8 THE NEED FOR BETTER LITERACY SKILLS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

Studies indicated that South African learners perform below average with regard to literacy skills. These studies include the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (Centre of Evaluation and Assessment, 2006), as well as the report on Quality of Primary School Inputs in South Africa (Moloi & Chetty, 2011). A systemic evaluation by the South African DBE, which was conducted on Intermediate Phase learners, showed that 14% of learners were outstanding in their language competence, 23% were satisfactory or partly competent, but a vast majority (63%) were below the required competence for their age level. The study also indicated that only 51% of learners were able to read at an age-appropriate level (South Africa, 2008a). It was reported in the 2014 annual national assessment diagnostic report on first additional and home language by the DBE that 80% of the learners could not see the similarity between “find” and “discover” because of limited active vocabulary (South Africa, 2014).

The White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Education (South Africa, 2001) established a target of universal access to ECD, and specifically to a pre-Grade 1 Reception Year. Progress has been made by the DBE in improving access to ECD provision, especially for learners aged 5 – the suggested appropriate age for Grade R learners (South Africa, 2008d). This effort by the DBE to include Grade R in the General Education and Training Band suggested the importance of Grade R for laying a foundation for future learning.

Taking the above-mentioned into consideration, it is important to take note of the importance of learners' language ability, and especially their vocabulary, as a component of oral proficiency (August et al., 2005; Champion et al., 2003; Elley, 1989; Farkas & Beron, 2004; Schmitt, 2008; South Africa, 2003; Weizman & Snow, 2001). Furthermore, the danger exists that a learner who lacks language skills may be treated as less capable and can be offered experiences that are less cognitively challenging (August et al., 2005; Brewer, 2007; Carlo et al., 2004; Elley, 1989; Schmitt, 2008), which may ultimately lead to underachievement.

Building a learner's vocabulary can be an important part of overall language development and, more specifically, oral proficiency promotion. Helping young learners acquire new vocabulary will assist them in verbalising thoughts, emotions and concepts related to what they see and what they create (this includes aesthetic development) (Koster, 2009). New vocabulary can be introduced through art-making or visual art-viewing activities in the Grade R classroom. Little research has been done to investigate the utilisation of art-making activities in the promotion of oral proficiency. According to the National Reading Panel (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002), further research is needed to determine the vocabulary instruction needs of different age and ability levels, and the best professional development to help teachers become proficient in vocabulary instruction. The problem of ESL learners in the South African school context will be discussed next.

2.9 ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL) LEARNERS IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

In South Africa, where democracy is still in its infancy, the DBE has not yet resolved the issue regarding the language of instruction. As debates continue, the problems associated with the use of English as the sole medium of instruction, still engulf our education system (Dey, Simon, NgCabo, & Thole, 2007; De Wet, 2002; De Witt et al., 1998; South Africa, 2010; Van Rooyen & Jordaan, 2009). The same skills that predict the reading performance of mother tongue learners, also predict the reading performance of ESL learners. However, these language skills in isolation are not sufficient predictors of second language reading skills. The reading performance of ESL

learners is also influenced by their mother-tongue skills. It can therefore be said that a learner's abilities in his mother tongue will also predict English literacy competency (Dickinson, McCabe, Clark-Chiarelli, & Wolf, 2004; Restrepo & Towle-Harmon, 2008). Grade R ESL learners present with several challenges in emergent literacy development. They must develop these skills in a language they do not speak, while still acquiring emergent literacy skills and oral language skills in their mother tongue (August et al., 2005; Restrepo & Towle-Harmon, 2008). If they come from an impoverished environment, they will likely have inadequate exposure to new vocabulary learning. Thus, their delay in vocabulary is not a question of a language deficit, but of a lack of exposure. This finding seems to be underpinned by research by Verhoeven, Van Leeuwe, and Vermeer (2011), where learners from non-English-speaking families have difficulties overcoming their initial delay in the development of second language vocabulary (Carlo et al., 2004; Restrepo & Towle-Harmon, 2008).

The effects of oral English language proficiency continue to influence learners' reading mastery during the first eight years of school. There is a consistent negative association between delays in mastery of oral English language proficiency and mastery of reading proficiency levels: increased delays are associated with a decreased likelihood of mastery at higher levels of reading proficiency (Karlsen et al., 2016; Kim & Wagner, 2015; Kitajima, 2016; Palacios & Kibler, 2016; Vanderwood, Tung, & Checca, 2014; Roberts & Neal, 2004). Yet, the provision and quality of linguistic services facing language minority learners vary widely. An increased demand for English-speaking teachers fuelled by the rapid growth of the ESL population, has resulted in a shortage of qualified teachers (Dockrell, Stuart, & King, 2010; Kim & Wagner, 2015; Palacios & Kibler, 2016; Prevoo, Malda, Mesman, & Van Ijzendoorn, 2016; Roberts & Neal, 2004).

Playing catch-up means that their mother tongue literacy may not be as well developed as learners from a better socio-economic background. In most cases, this is because parents from impoverished socio-economic environments have no to little schooling, may be illiterate, and do not have the tools and know-how to stimulate young learners' literacy skills at home (Olivier et al., 2010; Verhoeven et al., 2011; Van Druten-Frietman, Denessen, Gijssels, & Verhoeven, 2015). Therefore, one of the most critical emergent literacy skills for ESL learners to develop is oral language in their mother tongue and second languages. Strong mother tongue language skills predict oral language, reading and writing skills in the second language (August et al., 2005; Carlo et al., 2004; Restrepo & Towle-Harmon, 2008). To improve emergent literacy in Grade R, ESL learners need the use of planned instruction or activities that address the prerequisite language skills and develop strong oral language skills (Carlo et al., 2004; Hall, 2011; Olivier et al., 2010; Pelletier, 1999).

Emergent literacy skills are believed to develop during preschool years for most learners when they are “in the process of becoming literate” (Restrepo & Towle-Harmon, 2008; Schutte, 2005). Literacy itself encompasses the skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. Circuits in the brain are already set up for infants, toddlers and preschoolers to emerge naturally into speaking the language(s) they hear spoken around them (Beaty, 2009).

Oral language forms the basis for the development of both reading and written orthography, as the latter represents the sounds of speech (Baker, 2008; Schutte, 2005; Stein, 1999; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002). Learners who do not develop these core language skills, lack some of the most fundamental skills essential for reading (Morgan & Meier, 2008; Restrepo & Towle-Harmon, 2008). The relationship between oral proficiency and code-related skills – such as conventions of print, emergent writing, knowledge of graphemes, grapheme-phoneme correspondence, and phonological awareness – is quite strong during the preschool years (Doyle & Bramwell, 2006; Morgan & Meier, 2008; Schutte, 2005).

Sometimes preschool learners have poor emergent literacy skills because of a variety of reasons. These reasons include having a disadvantaged background, learning English as a second language, and not having the opportunity to develop reading skills to the point required to do well (Armbruster & Osborn, 2001; Baker, 2008; De Witt et al., 1998; Hay & Fielding-Barnsley, 2007; Stein, 1999; Torgesen, 1997; Vervaeke et al., 2007; Winters, 2004). Learners struggling to read, regardless of the underlying cause, will benefit from early remedial reading instruction (Lyon et al., 2001; Vervaeke et al., 2007).

Poor oral proficiency will likely hamper the attempts of learners to become proficient readers, while also possibly increasing the frequency of their reading problems (Baker, 2008; Morgan & Meier, 2008; Stein, 1999; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002). Learners’ emergent literacy development is considered a good predictor of learners’ early reading development in the domains of metalinguistic awareness, and alphabetic and book concepts (Beaty, 2009; Brewer, 2007; Hay & Fielding-Barnsley, 2007; Schutte, 2005; Saada-Robert, 2004; South Africa, 2008c; Wilde & Sage, 2007; Wylie, 2009).

According to the DBE (South Africa, 2008c), there are five main components to the teaching of reading, and each of these components needs to be taught explicitly and practised in context on a daily basis. These components are: phonemic awareness; word recognition (sight words and phonics); comprehension; vocabulary; and fluency. Vocabulary instruction as a core aspect of this study within the multicultural South African context, will be discussed next.

2.10 VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION IN A MULTICULTURAL SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

The DBE (South Africa, 2008c) underpins this view and indicates that in order to teach explicit vocabulary, teachers need to explain or demonstrate the meaning of words. They should also give examples of the word in a sentence, encourage learners to use the word orally (by saying it aloud) in sentences of their own, and display the new words and the meanings of the words on a word wall or a chart. Teachers should follow up on vocabulary activities to ensure that learners get ample opportunity to practise using their new words.

Armbruster and Osborn (2001) indicated that specific word instruction, or teaching individual words, can deepen learners' knowledge of word meanings. It is suggested that vocabulary instruction should be appropriate for the age and ability of the reader so as to lead to optimal gains in reading comprehension (August et al., 2005; Carlo et al., 2004; Champion et al., 2003; Elley, 1989; Farkas & Beron, 2004; Schmitt, 2008). While much is known about the importance of vocabulary to succeed in reading, little research exists about the best methods or combinations of methods of vocabulary instruction, the measurement of vocabulary growth, and its relation to instruction methods (Alderson, 2005). The best means of achieving good vocabulary learning is also still unclear, in part because it depends on a wide variety of factors (Alderson, 2005; Schmitt, 2008). Pelletier (1999) asserts that there is considerable speculation in literature about the ways in which learners acquire vocabulary. These speculations range from broad-based theories of intellectual development, such as those of Piaget, Vygotsky, and information processing (which address the structure of cognitive development) to minute process theories of cognition, such as connectionism or parallel distributed processing (Fox & Riconscente, 2016; Kirch, 2014; Onchwari et al., 2016; Pelletier, 1999; Piaget, 2011). Research indicates that dependence on a single vocabulary instruction method will not result in optimal learning (Armbruster & Osborn, 2001; Hart & Risley, 1999; Weizman & Snow, 2001), but that various instruction methods should be used in a balanced way to promote optimal learning.

Literature suggests that there are mainly two approaches regarding vocabulary teaching and learning, namely direct vocabulary instruction (Armbruster & Osborn, 2001; Butler et al., 1885; Elley, 1989; Hart & Risley, 1999; South Africa, 2008c; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002; Weizman & Snow, 2001), and incidental vocabulary acquisition (Armbruster & Osborn, 2001; Read, 2008; Stahl, 1997). According to Elley (1989), and Weizman and Snow (2001), learners can learn vocabulary directly when they are explicitly taught both individual words and word-learning strategies.

Direct instruction should therefore include task restructuring and should actively engage the learner (Butler et al., 1885; Hart & Risley, 1999; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002). Incidental vocabulary acquisition forms an integral part of all learning activities and play in a Grade R class.

Studies have indicated that typical activities in Grade R classes, including storybook reading, listening to others, songs and rhymes, all aid in the extension of vocabulary (Armbruster & Osborn, 2001). When we consider studies regarding the influence of oral proficiency, and in particular Grade R learners' vocabulary, it becomes apparent that poor oral proficiency will likely hamper the attempts of learners to become proficient readers, while also possibly increasing the frequency of their reading problems (Morgan & Meier, 2008). Learners' early language development is considered a good predictor of learners' early reading development in the domains of metalinguistic awareness, and alphabetical and literature concepts (Hay & Fielding-Barnsley, 2007; Saada-Robert, 2004). Direct vocabulary instruction strategies, indirect vocabulary acquisition strategies, and multi-vocabulary instruction strategies will be discussed accordingly.

2.10.1 Direct vocabulary instruction strategies

As stated by Elley (1989), and Weizman and Snow (2001), learners can learn vocabulary directly when they are explicitly taught both individual words and word-learning strategies. Direct instruction should therefore include task restructuring and should actively engage the learner (Butler et al., 1885; Hart & Risley, 1999; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002).

Explicit instruction refers to definition instruction, including pre-teaching and the analysis of root words. Learners also need to practise using new vocabulary in order to increase their capacity to make a connection between what they know and the new word (Armbruster & Osborn, 2001; South Africa, 2008c). The DBE (South Africa, 2008c) underpins this view and indicates that in order to teach explicit vocabulary, teachers need to explain or demonstrate the meaning of words. They should also give examples of the word in a sentence, encourage learners to use the word orally (by saying it aloud) in sentences of their own, and display the new words and the meanings of the words on a word wall or a chart. Teachers should follow up on vocabulary activities to ensure that learners get ample opportunity to practise using their new words. Armbruster and Osborn (2001) indicated that specific word instruction, or teaching individual words, can deepen learners' knowledge of the meaning of words.

2.10.2 Incidental vocabulary acquisition strategies (including art)

Research shows that dependence on a single vocabulary instruction method will not result in optimal learning, but that various instruction methods should be used in a balanced way to promote optimal learning (Armbruster & Osborn, 2001; Hart & Risley, 1999; Weizman & Snow, 2001).

The zone of proximal development (ZPD) was defined by Vygotsky as the difference between what a learner can do without help, and what he or she can do with help (Fox & Riconscente, 2016; Kirch, 2014; Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky (1978) as a social constructivist viewed language learning not as an individualistic, internal mental process, but as a social activity where learners are active and interactive. The support of others enables learners to work at a level which would otherwise be beyond their reach, which he termed the zone of proximal development or ZPD (Edwards, 2006; Hall, 2011; Vygotskiĭ, Rieber, & Hall, 1998; Vygotsky, 1986). The ZPD is defined by Vygotsky (1978) as “the distance between a learner’s actual development level, as determined by independent problem solving, and the higher level of potential development, as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86). Vygotsky argued that language is the tool that makes higher mental functioning possible, as it serves as a way of organising and recalling experiences, and also as a way of communicating the internal thinking process (Winters, 2004).

Learners need recognition, acknowledgement of their achievements, and teachers show recognition in many ways: praising efforts; telling others what the learner had done; celebrating their successes; taking photographs; and taking an interest in and displaying their work (Hall, 2011, Hallam, Hewitt, & Buxton, 2014; McLean et al., 2016; Nutbrown, 2013; Palacios & Kibler, 2016; Pence, Justice, & Wiggins, 2008; Piasta, 2016).

Incidental vocabulary acquisition forms an integral part of all learning and play activities in a Grade R class. Most vocabulary is learned through reading, listening to others read, or other vocabulary-rich activities. However, incidental vocabulary learning is not a reliable procedure for promoting ESL learners’ vocabulary (Carlo et al., 2004). English Second Language learners that are less able to use context, disambiguate the meaning of unfamiliar words, because a higher proportion of words is likely to be unknown to them. Furthermore, because they lack full command of English grammar, they are less able to exploit linguistic cues to word meanings as a mother tongue speaker could (Carlo et al., 2004). Some studies (August et al., 2005; Bialystok, 1997; Carlo et al., 2004; Chan & Sylva, 2015; Gillon, 2000; Hall, 2011; Letts, 1991; Nel & Theron, 2008; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002; Van Druten-Frietman et al., 2015; Winters, 2004) showed that adverbs, verbs and adjective that create vivid images, are most memorable.

Active student-initiated analytic talk and participation also help motivate students and increase vocabulary learning (Armbruster & Osborn, 2001). Small group discussions offer a helpful context within which powerful vocabulary learning can occur (Doyle & Bramwell, 2006). Activities like these provide learners with concepts they need for their originality as well as oral proficiency to develop (Koster, 2009).

Approaches to combine direct and indirect vocabulary teaching and learning include: repeated exposure of new words by using new vocabulary across the curriculum to increase learning gains (Armbruster & Osborn, 2001; Carlo et al., 2004; Lipsky & Adelman, 2016; Rahn et al., 2016; Schmitt, 2008; Van Druten-Frietman et al., 2015; Verhoeven et al., 2011); pre-teaching words to improve vocabulary and comprehension; and encouraging learners to ask and answer who, what, when, where, why, and how questions during storybook reading.

Teachers can help learners acquire vocabulary during lessons by fully explaining what it is they are teaching, modelling their own thinking processes, and encouraging learners to ask questions and to discuss possible answers among themselves (Pelletier, 1999).

A creative visual art assignment contains a very different desired outcome. This is an extremely valuable personal experience and leads students to metacognitive evaluation. Art-making in this manner truly assists students with creative “out of the box” thinking (Shumaker, 2009; Stevenson & Deasy, 2005). In addition to helping learners to acquire knowledge about art-making and leading them to metacognitive evaluation, art-making lessons also promote oral proficiency in several ways (Jarman, 2009; Klein, 1991; Koster, 2009). These actions during art-making activities may include talking about the art-making process, where language rich in theme-related vocabulary is used.

Modern linguistics was originally viewed by De Saussure (as quoted by Tobin, 1990) as merely being a part of a larger semiotic or sign-oriented science. For De Saussure, the semi-logical perspective was central to any serious study of language. “Is it not obvious”, he wrote, “that language is above all a system of signs and that therefore we must have recourse to the science of signs’ if we are to define it properly?” (Culler, 1976, p. 105; Tobin, 1990, p. 16). Visual art-viewing activities that can be linked to vocabulary introduction may include looking at a poster or printout of a famous painting, looking at illustrations in a picture book, or viewing learners’ own visual artwork during a show-and-share. These activities provide an additional benefit in that they will aid in aesthetic development (Jarman, 2009; Klein, 1991; Koster, 2009; Read, 2008).

Visual art is not just “playing around” with paint. On the contrary, using young learners’ drawings may be a valuable introduction to writing (Camnizer, 2009; Carruthers & Worthington, 2006; Jarman, 2009; Jenson, 2001; Read, 2008; Wilmot & Schäfer, 2015). There are many benefits to participating in art-making activities. Not only do they provide a means of expression, creativity and imagination, but they also aid in the development of perception and memory, problem-solving skills, empathy, feelings and emotions (Camnizer, 2009; Klein, 1991; Koster, 2009). Consequently art-making activities are often seen as a tool for integration with other subjects, such as languages and mathematics (Carruthers & Worthington, 2006, 2011; Shumaker, 2009).

Research indicates that dependence on a single vocabulary instruction method will not result in optimal learning, but that various instruction methods should be used in a balanced way to promote optimal learning (Armbruster & Osborn, 2001; Hart & Risley, 1999; Weizman & Snow, 2001).

Approaches to combine direct and indirect vocabulary teaching and learning include: repeated exposure of new words by using new vocabulary across the curriculum to increase learning gains (Armbruster & Osborn, 2001; Carlo et al., 2004; Lipsky & Adelman, 2016; Rahn et al., 2016; Schmitt, 2008; Van Druten-Frietman et al., 2015; Verhoeven et al., 2011); pre-teaching of vocabulary to improve vocabulary and comprehension; and encouraging learners to ask and answer who, what, when, where, why, and how questions during storybook reading.

No single standard of vocabulary assessment strategies emerged from the studies reviewed. Studies do, however, indicate that appropriate conclusions about instruction are derived when the assessments match the instruction (August et al., 2005; Carlo et al., 2004; Champion et al., 2003; Elley, 1989; Farkas & Beron, 2004; Kamhi, Allen, & Catts, 2001; La Brocca & Morrow, 2016; Lipsky & Adelman, 2016; Rahn et al., 2016; Schmitt, 2008; Verhoeven et al., 2011). This will provide better information about the specific learning of the students relating to that instruction. Further research is needed to determine the vocabulary instruction needs of different age and ability groups to help teachers become proficient in vocabulary instruction.

2.10.3 Multi-vocabulary instruction strategies

Research indicates that dependence on a single vocabulary instruction strategy will not result in optimal learning, but that various instruction methods should be used in a balanced way to promote optimal learning (Armbruster & Osborn, 2001; Hart & Risley, 1999; Weizman & Snow, 2001).

Approaches to combine direct and indirect vocabulary teaching and learning include: repeated

exposure of new words by using new vocabulary across the curriculum to increase learning gains (Farkas & Beron, 2004; La Brocca & Morrow, 2016; Rahn et al., 2016; Schmitt, 2008; Van Druten-Frietman et al., 2015; Verhoeven et al., 2011; Wasik & Hindman, 2014; Weizman & Snow, 2001); pre-teaching of vocabulary to improve vocabulary and comprehension; and encouraging learners to ask and answer who, what, when, where, why, and how questions during storybook reading.

No single standard of vocabulary assessment strategies emerged from the studies reviewed (August et al., 2005; Bohlmann et al., 2015; Carlo et al., 2004; Farkas & Beron, 2004; La Brocca & Morrow, 2016; Schmitt, 2008). Studies do, however, indicate that appropriate conclusions about instruction are derived when the assessments match the instruction (August et al., 2005; Brown et al., 2010; Champion et al., 2003; La Brocca & Morrow, 2016; Rahn et al., 2016; Schmitt, 2008; Weizman & Snow, 2001). This will provide better information about the specific learning of the students relating directly to that instruction (Brown et al., 2010; Cabell et al., 2015; Elley, 1989; Kim, 2016; Saito, 2015; Schmitt, 2008; Verhoeven et al., 2011).

Further research is needed to determine the vocabulary instruction needs of different age and ability groups to help teachers become proficient in vocabulary instruction.

The next part of the literature overview will focus on art-making and an investigation of semiotics as visual language representation.

2.11 SEMIOTICS AS VISUAL LANGUAGE REPRESENTATION

The power of the arts is that they are semiotic tools for symbolic and metaphorical communication (Eckhoff, 2008; Kárpáti & Gyebnár, 2013; Marvin & Wright, 1997; Wright, 1991). Through media, such as drawing and painting, learners often communicate complex thoughts and feelings better than they can through spoken or written language (Cutcher & Boyd, 2016; Marvin & Wright, 1997; Nevanen, Juvonen, & Ruismäki, 2014b; Wright, 1991). Indeed, some students are much more successful in communicating sophisticated ideas through these visually-oriented means than in other domains (Marvin & Wright, 1997; Wright, 1991). Acknowledging that learners have different learning styles has important implications for teaching literacy skills in Grade R.

As stated by Vygotsky, the social environment is almost entirely responsible for higher cognitive processes, like language, memory, and abstract thinking (Dimitriads & Kamberelis, 2006). He maintained that the idea of symbiotic interaction is fundamental to effective social interaction (Dimitriads & Kamberelis, 2006). Language and other semiotic resources (e.g. gestures and pictures) are used as interactions within the context of the social environment (Dimitriads & Kamberelis, 2006).

Socio-cognitive constructivist theory combined the contributions of both social and cognitive constructivist perspectives, for “learning is constructed through transactions between the individual and the community, between the personal and the social” (Chapman, 1997, p. 44; Winters, 2004, p. 16).

The field of semiotics is concerned with everything that can be seen as a sign (Chandler, 2007; Hopperstad, 2008; Kendon et al., 1981; Krampen et al., 2013; Sebeok, 2001; Sebeok & Danesi, 2000; Tobin, 1990). Learners’ visual artwork (visual symbols) can (consistent with the field of semiotics) be a substitute for the written text (word symbols) or even for a lack of vocabulary (Chandler, 2007; Kendon et al., 1981).

Semiotics was originally viewed as a larger science of human behaviour and cognition. Linguistics was more clearly and precisely defined as a scientific study of language. Language, in turn, was to be viewed as a system of semi-logical or sign-oriented facts (Bolinger, 1968; Culler, 1976; Dimitriads & Kamberelis, 2006; Simone, 1995; Tobin, 1990).

Semiotics is usually defined as a general philosophical theory dealing with the production of signs and symbols as part of code systems which are used to communicate information (Cloete, 1992; Dimitriads & Kamberelis, 2006). Semiotics include visual and verbal, as well as tactile and olfactory signs (all signs or signals which are accessible to and can be perceived by all our senses), as they form code systems which systematically communicate information or messages in literally every field of human behaviour and enterprise (Bolinger, 1968; Cloete, 1992; Du Plooy, 1986; Tobin, 1990).

Learners’ realisation that a single marking can “stand for” a thing often coincides with their continued acquisition of conventional speech. The learner often proclaims these forms to be daddies, eyes, pillows or animals, or whatever other object suits his immediate fancy (Aerila & Rönkkö, 2015; Chan & Sylva, 2015; Nutbrown, 2013; Pretorius & Spaull, 2016; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002). The “romancing” rarely refers to any recognisable element in the scribble, but confirms to the child the fact that drawn shapes cannot only represent a thing, but can also present ideas. While scribbles are the foundation for both conventional drawing and conventional writing, learners usually begin to differentiate their own scribbles as either drawing or writing between the ages of two and a half and three years (Chan & Sylva, 2015; Nutbrown, 2013; Pretorius & Spaull, 2016). Building on this work related to the development of figurative thinking, many early childhood art education researchers have also found that when children integrate storytelling or dialogic commentary into their drawing, the art production can also reinforce the development of traditional narrative conventions, and the dynamic relationships

between a drawing and a story (Aerila & Rönkkö, 2015; Chan & Sylva, 2015; Pretorius & Spaull, 2016; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002).

The significance and power of visual art is that it is a semiotic tool for symbolic and metaphorical communication (Aerila & Rönkkö, 2015; Chan & Sylva, 2015; Nutbrown, 2013; Pretorius & Spaull, 2016; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002). Artistic engagement, when understood as an intellectual endeavour, demonstrates the capacity of learners' graphic communication: our attention centres on how the features of the artwork are ascribed to aesthetic, intellectual and emotional significance (Ahlskog-Björkman & Björklund, 2016; Alter-Muri, 1997; Baker, 2015; Bentley, 2015; Bromley, 1998; Dockrell et al., 2010; Kárpáti & Gyebnár, 2013; Simone, 1995). This requires us to view the content of a learner's drawing on an equal basis with the forms in which it is symbolised. Drawing imaginatively in this way encourages the use of concepts and processes that allow students to think imaginatively, long-term and consequentially (Camnizer, 2009; Chandler, 2007; Hopperstad, 2008; Kendon et al., 1981; Krampen et al., 2013; Sebeok, 2001; Shumaker, 2009; Wright, 1991). In the next paragraph, art-making, literacy skills, and creativity as a way of nonverbal expression, will be discussed.

2.12 ART-MAKING, LITERACY SKILLS AND CREATIVITY AS A WAY OF NONVERBAL EXPRESSION

Ultimately, this research wanted to determine whether art-making activities can be utilised to promote oral proficiency in Grade R. Picasso once famously said: "All learners are artists. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up." Learners need to express themselves to communicate with others. They fulfil these needs most effectively through personal expression, creative exploration and action (Edwards, 2006). The whole language approach to integrated curriculum has been gaining acceptance (Armbruster & Osborn, 2001; Bromley, 1998; Camnizer, 2009; Cathy, 2003; Darby & Catterall, 1994; Eisner, 1998; Jenson, 2001; Klein, 1991; Koroscik, 2001; Koster, 2009; Olivier et al., 2010; Pelletier, 1999; Phillips et al., 2010; Read, 2008; Shumaker, 2009; South Africa, 2003, 2008b, 2008c, 2009, 2011; Taylor, 2010; Wachowiak & Clements, 2001; Winters, 2004). This means that the teaching of literacy skills became the aim of every classroom activity and not just the language lesson. It featured thematic interconnections between subjects, focused on inquiry, and encouraged a variety of impressive and expressive learning modes (Olivier et al., 2010; South Africa, 2003, 2008b, 2009; Wachowiak & Clements, 2001).

A learner will experiment with making visual art long before they begin to read and write. When visual arts are metaphorically considered to be language, a concept called visual literacy emerges

(Camnizer, 2009; Edwards, 2006; Read, 2008; Taylor, 2010; Wachowiak & Clements, 2001; Winters, 2004). Through the arts, learners' minds can demonstrate their concepts of the world long before they can put their constructs into spoken and written words. Language, oral and written, share much common ground with the visual arts (De Melendez et al., 2000; Wachowiak & Clements, 2001). Both subjects focus on means of expression. Both use symbols. Both employ similar methods of critical analysis and interpretation (Bromley, 1998; Camnizer, 2009; Klein, 1991; Read, 2008; Taylor, 2010; Wachowiak & Clements, 2001). It is through the creative exploration of their bodies, the materials and tools of the visual art form, and the environment that learner artists begin to develop visual, auditory, kinaesthetic and graphic symbols with which to represent their thoughts (Koster, 2009; De Melendez et al., 2000).

Art-making activities provide concrete experiences in which learners may encounter and interact with the world in ways that are unique and special to them. Young learners are drawn to art-making activities because "messing around" with creative visual art materials are both natural and satisfying. These "messing about" activities are a way for young learners to experiment and explore the act of art-making, whether it incorporates scribbling with crayons, mixing paint and making a mess with it, or playing with play dough until all the colours become one big rainbow ball. It is through the process of exploring with visual art materials that they build a rich storehouse of ways to say what they need to say. These experiences have increased power and significance when their message is shared with and accepted by others as a means of communication (Edwards, 2006).

For learners who do not yet know how to write, and may not have the vocabulary to use to describe events, drawing and visual art activities can communicate much. One of the reasons learners draw, is because they lack the words to communicate thought and feeling, and visual art provides a nonverbal language for expression (Edwards, 2006). The interplay of the two forms of communication is, in fact, a powerful motivator for both drawing and writing: both the artwork and the written passage offer representations of the same cluster of things – each provides a window into the learner's world (Cathy, 2003; Darby & Catterall, 1994; Klein, 1991; Koroscik, 2001; Shumaker, 2009; Taylor, 2010; Wachowiak & Clements, 2001).

Art-making activities reinforce the learner's ability to use imagination when learning about the environment (De Melendez et al., 2000). Consequently, art-making activities are often seen as a tool for integration with languages (Camnizer, 2009; Olivier et al., 2010; Shumaker, 2009; Taylor, 2010).

In addition to helping learners acquire knowledge about art-making and leading them to

metacognitive evaluation, art-making lessons also promote oral proficiency in several ways (Jarman, 2009; Klein, 1991; Koster, 2009). These include talking about the art-making process, where language rich in theme-related vocabulary is used. Activities like these provide learners with concepts they need to foster originality, and for oral proficiency to develop (Armbruster & Osborn, 2001; Bromley, 1998; Camnizer, 2009; Champion et al., 2003; Klein, 1991; Koroscik, 2001; Koster, 2009; Olivier et al., 2010; Pelletier, 1999). Building a learner's vocabulary can be an important part of overall language development and, more specifically, promotion of oral proficiency (August et al., 2005; Carlo et al., 2004; Champion et al., 2003; Elley, 1989, Schmitt, 2008; Weizman & Snow, 2001). New vocabulary can be introduced through art-making or visual art-viewing activities in the Grade R classroom. Sign systems, such as visual art, can also activate learners' prior knowledge and evoke lived-through experiences, because the visual arts are tools that support the composition of meaning and may assist in communicating thoughts (Winters, 2004).

Through art-making, learners will develop language skills by learning vocabulary of visual art words, and by learning how to communicate about their artwork and the work of others, orally, with graphic symbols, and later at primary level through writing (Bialystok, 1997; Koster, 2009; Tobin, 1990).

Learners share their visual art creations in a variety of ways – some nonverbally, some through sound effects or movement, and others with intricate oral explanations and stories. The receptive adult who understands that this is an important part of language development, will provide opportunities for the interrelation between the arts and language by means of purposeful art-making activities (Ahlskog-Björkman & Björklund, 2016; Bromley, 1998; Camnizer, 2009; Chan & Sylva, 2015; Cutcher & Boyd, 2016; Hallam et al., 2014; Kim, 2016; Koster, 2009; Nevanen, Juvonen, & Ruismäki, 2014a; Nutbrown, 2013).

When learners create a work of visual art, they have a sense of ownership over the piece. This is a much different experience than when a learner must complete a teacher-guided assignment (Read, 2008; Shumaker, 2009; South Africa, 2008b). A mathematics assignment, for instance, has a clear and teacher-desired outcome (Shumaker, 2009). The art-making assignment, on the other hand, requires learners to be self-directed learners. It might be that learners' verbal responses will be more spontaneous because the process and the result are not teacher-directed.

2.13 ENHANCING LANGUAGE ABILITIES THROUGH ART

The integration of visual arts in language education not only involves the visual arts as the objective, but also as the mechanism for learning (Brown et al., 2010). Cutcher and Boyd (2016)

assert that humans have a basic need to engage with the practices of creation. Developments in Scandinavia and Northern Italy show how a focus on visual arts can enhance learners' learning, both in the arts and other aspects of their development (Baker, 2015; Cutcher & Boyd, 2016; Hong, Shaffer, & Han, 2016; Lindsay, 2015; Nutbrown, 2013). For young learners, art-making is also a sensory exploration activity. This methodology enables learners to explore, express, create and represent ideas by using one of their many languages (that of art-making). They enjoy the feeling of a crayon moving across paper and seeing a blob of coloured paint grow larger. Kamii and De Vries (1993) argue that exploring materials in visual art activities is very important, because it is through exploration that learners build knowledge of the objects in the world around them.

As learners grow and develop, their art-making activities move beyond exploring with their senses and begin to involve the use of symbols (Koster, 2009; Read, 2008; Taylor, 2010). Learners begin to represent real objects, events, and feelings in their artwork. Drawing becomes an activity that allows them to symbolise what they know and feel. It is a crucial outlet for learners whose vocabulary, written or verbal, may be limited (Cathy, 2003; De la Roche, 1996; Kim, 2016; McNiff, 1986; Morgan & Meier, 2008; Olivier et al., 2010; Van Druten-Frietman et al., 2015). Learners use the visual arts to explore ways of expressing their feelings and sensory experiences in tangible, symbolic forms (Aerila & Rönkkö, 2015; Cutcher & Boyd, 2016; Edwards, 2006; Nevanen et al., 2014a; Nutbrown, 2013; Sotiropoulou-Zormpala, 2016). This early use of symbols in artwork is very important as it provides a foundation for learners' later use of words to symbolise objects and actions in formal writing. Using symbols in visual artwork can, in this way, be linked with what is known in literature as semiotics (Alter-Muri, 2002; Cutcher & Boyd, 2016; Du Plooy, 1986; Edwards, 2006; Frisch, 2006; Jenson, 2001; Solomon, 2005).

Koroscik (2001), and Wachowiak and Clements (2001) argue that the sensory features of pictures are stored in imagery codes, while the products of verbalisation are retained as verbal or linguistic codes. This links with research (Wachowiak & Clements, 2001) that proves how verbalisation improves retention of visual art concepts. Koroscik (2001) links the aforesaid with multiliteracies theory, which includes the ability to create meaningful messages from symbols, despite the form of expression. These messages rely on "modes of representation much larger than language alone" (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 162; Winters, 2004, p. 20), including other forms of perception and communication (e.g. "reading" and "composing" signs, gestures, graphics, musical scores, performances, media, etc.).

Learners' language abilities are enhanced through the arts when they: (1) learn ways to describe and discuss arts material, processes, visual art forms, and works of art; (2) observe and describe

their actions and the objects in their environment using the arts and language; and (3) relate spoken language and graphic symbols (Camnizer, 2009; Koster, 2009). Providing opportunities for learners to talk about their artwork allow them to develop their communication skills. Learners learn new words to describe what they are doing as they explore new media (Koster, 2009).

Lowenfeld and Brittan (1982) argue that there are six clearly defined stages of artistic development, and that these stages can be witnessed in the artwork of learners. These six stages of artistic development, as stated by Lowenfeld and Brittan (1982), are discussed below.

2.14 LOWENFELD'S STAGES OF ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT

2.14.1 Stage 1: Scribble (2 to 4 years)

According to Lowenfeld and Brittan (1982), the scribble stage is made up of four substages:

- (a) Disordered: Uncontrolled markings that could be bold or light, depending on the personality of the learner. At this age, the learner has little or no control over motor activity.
- (b) Longitudinal: Controlled repetitions of motions. Visually demonstrates an awareness and enjoyment of kinaesthetic movements.
- (c) Circular: Further exploring of controlled motions, demonstrating the ability to do more complex forms.
- (d) Naming: The learner tells stories about the scribble. There is a change from kinaesthetic thinking in terms of motion to imaginative thinking in terms of pictures. This is one of the great occasions in the life of a human. It is the development of the ability to visualise in pictures.



Figure 2.14-1: Example of scribbles

2.14.2 Stage 2: Preschematic (4 to 6 years)

As Grade R learners represent the preschematic stage, a broad review will follow:

According to Lowenfeld and Brittan (1982), the symbol a learner draws for familiar objects is called a schema. The learner experiments with drawing through the scribbling and the preschematic stages to develop these symbols. They are unique to each learner, yet similar, because they follow the physical and mental developmental stages through which each child moves (Liebermann, 1979; Lowenfeld, 1954; Malchiodi, 1998). These attempts are nonrepresentational. It is difficult, if not impossible, for learners in this stage to follow instructions, such as “think of your favourite _____ and draw it”. Learners in this stage are able to think of a favourite, but they lack the fine motor skills and cognitive ability to physically represent their thoughts (Kelly, 2004; Koenig & Holbrook, 2000; Nilsen, 2016). They are more likely to draw what they can, even a scribble, and say: “This is a butterfly”. To the viewer, as well as the artist, it is a blob (Koenig & Holbrook, 2000).

The preschematic stage is announced by the appearance of circular images with lines which seem to suggest a human or animal figure (Deaver, 2009; Hallam et al., 2014). As the learner progresses from the mark-making (scribbling) stage, he will be able to draw his first human figures, which emerge from his scribbles. This new and distinguished symbol comes as a result of their endless combinations of line and shape (Alter-Muri, 1997; Alter-Muri, 2002; Bresler & Thompson, 2002; Cutcher & Boyd, 2016). During this stage, the schema (the visual idea) is developed. The drawings show what the learner perceives as most important about the subject. Drawing representations of the human form in this stage expands the tadpole man with more facial features and other details to which the learners have given particular attention. The tadpole man is a beginning drawing of humans with lines protruding from a circle for a head – the figures are therefore described as being “tadpole-like” (Jenson, 2001; Koenig & Holbrook, 2000; Nilsen, 2016; Schroeder, 2003; Wright, 1991). All the learner's human figures are very similar to each other: large head, appendages that sprout directly from it, two large eyes, and perhaps a mouth. As time passes by, the learner will begin to add details, such as hair to the head, clothing to the body, and so forth. Finally, there will be gradual inclusion of additional body parts, such as fingers and toes (Alter-Muri, 2002; Deaver, 2009; Hsiao, 2010; Lowenfeld & Brittan, 1982; Lowenfeld, 1954; Nilsen, 2016). Family becomes the most important subject to draw, and learners create their own way to recognise members of the family by using different colours, sizes, shapes, details, or any other way (Alter-Muri, 2002; Alter-Muri & Vazzano, 2014; Lowenfeld, 1954).

Learners in this stage search for meanings for their symbols: each symbol is connected with a meaning that they can relate to others from their life or their previous experiences (Alter-Muri, 2002; Liebermann, 1979; Lowenfeld, 1954; Lowenfeld & Brittan, 1982). Learners also like to

exaggerate the most important parts of their symbols (e.g. to exaggerate the size of the hands if the hands perform an action). In this stage, it often seems that almost all the learner's symbols are smiling (human beings, animals, the sun, the doors, the flowers, etc.). Learners in this stage seem to agree on categorising the most important objects to draw (Liebermann, 1979; Lowenfeld, 1954; Lowenfeld & Brittian, 1982; Malchiodi, 1998; Nevanen et al., 2014b): people in general are considered the most important objects to draw, then animals (most of them have the same shape), then houses, trees, and so on. They like to use different materials to express their ideas (Alter-Muri, 2002; Deaver, 2009; Lowenfeld, 1954; Lowenfeld & Brittian, 1982). Learners become familiar with the difference between their symbols and their scribbles: symbols now have a meaning and recognisable shape even though some learners continue to scribble as they pass from this stage to the next (Lowenfeld, 1954; Lowenfeld & Brittian, 1982; Nilsen, 2016). At the end of this stage, learners begin to create a schema for people (family, society, friends, etc.). Also, they tend to repeat the same schema whenever they need it to draw their symbols (Deaver, 2009; Kelly, 2004; Nilsen, 2016; Wellhousen & Crowther, 2004).

There is little understanding of space: objects are placed in a haphazard way throughout the picture. Figures and any other objects (such as animals, trees, houses, etc.) will all float in relationship to one another, and none will be in correct proportion (Koenig & Holbrook, 2000; Malchiodi, 1998; Wellhousen & Crowther, 2004). Learners begin to understand and draw the third dimension in their drawings: for example, they will try to show part of the hidden object behind another object, as in the image of mountains where some of them appeared and the others are hidden (Alter-Muri, 1997; Alter-Muri, 2002; Lowenfeld, 1954; McGuire, 2011). The "mandala" stays with them as an important schema in many of their symbols (human beings, sun, animals, etc.): the mandala now becomes very developed (Koenig & Holbrook, 2000). The learner draws "what he knows but not what he sees" – this means that learners depend on their own imagination for drawing objects (Alter-Muri, 2002; Chan & Zhao, 2010; Deaver, 2009; Hallam et al., 2014; Matthews, 1998).

The use of colour is more emotional than logical (Alter-Muri, 2002; Lowenfeld & Brittian, 1982). The colour choices will still be much more reflective of a learner's personal colour preferences than any attempts to portray objects "as they really are" (Liebermann, 1979; Malchiodi, 1998). Rainbows become one of the most important objects to draw as it gives the learner a chance to use many different colours (Koenig & Holbrook, 2000). As learners try to fill shapes with colours (if they draw the outer lines of these shapes), it seems hard for them to control this skill without passing these outer lines, but as they develop, they can refine this skill (Liebermann, 1979; Lowenfeld, 1954; Lowenfeld & Brittian, 1982).

Learners in this stage will begin to seek approval for their drawings if they had not already done so in the past, bringing them to adults for confirmation, and pointing out the various people and other objects that they had drawn (Koenig & Holbrook, 2000). Telling stories becomes a very important part of learners' drawings – a perfect way to give meaning to their symbols (Koenig & Holbrook, 2000; Malchiodi, 1998). At the end of this stage, details become a very important issue for the learners to experiment with, for example, details for figures, such as buttons, decorations, ribbons, fingers (without heeding numbers), and so on (Alter-Muri, 2002; Lowenfeld, 1954; Lowenfeld & Brittan, 1982).

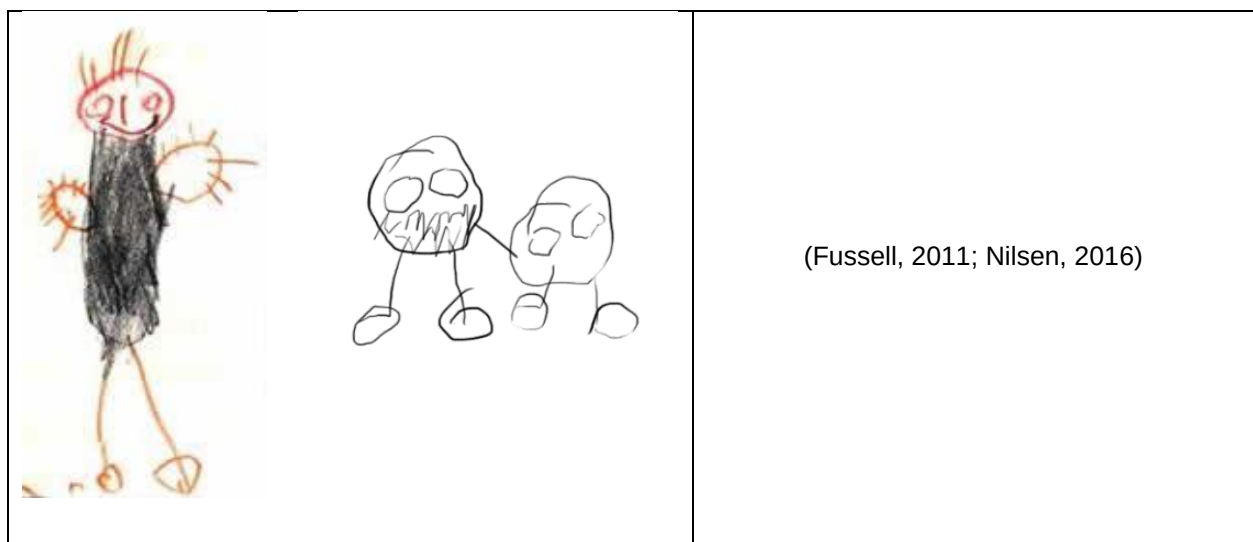


Figure 2-2: Examples of preschematic stage drawings

2.14.3 Stage 3: Schematic (7 to 9 years)

This stage is easily recognised by the demonstrated awareness of the concept of space. Objects in the drawing have a relationship to what is up and what is down. A definite base and skyline is apparent. Items in the drawing are all spatially related. Colours are reflected as they appear in nature. Shapes and objects are easily definable. Exaggeration between figures (humans taller than a house, flowers bigger than humans, family members large and small) is often used to

express strong feelings about a subject. Another technique called “folding over” is sometimes used, which is demonstrated when objects are drawn perpendicular to the baseline. Sometimes the objects appear to be drawn upside down. Another phenomenon is called “x-ray”. In an x-ray picture, the subject is depicted as being seen from the inside as well as the outside (Alter-Muri, 2002; Lowenfeld & Brittan, 1982).

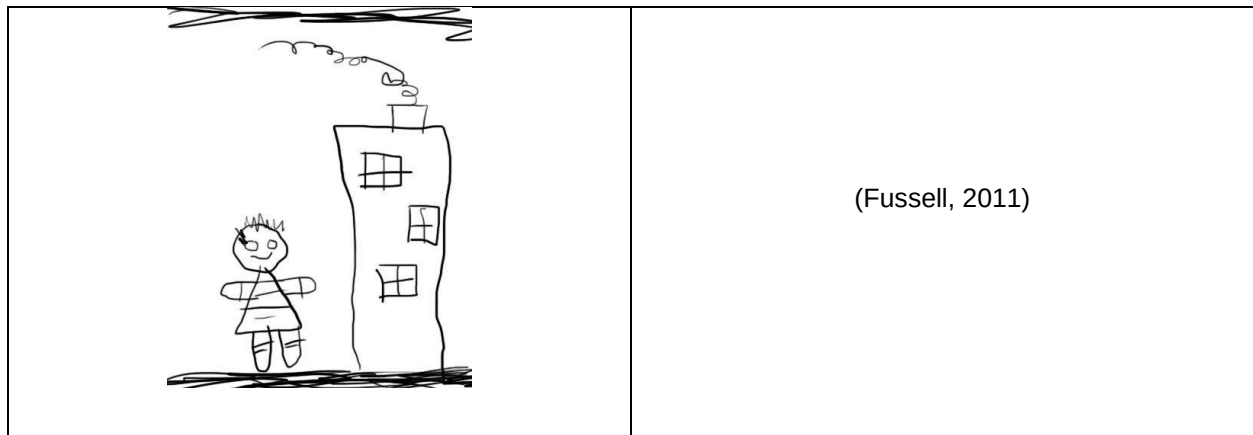


Figure 2-3: Example of a schematic drawing

2.14.4 Stage 4: Drawing realism (9 to 11 years)

Drawing realism is also known as the gang age. Group friendships of the same sex are most common. This is a period of self-awareness to the point of being extremely self-critical. The attempts at realism need to be looked at from the learner's point of view. Realism is not meant to be real in the photographic sense, but rather an experience with an object. In this regard, this stage is the first time that the learner becomes aware of a lack of ability to show objects the way they appear in the surrounding environment (Lowenfeld & Brittan, 1982). The human is shown as a girl, boy, woman, man, clearly defined with a feeling for details often resulting in a “stiffness” of representation. Perspective is another characteristic of this stage. There is an awareness of the space between the baseline and skyline. Overlapping of objects, types of point perspectives, and the use of small to large objects, are evident in this stage. Objects no longer stand on a baseline. Three-dimensional effects are achieved along with shading and the use of subtle colour combinations. Due to an awareness of lack of ability, drawings often appear less spontaneous than in previous stages (Alter-Muri, 2002; Lowenfeld & Brittan, 1982).

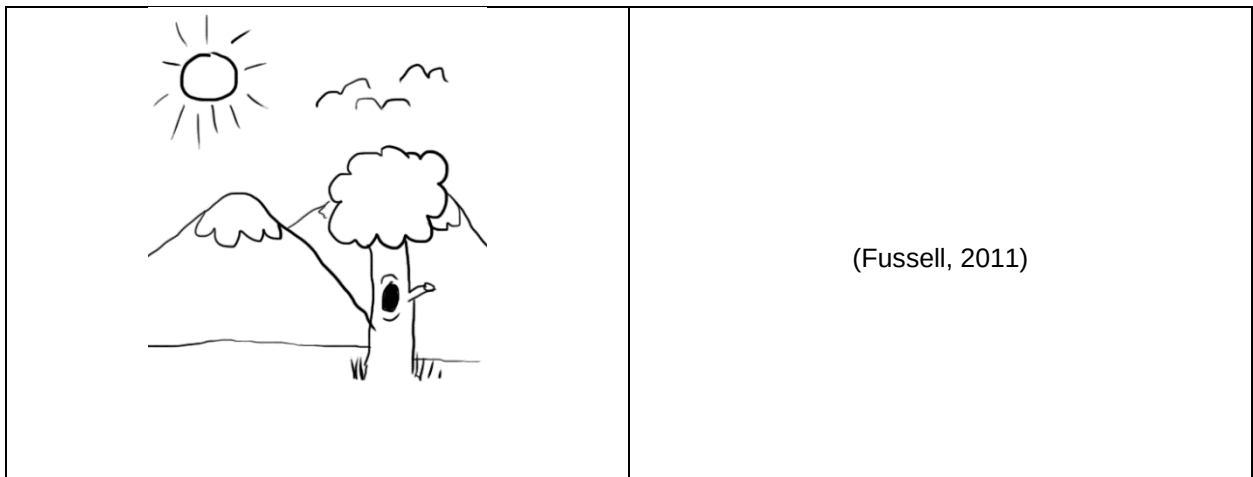


Figure 2-4: Example of a realism stage drawing

2.14.5 Stage 5: The pseudorealistic stage (11 to 13 years)

In the previous stages, the process in making the visual art was of great importance. In this stage, the product becomes most important to the learner. This stage is marked by two psychological differences. In the first difference, called visual, the individual's artwork has the appearance of looking at a stage presentation. The work is inspired by visual stimuli. The second difference is based on subjective experiences (Lowenfeld & Brittan, 1982). This type of nonvisual individual's artwork is based on subjective interpretations, emphasising emotional relationships to the external world as it relates to them. Visual types feel like spectators looking at their work from the outside. Nonvisual-minded individuals feel involved in their work as it relates to them in a personal way. The visual-minded learner has a visual concept of how colour changes under different external conditions. The nonvisual-minded learner sees colour as a tool to be used to reflect emotional reaction to the subject at hand (Lowenfeld & Brittan, 1982).



Figure 2-5: Example of a pseudorealistic stage drawing

2.14.6 Stage 6: The decision stage (13 to 16 years)

Learners in this stage will decide to continue drawing, or will view it as an activity without merit. Due to the level of self-criticism inherent in this stage, many learners (now young adults) view drawing as a skill that they do not possess. Others, however, decide to continue working on their drawing skills and continue to develop (Lowenfeld & Brittan, 1982).

An art-making activity may consist of formal visual art project lessons (such as creating a painting of an animal, making a shape collage, or drawing a self-portrait), informal process explorations (such as playing with clay or play dough), or at the visual art centre or visual art table (Koster, 2009). Visual art-viewing activities that can be tied to vocabulary introduction may include looking at a poster or printout of a famous painting, looking at illustrations in a picture book, or viewing learners' own visual artwork during a show-and-share. These activities provide an additional benefit in that they will aid in aesthetic development (Jarman, 2009; Klein, 1991; Koster, 2009; Read, 2008).

Participating in art-making programmes can enhance learners' literacy skills directly and indirectly. Arts in the early years, if done purposefully, can be a surplus of literary experiences for the learner (Camnizer, 2009; Eisner, 1998; Hart & Risley, 1999; Jenson, 2001; Klein, 1991; Read, 2008; Shumaker, 2009; Winters, 2004). For instance, a learner will pick up a crayon to scribble with long before he picks up a pencil to write. These scribbles are not just random marks on a paper (Taylor, 2010; Wachowiak & Clements, 2001). Young learners are exploring cause and effect, working on fine motor skills (the muscles that help them to hold increasingly more delicate/complex objects and control them accurately) as well as hand-eye coordination (Taylor, 2010). Secondly, visual art can encourage observation. Childhood visual art education can help to train learners to observe the beauty around them and to not take it all for granted. The observational aspect of visual art is important, as this can help learners use words, adjectives and nouns to describe what they see (Camnizer, 2009; Cathy, 2003; Jenson, 2001; Klein, 1991; Koroscik, 2001; Koster, 2009; McNiff, 1986). It can, among other things, encourage the identification of colours and reinforce the names of shapes (Ahlskog-Björkman & Björklund, 2016; Aerila & Rönkkö, 2015; Brown et al., 2010; Camnizer, 2009).

2.15 CREATIVE SKILLS OF 5- TO 6-YEAR-OLDS

Making and experiencing art encourages the development of useful life skills, such as visual and spatial perceptive skills, self-criticism, interest in new experiences, and the ability to learn from mistakes (Clarke & Budge, 2010; Nevanen et al., 2014a; Nevanen et al., 2014b; Winner & Hetland, 2008). Quality visual arts education has been shown to affect a student's ability to

concentrate, solve problems, and handle contradictions in peer relations (Kárpáti & Gyebnár, 2013; Klein, 1991; Nevanen et al., 2014a; Nevanen et al., 2014b; Pelletier, 1999; Piasta, 2016).

Through the work of developmental psychologist Piaget, we began to understand that knowledge is not innate, but rather actively constructed inside the mind (Du Toit & Kruger, 1991; Edwards, 2006). His cognitive constructivist theory showed us that learners progress at their own pace, always building on what they already know (Winters, 2004). Learners between the ages of 2 to 7 acquire representational skills such as language, mental imagery, symbolic play, and drawing. They have an egocentric view of the world and view situations from their own perspective (Gallagher & Reid, 2002; Inhelder & Piaget, 1958; Piaget, 1974; Piaget & Inhelder, 2008). Piaget and Inhelder noted that the onset of language is during this stage of development. Learners learn that they can use words as substitutes for objects and action. It is during this stage of development that learners move out of exploration and begin to focus on symbolic representation in their artwork (Inhelder & Piaget, 1958; Piaget, 1972, 1974; Piaget & Inhelder, 2008).

Nevanen et al. (2014a) state that the learner becomes familiar with the surrounding world through self-expression, which strengthens his ability to express feelings and emotions. Through developing sensitivity and building courage, self-knowledge and self-assurance, visual art education helps to grow a balanced individual and personality (Frisch, 2006; Hong et al., 2016; McNiff, 1986; Nevanen et al., 2014a; Pantaleo, 2016). Nevanen et al. (2014a) also indicate that the learner's abilities to cooperate and interact are also developed. As this type of education is based on meaningful and significant tasks, pupils develop persistence and coping abilities. These essential experiences build a base for the development of a scientific worldview, which also forms the basis for school learning. Visual art can also contribute to learners' psychological well-being and subsequently prepare them for learning (Alter-Muri & Vazzano, 2014; Day & Hurwitz, 2012; Dockrell et al., 2010; Eisner, 1998; Frisch, 2006; Hopperstad, 2008; Nevanen et al., 2014a; Schroeder, 2003).

As stated by Koster (2009), most learners in the 5- to 6-year-old age range display the following behaviours: they show increasing control over wrists and hands, and exhibit a more mature grip on drawing tools; can concentrate for a period of time (30 minutes or more) on a self-selected art activity; can work together in small groups of three to six on common projects, and are able to share some supplies; can follow a three-step direction; and can classify objects and make predictions.

An art-making activity may consist of formal visual art project lessons (such as creating a painting of an animal, making a shape collage, or drawing a self-portrait) or informal process explorations

(such as playing with clay or play dough) (Brown et al., 2010; Edwards, 2006; Frisch, 2006; Hallam et al., 2014; Koster, 2009; Nutbrown, 2013; Wachowiak & Clements, 2001). Art-making activities must be selected purposefully to enhance understanding and enrich the concepts learned during other formal lessons (De Melendez et al., 2000; Deaver, 2009; Kárpáti & Gyebnár, 2013; Stevenson & Deasy, 2005). An art-making experience should therefore be used as an opportunity to clarify and enhance a concept, and should not be viewed as a way to fill in time with “busy work”. Art-making experiences should also be used as ways to depict abstract ideas (Bresler & Thompson, 2002; Cutcher & Boyd, 2016; Day & Hurwitz, 2012; De Melendez et al., 2000; Lum, 2013; Nutbrown, 2013; Isenberg & Jalongo, 2013; Solomon, 2005; Wright, 1991).

Age-appropriate art-making activities for Grade R learners will be discussed next.

2.15.1 Age-appropriate art-making activities

Nutbrown (2013) asserts that learners’ creativity must be extended by the provision of support for their curiosity, exploration and play. They must be provided with opportunities to explore and share their thoughts, ideas and feelings, for example, through a variety of art, music, movement, dance, imaginative and role-play activities. Learners’ drawings were devalued by preschool teachers as far back as the 1950s (Nutbrown, 2013). Holt (2009) and Nutbrown (2013) registered concern at the poor standard of art-making activities and called for a new approach in the early years. Internationally, research into aspects of art-based learning often focuses more specifically on the practice of elements of skills in the visual arts, and the development of skill, rather than the experience and more holistic development and understanding of visual art (Nevanen et al., 2014b, Hopperstad, 2008, Nutbrown, 2013). Visual art education combines natural expression and integration: it stimulates a learner’s own thinking, connecting the magic of art to the logic of science and other learning areas. Frisch (2006), Scott (2006), and Nutbrown (2013) point out the importance of learners having opportunities to interact with adults in the development of their skills of graphic representation. According to Aerila and Rönkkö (2015), Alter-Muri (1997), Baker (2015), Nevanen et al. (2014a), Schutte (2005), Shumaker (2009), and Wright (1991), art-related learning should be the central way of doing and playing in preschool, because the high quality of art-related education has a positive effect on learners’ well-being, identity development, and creative thinking. They recognise the effects of art-related education on the learner and the learning or teaching environment, as well as the entire community. Art-related education should always focus on education through the arts – thus, not only education in the arts. This kind of action strengthens the welfare of children and increases their opportunities to participate. They further recognise a Vygotskian perspective on the development of sign and the importance of shared talk.

Visual art education supports knowledge learning, as it promotes the learning of symbolic language and the development of conceptual thinking (Nevanen et al., 2014a). A symbol can be described as an animate or inanimate object which represents another object, idea or concept (Krugel, 2005; Vygotsky, 1986; Vygotskii et al., 1998). Language can be described as a system of symbols or words which represents meanings and is combined in phrases and sentences consistent with the rules of grammar, with the result that they have meaning which are more than constituent words (Krugel, 2005; Vygotsky, 1986; Vygotskii et al., 1998). In school, the learner gets to know visual lingual symbols represented by specific combinations and groupings of the letters of the alphabet. He also gets to know the relationship between visual and speech symbols and their meanings (Diazgranados, Borisova, & Sarker, 2016; Du Toit & Kruger, 1991; Chan & Sylva, 2015; Hall, 2011; Hay & Fielding-Barnsley, 2007; Hoff, 2005; Neumann, Hood, & Neumann, 2016; Pretorius & Spaull, 2016).

Learners develop writing skills by creating a graphic symbol system to record their inner and outer observations (Cathy, 2003; Jenson, 2001; Koster, 2009). When learners are asked to respond creatively in response to an experience, they are being challenged to communicate their ideas and thoughts in a symbolic mode (Koster, 2009). Between the ages of 2 and 12, learners acquire the ability to make symbols and learn that these symbols can communicate to others. Responsive activities – such as making a painting about a visit to the zoo, and then talking or writing about it – help them use this developing symbol system, and refine the nature of their communication (Bromley, 1998; Camnizer, 2009; Jenson, 2001; Koster, 2009; Read, 2008; Solomon, 2005).

Visual art-making has essentially been connected to early childhood education and day-care in Europe. Several philosophers of education have considered that visual art-making is natural for and is useful to the learner's development (Aerila & Rönkkö, 2015; Tate, 2016; Strauch-Nelson, 2012; Weida, 2013). Visual art-making educates learners by requiring them to design, build, create, and solve problems. In visual art-making, there is development of problem-solving skills and the learner's thinking skills, along with the development of self-esteem through the joy of the success and through received feedback (Aerila & Rönkkö, 2015). It is, however, important to ensure that these art-making tasks are developmentally appropriate. Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) is based on the idea that teachers need to know how young learners typically develop, what variations may occur in this development, and how learners' learning and development can best be facilitated (Bromley, 1998; Camnizer, 2009; Jenson, 2001; Klein, 1991; Koster, 2009).

Learners of this age can participate in a wide range of self-selected individual and group explorations (Cathy, 2003; Klein, 1991; Koster, 2009; Solomon, 2005). They can be introduced

to visual art materials that require more physical control, such as using scissors and glue (Beaty, 2009). Learners can be expected to work on their own and get and put away their own materials, with occasional adult supervision (Koster, 2009). In creative and artistic expression, for young learners, there is no one correct response and no right or wrong way to create an art-making experience. The creative and artistic process is a safe way for young learners to try out, explore, experiment, and learn about themselves (Edwards, 2006).

The effective integration of visual arts is believed to help children to improve their reading and interpretation skills, develop their writing skills, enhance their mathematical and scientific reasoning abilities, develop their ability to focus on details in context, and enhance their skills to find inconsistencies related to mathematics and science (Appel, 2006; Öztürk & Erden, 2011). Moreover, the integration of visual arts into the curriculum helps children to find different methods of expression to understand their own cultures as well as others, and to improve their analytical thinking skills (Bloom & Hanny, 2006; Kerfoot & Simon-Vandenberg, 2015; Letts, 1991; Öztürk & Erden, 2011). Visual arts also help teachers to determine learners' understanding by using learners' products as a basis to show their progress in learning new content (Letts, 1991; Öztürk & Erden, 2011). Finally, art provides opportunities for learners with one more language to represent their products and work. In this way, teachers can better understand learners' current knowledge of a concept or understanding of an experience. Literature that relates to the research problem were consulted (Edwards, 2014; Öztürk & Erden, 2011; Tate, 2016; Wright, 1991).

2.16 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter, the theoretical framework underpinning early literacy development was explained, with a specific focus on the promotion of oral skills by means of art-making. Piaget's developmental processes was used as a framework to explain the typical development of oral language of grade R learners. Furthermore, the chapter described the stages of cognitive development, with a specific focus on the pre-operational stage as focus of this study. This was followed by a review of oral proficiency as an emergent literacy skill in Grade R, and as a predictor of successful future reading skills. The importance of vocabulary instruction in a multicultural classroom for ESL learners was described, followed by a discussion on the utilisation of art-making to promote oral proficiency. Additionally, the power of art-making as a semiotic tool through which learners can communicate and through which oral proficiency can be enhanced, was described. Lowenfeld's stages of artistic development was discussed, with an emphasis on the preschematic phase in which Grade R learners find themselves. The chapter concluded with

a discussion on age-appropriate art-making activities through which learners can develop oral proficiency and develop holistically.

In the next chapter, the research process will be described in detail. This will include the research design and methodology of the study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 2, the review of the body of scholarship on the topic of promoting oral proficiency was examined, and the question, “how can art-making promote oral proficiency in Grade R?” was posed. Through this investigation, it became clear that art-making can indeed be a powerful tool for promoting oral proficiency in general (Armbruster & Osborn, 2001; Bromley, 1998; Camnizer, 2009; Edwards, 2006; Eisner, 1998; Hall, 2011; Jenson, 2001; Klein, 1991; Koster, 2009; Olivier et al., 2010; Read, 2008; Shumaker, 2009; Taylor, 2010; Winters, 2004). In this chapter, the research design and qualitative approach will be discussed, followed by a discussion regarding the strategies used to conduct the empirical inquiry.

Research has shown that visual art and language are both symbol systems used to convey a message or feeling (Cathy, 2003; Koster, 2009; Read, 2008; Taylor, 2010; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). Examining various forms of literature on the subject, there appears to be little empirical research on the topic of art-making and oral proficiency in Grade R (Camnizer, 2009; Cloete, 1992; Darby & Catterall, 1994; De Klerk, 2002; Koster, 2009; Read, 2008; Taylor, 2010; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Winters, 2004).

Taking the above-mentioned into consideration, the following specific research questions are posed:

The primary problem was that learners did not understand what was being taught in Grade R because of inadequate oral proficiency skills. The major question that this study addressed was: “How can art-making activities be utilised to promote oral proficiency?”

The following secondary problems arose from the primary problem:

- How does a learner’s vocabulary influence their oral proficiency?
- Why is vocabulary and oral proficiency important for emergent literacy skills of Grade R learners?
- How can art-making activities be utilised for enrichment of vocabulary in Grade R.

3.2 AIM OF THE STUDY

Ultimately, this research wanted to determine whether art-making activities can be utilised to promote oral proficiency in Grade R. Emergent literacy skills lay the foundation for reading skills

and learning. Learners with poor oral proficiency skills need to be exposed to as much new vocabulary teaching and learning as possible in order to promote oral proficiency, and to help them develop to their full potential (Baker, 2008; Biersteker, Dawes, Hendricks, & Tredoux, 2016; Butler & Hakuta, 2009; Dockrell et al., 2010; Morgan & Meier, 2008; Saito, 2015; Stein, 1999). Due to my involvement with Grade R ESL learners, I experienced on a weekly basis that ESL learners did not understand classroom instruction and struggled to participate during group activities. I therefore wanted to get involved in research on how to promote oral proficiency, and how art-making activities can be utilised to develop Grade R learners' oral proficiency skills.

The following objectives were set up to help with the research: to (1) establish the influence of Grade R learners' vocabulary on their oral proficiency; to (2) determine why vocabulary and oral proficiency are important for later learning; and to (3) explore how art-making can be utilised to promote oral proficiency in Grade R, especially in a South African context.

As Mason (1996, p. 3) notes, "Qualitative research aims to produce rounded understandings on the basis of rich, contextual and detailed data." Therefore, a qualitative case study methodology was chosen. A qualitative approach allowed me to identify strategies that would provide an opportunity to communicate using new words. A narrative text for the study was selected, because narrative texts tell stories. In this way, the narrative study easily lent itself to being represented in a variety of ways.

The research was exploratory and evaluative. Firstly, the study was exploratory as I gained familiarity with or achieved new insights into learners' acquisition of vocabulary, uncovering the specific strategies they used to understand and use new words, and then discovering how art-making can facilitate these processes. Secondly, the study was evaluative in that the students' successes in using new vocabulary correctly, were assessed. This methodology corresponded directly with the research questions, which were to (1) determine how a learner's vocabulary influences their oral proficiency; (2) why vocabulary and oral proficiency is important for emergent literacy skills of Grade R learners; and to (3) explore how art-making activities can be utilised for enrichment of vocabulary in Grade R.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

It is generally accepted that the use of various methods of data collection will establish the credibility and trustworthiness of the data (Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Art-making activities were structured around the theme discussed during a particular week and included various purposefully chosen art-making methods. These included, but were not limited to, collage, painting, drawing, structure-building, and working with clay or play

dough. In-depth, individual dialogue took place with the purpose of establishing the baseline level of oral proficiency of learners. Each art-making activity was divided into two 45-minute sessions. The first session focused on theme introduction and clarification of new vocabulary. The second session focused on art-making and the reinforcement of vocabulary.

Learners worked in groups of 2 to 4 to encourage them to converse in English. All activities were video, audio and photo recorded with permission of parents. These recordings were done to ensure the accurate transcribing of the research process. A photo record was kept and a CD with images of completed artwork will be made available on request. Original artworks were kept for the duration of the study. The programme ran for 12 weeks.

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), the general strategy for solving a research problem is referred to as the research design. The research design therefore better describes the purpose of the study and clarifies the research question (Flick, 2009; Henning, 2004; Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Silverman, 2000; Willig, 2008). The research design provides the overall structure for the procedures I follow, the data I collect, and the data analysis I conduct. The research design focuses on the systematic investigation of the research problem, as well as the aim of the study (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000; Bouma & Ling, 2004; Henning, 2004; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Shumaker, 2009). A qualitative design is appropriate for this study because of the mutual interaction between the learners (participants) and me during the research process (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000; Bouma & Ling, 2004; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Shumaker, 2009; Silverman, 2000). According to Bouma and Ling (2004), a qualitative research design enables me to answer questions relating to a specific observable fact. Kumar states that qualitative research can be seen as an unstructured, flexible or open research design with an emphasis on the description of variables, with fewer cases being studied (Flick, 2009; Henning, 2004; Kumar, 2005; Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Shumaker, 2009; Silverman, 2000). Typically, qualitative research is not concerned with large numbers of participants, but rather with a smaller group of participants, with the aim of obtaining in-depth information about their experiences and practices (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000; Flick, 2009; Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Mason, 1996; Palys, 1997; Silverman, 2000; Willig, 2008).

The data collection resources used during the study is illustrated in Figure 3-1, and will be discussed thereafter.

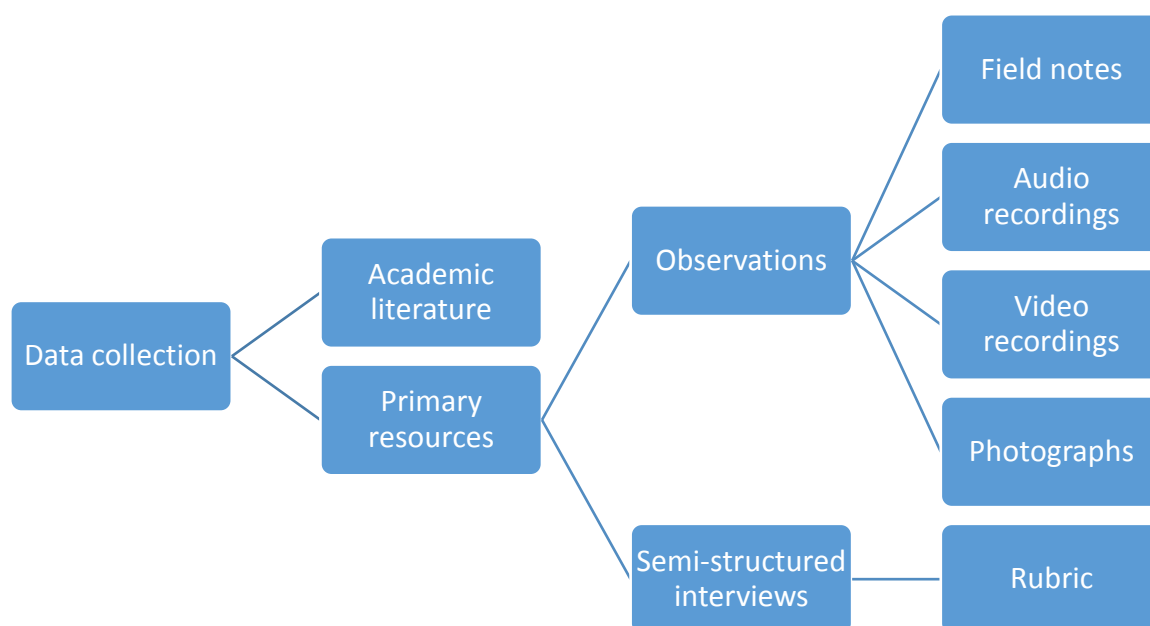


Figure 3.3-1: Data collection resources

3.3.1 Academic literature

Academic literature that relates to the research problem were consulted. Various databases including, but not limited to EBSCOhost (ERIC & Academic Search Premier) and ScienceDirect, were used in the search for relevant literature relating to the research problem and the goal of the research. In addition to books and conference proceedings, knowledge through observation and consultation with supervisors and other experts were also reviewed, and relevant literature was included in the review of the body of scholarship.

3.3.2 Primary resources

Primary resources are unpublished data, obtained directly from participants or organisations, such as reports, correspondence, and so forth. However, it could also be published in the form of a letter in a newspaper. Primary sources are therefore any original source documents. Previously published work in any form – such as books, articles, and so forth – are classified as secondary sources (Barone & Eisner, 2011; Bauer & Gaskell, 2000; Bouma & Ling, 2004; Mason, 1996; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Nieuwenhuis, 2007).

In an effort to compile impartial and accurate primary data, the following tools were utilised during the study:

3.3.2.1 Observations

As stated by Nieuwenhuis (2007), observations can be seen as a process that helps to record participants' behavioural patterns without communicating with them. Observation is the systematic process of recording the behavioural patterns of participants without necessarily questioning or communicating with them. Using observations to collect data enabled me to be flexible, and I could have made use of unforeseen data sources as they occurred (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). It was an everyday activity whereby not only the senses but also intuition was used to gather bits of data, and it was a very time-consuming process. As a qualitative data-collection technique, observation was used to enable me to gain a deeper insight into and understanding of the phenomenon being observed (Barone & Eisner, 2011; Bouma & Ling, 2004; Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Audio, video and photo recordings were also made of individual learners to do a baseline assessment and inform the developmental process.

I observed the Grade R learners during vocabulary introductory and art-making sessions over a period of three months (April to July 2012). The observations were made twice a week during the various activities.

The following recording tools were used in the collection of data to support the data collection during observations:

3.3.2.1.1 Field notes

A field note is "a detailed, continuous or sequential account of what is observed" (Mouton, 2009, p. 243-244; Nieuwenhuis, p. 16). The field notes therefore not only focused on the actions, but also on the situation, and tried to describe the action in the context in which it occurred.

As stated by Maree and Van der Westhuizen (2007), and Nieuwenhuis (2007), field notes are a log of activities that give clear information about work patterns. Feedback from the parents of participating learners about the progress of learners were not included during the planning of the study. However, it became clear that the parents wanted to share their observations and discuss the learners' progress. Therefore, discussions were held with parents and valuable insight was gained, as discussed in Chapter 5. These discussions were recorded in a field note.

My field notes were used to gather information relevant to this study. The report helped to identify issues, concerns and the influence that art-making activities had on learners' oral proficiency during the project.

3.3.2.1.2 Audio recordings

Audio recordings of the learners while speaking to the teacher or other learners were made. This was important to obtain baseline data when the study first started, and again when learners participated in a variety of speaking activities.

3.3.2.1.3 Video recordings

The art-making process was video recorded. These recordings were made to ensure accurate transcribing of the research process. Video recordings of the learners speaking to the teacher or other learners were made. This was important to obtain baseline data when the study first started, and again when learners participated in a variety of speaking activities. Video recording supported information gathered by means of the field notes, and was therefore not considered a measuring tool. Video recordings will not be made available due to sensitive ethical issues.

3.3.2.1.4 Photographs

A digital camera was used to take photographs of learners during various activities. These photographs were used to support information gathered by means of the field notes, and were not considered a measuring tool. The main purpose of the photographs was to capture final product of each visual art-making activity.

3.3.2.2 Semi-structured interviews

An interview can be defined as a conversation taking place between a participant and an interviewer in order to help the interviewer to collect descriptive data and to learn about the participant's beliefs, opinions and views (Eisner & Day, 2004; Flick, 2009; Henning, 2004; Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Silverman, 2000; Willig, 2008). As stated by Leedy and Ormrod (2005), making use of semi-structured interviews allowed me to be more flexible with the questions being asked. Open-ended questions were used for these types of interviews to help explore views and opinions of the participants. An advantage of open-ended questions was that I gained unforeseen information, such as progress noticed by parents.

Pre- and post-programme semi-structured interviews were conducted with Grade R learners. The semi-structured interviews consisted of predetermined questions about certain topics (Bouma & Ling, 2004; Eisner & Day, 2004; Flick, 2009; Henning, 2004; Mason, 1996; Nieuwenhuis, 2007). This type of interview enabled me to ask follow-up questions, as indicated in Addendum B.

Questions that arose during the interviews included open-ended questions, such as: “Are you scared? Do you want a teacher to come and sit with you?” These questions and more are included in Addendum B.

A rubric was used during pre- and post-programme interviews to assist with the data collection. The rubric was used to record the presence or absence of behaviour. The response was usually recorded in the form of a tick. I also included important information. These notes might have had an impact on the information recorded that day and might have cued me to re-evaluate the information on the rubric. Sample questions for the pre- and post-programme interviews are included in Addendum B. A sample of the pre- and post-interview rubric is displayed in Table 3-1 (and also in Table 1-1 of Chapter 1).

Table 3-1: Pre- and post-programme interview rubric

Score	1	2	3	4	5
Confidence	Learner displayed little confidence during interview. Learner needed support of a friend or class teacher	Learner displayed little confidence during interview. Learner did not need support of a friend or class teacher	Learner displayed some confidence during interview without support of a friend or class teacher.	Learner displayed some confidence during interview. Learner asked for word or question not understood to be repeated	Learner spoke with confidence and was eager to communicate
Vocabulary	Only nodded No verbal response	One-word answers	Use of code-switching in sentences	Use of incorrect word sounding similar to appropriate words	Correct use of all English words
Sentence structure	No verbal response	One-word answers	Incorrect grammar and tenses	Incorrect grammar or tenses	Correct grammar and tenses
Fluency of speech	No verbal response	One-word answers with hesitation	Short sentences with hesitation and stuttering	Short sentences with hesitation or stuttering	Fluent speech

3.3.3 Crystallisation

As mentioned in Chapter 1, crystallisation was utilised by using multiple methods of data collection and analysis in order to validate the results (Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2007; Nieuwenhuis, 2007). These methods included observations, semi-structured interviews, field notes, audio and video recordings, as well as photographs. Each data collection method served as a unique source of information on the subject of study, namely the way art-making can be utilised to promote oral proficiency in Grade R.

As mentioned in chapter 1, these various dimensions could be compared to the different shades of a crystal. According to Richardson (cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 245), the world exists of “far more than three sides”. These multidimensional forms enable a deeper understanding of the topic under study. Figure 3-2 illustrates the various data collection strategies that were used.

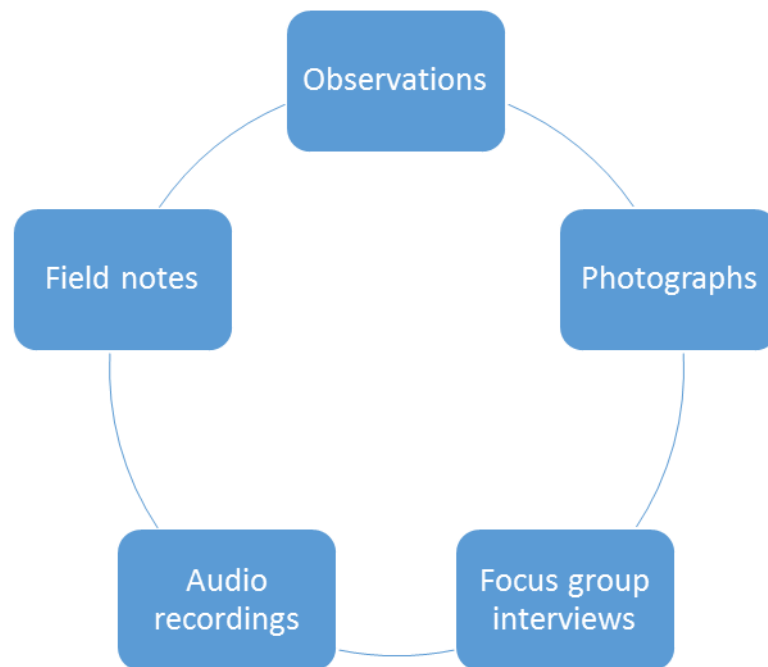


Figure 3-2: Data collection methods used to ensure crystallisation of data

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data was analysed through an interpretative paradigm. Interpretivism was suitable for this study because it dealt with the way people reacted to and reflected on a situation according to their own experiences and ideas. As behaviour is constituted by social conventions, interpretation was required: the facts do not speak for themselves. No distinction was made between subject (the researcher) and the object (the event being studied). In interpretivism, the social context, conventions, norms and standards of the particular person or community were crucial elements in assessing and understanding human behaviour (the truth is relevant and subject to the subjective elements) (Jansen, 2007; Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Interpretivism foregrounds the meaning that individuals or communities assign to their experiences, therefore intersubjective meanings are crucial in achieving understanding and meaning (Nieuwenhuis, 2007).

The steps described by Leedy and Ormrod (2005) were followed during the data analysis: I started the process of data analysis by organising the information related to the study in a logical sequence. The categorisation of data helped with the grouping of related information. Concurrently, I conducted open coding by marking or highlighting and coding sentences and phrases in the transcripts according to analytical and theoretical ideas developed during the literature study (Willig, 2008). Focused coding was applied to develop a set of analytical categories used for grouping topics that relate to each other so as to arrive at major themes (Nieuwenhuis, 2007).

3.4.1 Participation procedures and duration

In this qualitative study, the population was purposefully selected to ensure that individual participants had the best experience in the field studied, as suggested by Henning (2004).

Sampling was purposeful and methodological, and was based on open case-sensitive approaches, like the field notes for collecting the data (Flick, 2009). I identified and located individuals who were knowledgeable about the phenomenon, or in the case of this study, learners who might have lacked oral proficiency and needed support to achieve reading readiness.

Purposeful sampling did not aim at involving many randomly selected participants, but a few information-rich key participants who could provide many insights about the topic. In this research study, the population was drawn from Grade R learners at a private school in the North West Province (Dr Kenneth Kaunda District). In-depth individual dialogues took place between the participants and me. The formation of these dialogues took pragmatic reasons into consideration: selecting a homogeneous group; keeping the group small; the limitation of costs and time; and easy access for me as I resided and worked in this region at the time.

Grade R learners who were identified by teachers as having oral proficiency difficulties were considered for the study. Each teacher was asked to nominate as many learners as possible whom they felt could benefit from the study. The criteria for nominating learners were: (1) learners had to be first or second language English speakers; (2) learners had to be in Grade R and between the ages of 5 and 6; (3) learners who had been diagnosed with hearing, speech or intellectual barriers were not eligible to participate; (4) learners had to display signs of oral proficiency problems; and (5) learners had to have permission from their parents to participate in the study.

Thirty-five (n=35) parents expressed an interest. Signed informed consent forms were received back from only twenty-one (n=21) parents. The twenty-one (n=21) learners in two Grade R

classes in the same school were included in the study. The group comprised of learners speaking the following languages: 3 English (n=3), 9 Setswana (n=9), 6 Sesotho (n=6), 1 Afrikaans (n=1), 1 Czech (n=1), and 1 isiXhosa (n=1). Following informed consent from the parents, each learner was given the opportunity to participate and was also given the choice to withdraw from the study at any given time.

Learners' participation and demographics are displayed in Figures 3-3 and 3-4.

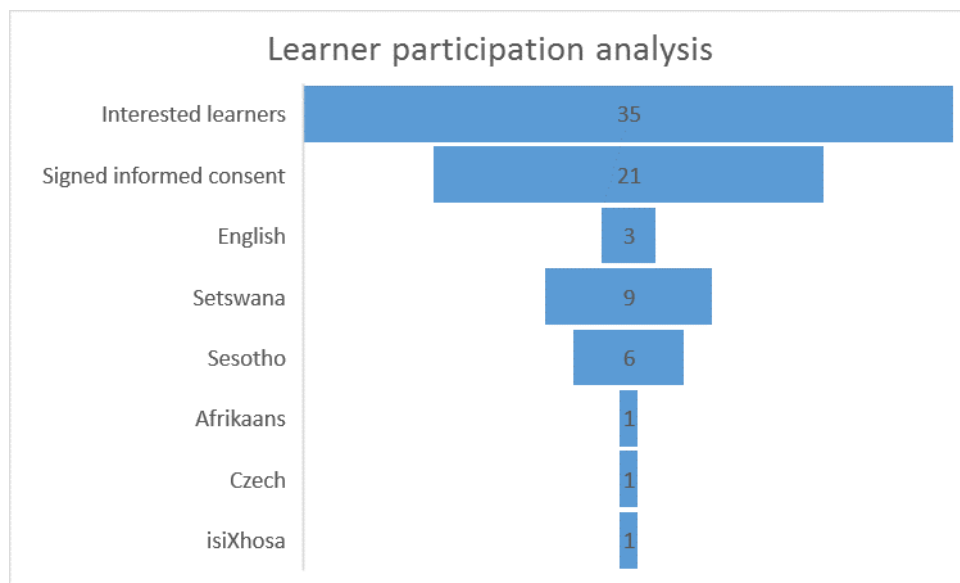


Figure 3-3: Learners' participation description

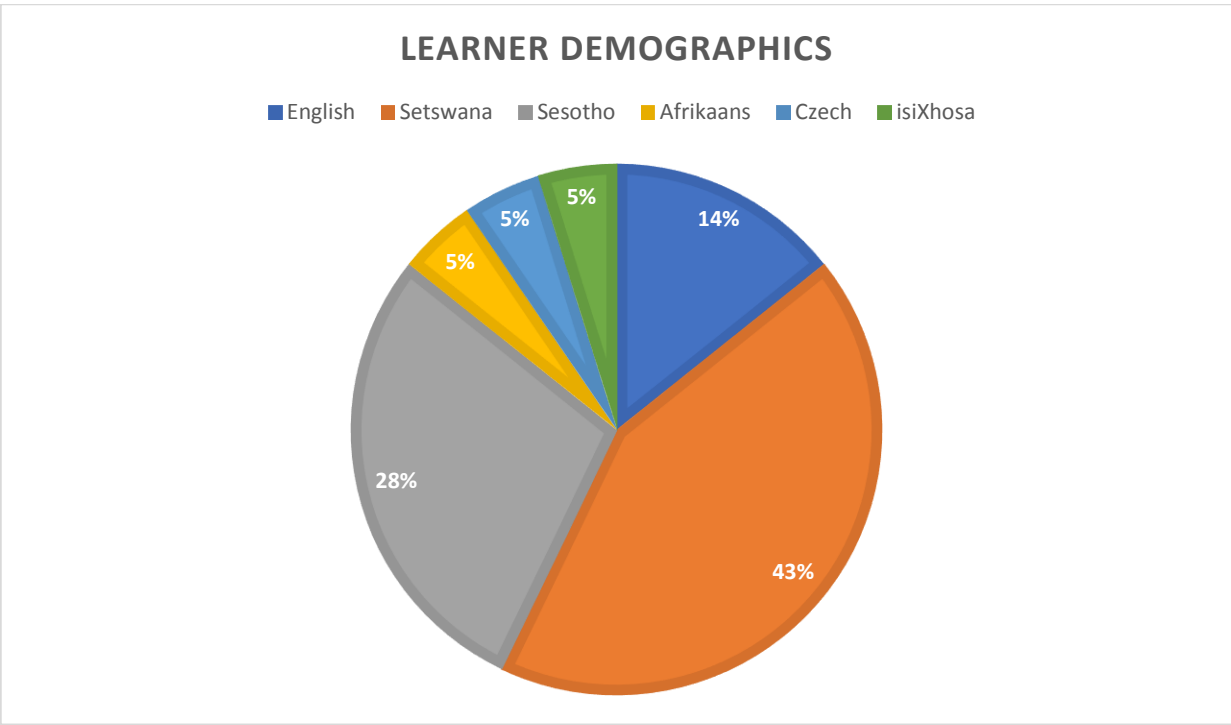


Figure 3-4: Participating learners’ demographics

The timeframe for data collection is displayed in Figure 3-5:

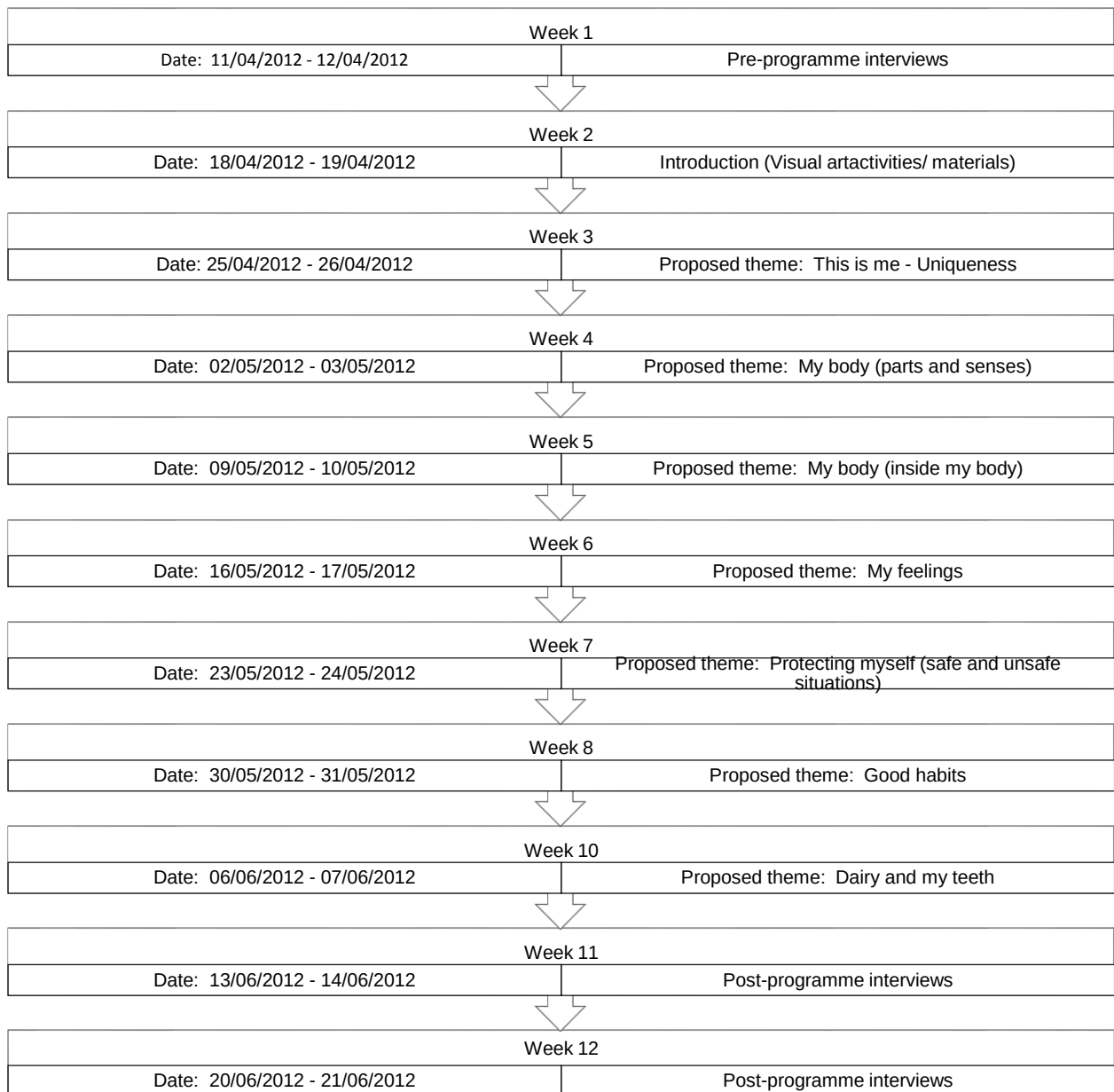


Figure 3-5: The timeframe and duration of data collection

3.5 CONTENT ANALYSIS

Content analysis was used to analyse data when I made use of field notes, open-ended question interviews or focus groups to collect data. By using qualitative content analysis, I investigated and described the observations, semi-structured interviews, parent discussion interviews and observations. Qualitative content analysis is a detailed and systematic examination of content, and focuses on the interpretation and understanding of participants' perspectives during the research. This method aims to find patterns and themes in the collected data (Barone & Eisner, 2011; Flick, 2009; Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2007; Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Willig, 2008).

As proposed by Leedy and Ormrod (2005), as well as Nieuwenhuis (2007), the information was organised and categorised by looking for similarities and differences that would help to confirm or refute the theory. I made use of observations to categorise the data and themes that came forth from the semi-structured interviews.

Information was sorted according to aspects such as how many of the new vocabulary were used during activities, and how learners' confidence improved with regard to speaking English. I then drew conclusions about the findings of the table.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the guidelines and procedures of the ethics committee of the North-West University were followed for the duration of the research. The following ethical principles, as outlined by Bouma and Ling (2004), as well as Henning (2004), were also followed:

- all information was handled as confidential, stored securely, and was processed with consistency;
- participants had the opportunity to make an informed decision whether they wanted to participate in the study, and they were ensured that they could withdraw from the study at any given time;
- before data collection commenced, written, informed consent had been obtained from the school as well as from the parents of learners who were interested in participating in the study;
- all participants were handled with respect and compassion, and participants were not influenced negatively;
- the rights and feelings of participants were always considered as sensitive and were approached with care to ensure that participants did not suffer any losses because of the study. No potential conflict of interest was foreseen.

3.6.1 Informed consent

Parents with learners in Grade R were contacted via a written letter explaining the study and asking for permission to include the learner in the study (see Addendum A). I received a signed consent form from the parents/guardian of the learner, stating their willingness to participate in the study. The study was explained to learners, and learners were asked to give their consent to participate.

3.6.2 Data storage

Copies of recordings (audio, video and photo recordings) will be kept safe for a period of 7 years, after which it will be destroyed as stated in the terms by the Ethics Committee. The data were also entered into a software program and stored on my password-protected computer for as long as needed, and will be deleted. Learners' artworks were kept for the duration of the study. Only members from the research team will have access to the data.

3.6.3 Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity

Participants and I had to have a clear understanding regarding the confidentiality of the results and the findings of the study. All participants' information provided during this study were kept private, and the results were presented in an anonymous manner so as to protect the identities of the participants. With permission from parents, legal guardians and learners, audio, video and photo recordings were stored for later evaluation and representation. These recordings were done to ensure accurate transcribing of the research process.

During presentation of research papers at conferences and other academic summits, it is sometimes helpful to include pictures and video clips in presentations. Permission to use photos and other recordings of art activities after completion of the study, will be obtained from parents, legal guardians and learners. The names and identities of all learners will still be private, the name of the school will not be revealed, and learners' faces will be blurred to ensure anonymity².

No possible risks to participants were envisaged. In the event of questions or activities that may have been perceived as threatening or causing discomfort, participants could have declined to answer such questions without providing any reason for doing so. This study had a very low threat of any risks or discomfort to the participants.

3.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter, the interpretivistic paradigm on which the qualitative research design was based, was presented. Thereafter, I elaborated on the data-generation process, as well as the way in which the data analysis was done. The chapter concluded with a discussion on the ethical procedures that were followed in order to protect learners who took part in the research.

In the next chapter, the data collection and analysis will be discussed against the background of

² Please note that pseudonyms were used to protect learners' identity.

the theoretical description done in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 4: DATA COLLECTION AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 explains how art-making sessions were facilitated in order to promote oral proficiency of Grade R learners. The various art activities and vocabulary instruction that accompanied art activities will be explained. This chapter will also reflect on the pre-programme baseline assessments, and will describe the way in which data were collected and interpreted. Several types of data were collected during this study, including: (a) field notes (based on informal interviews with students or parents, observations, and art-making sessions); (b) visual art samples; (c) recordings of learner interaction (video, audio and photo recordings); (d) interview notes and rubrics. The chapter will conclude with individual patterns of change in oral proficiency by means of a discussion of three individual case studies.

The field notes and samples were used in different ways. Firstly, field notes and samples were examined throughout the programme, looking for individual progress and significant moments of student growth in understanding of new vocabulary and assignments, and using English to communicate. Secondly, these field notes and samples were used during informal discussions with parents to compare learners' progress at home with progress shown during art-making sessions. Here, the field notes and samples were used to inform conversations about learners' progress, the strengths of the programme, and opinions held by learners and parents. Thirdly, field notes and samples were used as qualitative data references throughout the analyses of case studies and art-making sessions.

4.2 PRE-PROGRAMME BASELINE ASSESSMENT

Each student was interviewed for a baseline oral proficiency assessment which focused on the use of vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar, fluency of speech, and confidence during communication. During interviews, I made note of any difficulties, distinguishing any errors the students had made (e.g., substitutions with home language words; omissions of words important for sentence structure; and repetition of words, or the use of incorrect words). To analyse these pre-programme interviews, the number of mistakes made was tallied and the total was recorded in order to be compared with the post-programme interviews (see Addendum C for the analysis).

4.2.1 Instruction comprehension analysis

To gain more insight into how the students were comprehending instructions, every art-making activity was recorded via a field note, video and audio recordings, as well as photos. Every art-making activity started with the introduction and explanation of new vocabulary. Instructions for the art-making activity were given without giving learners an example of the finished product. Learners were then divided into their groups to complete the activity without my input. Discussions within the group of what was expected of them were recorded in order to evaluate whether the instructions given were understood correctly. The execution of the art-making activity and the final product were photographed to strengthen the findings.

The data were analysed on three separate levels: 1) individually; 2) comparatively across the twenty-one (n = 21) learners; and 3) globally across the whole project.

Individually: Each week the students' vocabulary, fluency and comprehension were compared to that of the previous week in order to identify patterns that might suggest why each learner may have been struggling with oral proficiency. This comparison of each group's use of new vocabulary offered insight into students' progress with regard to oral proficiency.

The comparisons were done by transcribing audio and video recordings. The incidences of new vocabulary that was used, were counted and recorded. The analysis of these transcriptions is noted in Addendum C.

Comparatively across all learner participants: To compare the results of learners' pre- and post-programme interviews, the overall averages and the averages for each art-making activity were contrasted against each other. The purpose of this was to determine whether arts-integration was an effective instructional and evaluative tool for students across different levels of competency.

Overall analysis: Firstly, all recorded group discussions were transcribed. Then progress in each learner's oral proficiency was colour-coded. For example, if a learner improved his/her use of new vocabulary, the growth was coloured red. If the usage of new vocabulary stayed the same, the finding was coloured yellow. Having these data put together and coloured in this visual way allowed for the identification of patterns of change. Secondly, the students' oral proficiency with regard to fluency and miscue were totalled for the pre- and post-programme interviews. A row in the overall table was added, which illustrated the overall change that occurred throughout the programme (between the pre- and post-tests) and across each of the oral proficiency focusses. This provided insight into whether less proficient learners could improve their global oral proficiency by participating in an art-integrated strategic programme.

4.2.2 Recordings

Video, audio and photo recordings were used to capture the learners' interaction and use of new vocabulary during art-making activities. These recordings were used only by me and remained confidential for the duration of the study. As noted above, all video and audio recordings were transcribed. The photos were also used as qualitative data references throughout the analyses of case studies and art-making sessions, as mentioned earlier.

The analyses of the photos and transcriptions showed that learners did not only use new vocabulary that was explicitly taught, but they also picked up new words from peers. Although the frequency of incidental vocabulary acquisition was not calculated, it was apparent in the improvement of sentence structure and fluency of speech during the post-programme interviews.

4.2.3 Interview notes and reflective discussions

Parents of learners participating in the study wanted to partake and had questions about the progress in oral proficiency during the art-making sessions. The parents of some (n=5) of the learners were eager to communicate the learners' progress in oral proficiency at home as well as at school. They indicated that by the fourth week, learners were communicating with more confidence in English as well as in their mother tongue. Fifteen (n=15) parents communicated that the Grade R teacher was astonished with learners' progress in the class situation, and that eight (n=8) learners showed significant changes in both vocabulary use and sentence structure.

According to the parents (n=15), learners enjoyed the vocabulary and art-making sessions immensely. The parents stated that learners were more eager to go to school on the days these sessions took place, and that the learners would eagerly communicate what they had learned. Parents (n=9) mentioned that learners looked forward to the art-making sessions with anticipation, and asked parents to come and have a look at the finished product when they came to collect them. From these discussions, it was clear that the art-making sessions encouraged spontaneous communication. Subsequently, oral proficiency was promoted through the use of new vocabulary taught during art-making sessions.

The above-mentioned correlates with findings of Nevanen et al. (2014a), who stated that children developed the following skills during art-making activities:

- more joy for learning new skills;
- feelings of success;
- courage and self-confidence;

- cooperation skills;
- performance abilities; and
- tolerance of differences.

Interview notes and reflective discussions with parents were used to demonstrate individual growth qualitatively. Discussions with parents were only noted in the field notes, and were not audio or video recorded. The discussions with parents remained informal for the duration of the study.

The notes from parent discussions, running records, and audio- and video-recorded discussions were used throughout the individual case studies.

4.3 PRACTICAL ART-MAKING SESSIONS

The research study lasted for a total of seven weeks in the school term from April 2012 to June 2012. It consisted of three phases:

- Phase I: April 2012
- Phase II: May – mid-June 2012
- Phase III: mid-June – end June 2012

4.3.1 Phase I: Pre-programme interviews and introduction to art-making

Starting in April, each participating learner was asked to orally answer a few questions about their day. This was done to determine each learner's individual level of oral proficiency. The same set of questions were asked again at the end of the programme to determine learners' progress. These questions are included in Addendum B. The first sessions (pre-programme interviews) did not entail any art-making activities. It was the sole purpose of this session to have a discussion with learners to form a baseline of their oral proficiency skills.

4.3.1.1 Overview of the pre-programme interview

During the pre-programme interview conducted with each of the participating learners, there were no art-making activities. The pre-programme interviews were voice and video recorded. This was necessary for the following reasons.

Firstly, when performing or creating, learners act differently if they believe someone is judging their work (Danko-McGhee, 2006; Feeney & Moracvick, 1987; Nutbrown, 2013). Secondly, by using a voice recorder and not a notepad, I hoped that learners would feel less "judged". By placing a voice recorder on the table, I could accurately capture learners' responses to questions

and obtain data in a less obtrusive way. Thirdly, due to my interaction with the learners – by communicating with them – it was not always possible to make anecdotal notes: performance texts can occur quickly and vital understanding represented by facial expressions, glances, body movements and proximity can be missed in observational notes. Lastly, it was the aim of the sessions to provide learners with an environment in which they felt secure enough to acquire new vocabulary needed to complete art-making activities. For me to be available to learners whenever they needed guidance or assistance, voice, video and photo recordings were used to capture data without interfering with the interaction. These modes of recording (video recording, photographing, and audio recording) were believed to actively capture the verbal and nonverbal dynamics of learners' oral proficiency. It allowed me to return to the data at any time in the following months to transcribe lessons and to look for learner progress.

4.3.1.2 Introduction to art-making

During the first introductory session (the first time learners participated in art-making activities), learners' behaviour during art-making activities was recorded. How good instructions were understood, and the level of self-confidence with which tasks were carried out, were noted. The way learners communicated with each other was also recorded.

This first introductory session offered learners a chance to familiarise themselves with the art-making process. Most of the learners were hesitant to take initiative during art-making activities and anticipated structured teacher guidance. The aim of the study was not for learners to copy teacher-illustrated visual artwork, and it was therefore important for learners to feel comfortable with taking risks and exploring different ways of problem-solving. This phase of the research gave me the time to start forming relationships with all the learners. It was important that learners felt comfortable enough to communicate in English and to participate in unguided art-making activities to ensure a positive research outcome. The sessions focused specifically on the experimentation with different visual art materials and helping learners to form relationships between themselves. This week also gave me opportunities to observe the learners and it became evident that some of the learners felt shy and insecure. When asked questions, many would give simple one-word answers, and when asked to elaborate, some completely shied away.

4.3.1.3 Introductory art-making session

The figure below shows examples of the introductory art-making session.



Figure 4.3-1: Examples of the introductory art-making activity

Table 4-1: Phase I schedule

Date	Research Conducted
18/04	• Pre-programme interviews
19/04	• Complete pre-programme interviews
25/04	• Familiarise learners with art-making process • Lead learners to exploration of visual art materials.
26/04	• Help learners to form relationships between themselves • Observed students during art-making activity

4.3.2 Art-making and vocabulary instruction

Most research took place over the next month and a half, from the beginning of May to the middle of June 2012. During this time, learners attended a 45-minute session twice a week with me. In total, 14 art-making sessions focusing on enriching vocabulary and promoting oral proficiency were taught.

Each art-based session focused on the introduction and application of five new words. A general description of the art-making sessions will now follow. Each week during the first contact session, I would begin by introducing a specific theme or topic. Learners would sit down on a carpet and I would first give a broad overview of the theme. The five new words would then be introduced to learners using various learning aids. Learners were encouraged to ask questions and to take part

in discussions. I would ask questions and encourage learners to give full-sentence answers. After the introduction of the theme, learners were given the opportunity to interact with learning aids, and discussed objects and concepts among themselves. I was available to learners to answer any questions they might have had or to explain any concepts they were unsure of. When I felt that learners understood all concepts, and that learners could use new vocabulary accurately, the art-making activity was explained.

These explanations did not include a step-by-step instruction from me. I would rather state the main objective of the activity and provided learners with the materials to complete it without giving them a clear indication of what the result should look like. This was done to give learners the opportunity to discuss the activity among themselves and to decide as a group how to achieve the set goal. I recognised the learners' need for individuality and realised that when an example of the completed product was provided by me, learners would feel obligated to create a copy of the original. This would also not show that they understood the assignment.

4.3.2.1 Art-making sessions

The next step was to divide learners into three groups. These groups stayed the same for the duration of the study to help learners to form relationships, and to become comfortable when communicating with each other in English. Each group would decide on their own plan of action for making the visual artwork and dividing tasks among themselves. The groups were structured in such a way that learners did not all speak the same home language and was therefore compelled to communicate in English to achieve the set outcome. After learners were divided into the different groups, each group chose a table/visual art station to work at. They used materials provided to create their version of the visual artwork. It was important that learners understood that there was no right or wrong outcome. The focus was on the process and not the product, and exploring and communicating was more important than what the result looked like.

Each week employed a different art-making strategy and different art-making materials. These included: drawing; painting; clay-modelling; construction; face paint; cutting; collage; pasting and colouring.

It should be noted that the intent of this research was not to compare the artwork or artistic ability of learners, nor was it to determine which art-making activity worked best for each learner; but rather to take a holistic look at all the art-making sessions (including vocabulary instruction) to determine if art-making activities could be used as tools to promote oral proficiency.

4.3.2.1.1 Lesson 1: Introduction to art-making

Date: 25 April 2012 (Vocabulary introduction)

New vocabulary: Special, Doing, Happy, Feelings, Fingerprint

The lesson began with a discussion on every learner's uniqueness. I used myself as an example and explained how every person's appearance differs from another person. I explained that some people might be taller than I am, have a different hair and eye colour, and might even wear glasses. I also asked the learners to give examples of how they differed from me with regard to appearance.

The new vocabulary (special, doing, happy, feelings, fingerprint) were explained as discussed, using English explanations as well as code-switching by learners who knew what the words meant in their mother tongue, and were explained to learners with the same home language.

Date: 26 April 2012 (Art-making)

Visual art activity: This is me

Every learner picked an A3 cardboard with a body shape outline they felt resembled them the best. They had to cut out pictures from magazines to paste onto the body image according to the following criteria:

- Head for talents (singing, building...)
- Body for feeling (happy, sad...)
- Legs and feet for sport/interest (soccer, ballet...)
- Arms for colours (pieces of their favourite colours [3 max])
- Hands (each learner will make two handprints of their own with paint)

Sample conversation (Group 1)

Lena: (No verbal communication)

Alicia: "Lena give me book... Want picture for feelings in body."

J.P.: "Me also special... Me special like you."

Alicia: "My picture is special... Me special also like Lena."

Simpiwe: "I also special."

Simpiwe: "I happy."

J.P.: "Doing soccer, want ball."

Simpiwe: "I doing soccer."

Sample conversation (Group 2)

Queride: "I put feelings in body... Want picture smile."

Joshua: Feelings in body and head is for singing."

Ivanca: "Feelings is sad and happy."

Queride: "Smile is special... I special."

Ivanca: "Happy (Czech word) special."

"Want paint (Czech word) fingerprint."

Joshua: "Doing hands."

Hannes: "I do watch TV."

Queride: "Me also paint fingerprint."

Ivanca: "What you doing? Me do hands."

Queride: "Doing pictures."

4.3.2.1.2 Lesson 2: My body (parts and senses)

Date: 2 May 2012 (Vocabulary instruction)

New vocabulary: Smell, eyes, nose, touch, taste

The lesson began with me introducing a new "friend" to the class. I had borrowed an anatomy manikin from a local doctor's office and introduced him to the research group as "John". I explained that John came to visit the class to help me to explain what your body looks like on the inside and how it works. I placed an orange (pieces and rind) in a dark bag made of cloth. Every learner received an opportunity to smell, feel and taste a piece of the orange without looking in the bag. After everyone had a chance to examine the object in the bag, I asked the learners to explain what they smelt, felt and tasted. Only then the learners could guess what was in the bag.

The new vocabulary (smell, eyes, nose, touch, taste) were explained as discussed, using English explanations, visual aids and "John", the manikin, as well as code-switching by learners who knew what the words meant in their mother tongue, and were explained to learners with the same home language.

Date: 3 May 2012 (Art-making)

Visual art activity: Play-dough man

Learners were divided into groups of 3 to 4. Every group received 4 different colours of play dough (one colour for each learner). The group then had to work together to build a play-dough man by giving each learner in the group a chance to assemble his/her piece (learners were not allowed to make someone else's part or to take their play dough; however, they were allowed to help each other by giving instructions).

- Yellow for face and body
- Blue for features and hair
- Red for arms and legs
- Green for hands and feet

Sample conversation (Group 1)

Simpiwe: "Hallo friends."
Alicia: "Hallo Simpiwe."
J.P.: "Hallo Simpiwe."
Simpiwe: "I want yellow."
Alicia: "I take blue."
J.P.: (No verbal response takes red)
Alicia: "Simpiwe you začít (za/tʃ/i:t)"
Simpiwe: "What?"
Alicia: "You start, I will put hair and face."
J.P.: "Now me make arms."
"Where the nose Alicia?"
Simpiwe: "Lena you punt hands and feet."

Sample conversation (Group 2)

Ivanca: "Don't take red, I want red."
Josha: "OK, I want yellow."
Hannes: "Me blou (blou)."
Josha: "What you want?"
Hannes: "Want this (takes blue)."
Queride: (takes green)
Josha: "I start, then Hannes do hair and face."
Ivanca: "I make arms and legs... Queride makes hands."



Figure 4-2: Examples of completed “play-dough men”

4.3.2.1.3 Lesson 3: *Inside my body*

Date: 9 May 2012 (Vocabulary instruction)

New vocabulary: Muscles, skeleton, veins, x-ray, brain

I began the lesson by reintroducing the manikin (John) to the class. I explained that John came to visit the class to show them what a person looks like on the inside.

The new vocabulary (muscles, skeleton, veins, x-ray, brain) were explained as discussed, using English explanations, visual aids and “John”, as well as code-switching by learners who knew what the words meant in their mother tongue, and were explained to learners with the same home language.

Date: 10 May 2012 (Art-making)

Visual art activity: Making an x-ray

Learners were divided into groups of 3 to 4. Every group received big piece of paper. One learner had to lay down and the other learners in the group had to trace his/her outer lines. The whole group then helped to paint the inside of the body image with an ink solution. Each learner then chose a body part and bleached a part of the inside (to make an “x-ray”).

When the bleach and ink were dry, learners had to swop places (chose a different body part), and painted the muscles (red) and veins (blue).



Figure 4-3: Example of completed “x-rays”

4.3.2.1.4 Lesson 4: Feelings

Date: 16 May 2012 (Vocabulary instruction)

New vocabulary: Happy, sad, angry, lonely, excited

The lesson began with me reading the story “The way I feel” (Cain, 2005). This gave me the opportunity to discuss the story, pictures illustrated, as well as my own experiences with emotions with learners.

The new vocabulary (happy, sad, angry, lonely, excited) were explained as discussed, using English explanations, visual aids, as well as code-switching by learners who knew what the words meant in their mother tongue, and were explained to learners with the same home language.

Date: 17 May 2012 (Art-making)

Visual art activity: Emotion clowns

Learners were divided into pairs. Every learner decided which emotion he/she would like to be. The learner had to express why he/she chose that emotion and had to name one thing/event that made him/her feel that emotion (for example, I want to be sad because I lost my favourite toy. It

makes me sad when I can't find my doll). The other learner in the pair then used face paint to finger-paint the emotion (clown face) on the friend's face.

4.3.2.1.5 Lesson 5: Protecting myself

Date: 23 May 2012 (Vocabulary instruction)

New vocabulary: Protect, careful, safe, dangerous, responsibility

The lesson began with me reading the story "The way I feel" (Cain, 2005). This gave me the opportunity to discuss the story, pictures illustrated, as well as my own experiences with emotions with learners.

The new vocabulary was explained as discussed, using English explanations, visual aids, as well as code-switching by learners who knew what the words meant in their mother tongue, and were explained to learners with the same home language.

Date: 24 May 2012 (Art-making)

Visual art activity: Stop, think, do robot

I divided learners into groups of 2 to 3. Each group had to paint three paper plates in green, yellow and red without using a brush. I supplied the class with various materials that could be used instead of a brush (sponges, ruffled newspaper, ruffled plastic bags, straws, etc.). Every learner could decide which medium he/she wanted to use to paint the plate, but the whole plate had to be covered. Learners were allowed to share painting equipment within their small group, but not with the rest of the class. The group, as a team, then had to decide how they wanted to link the robot. They either had to punch two holes in each plate and connect them with string, OR use a strip of stiff cardboard to paste the plates together.

4.3.2.1.6 Lesson 6: Good habits

Date: 30 May 2012 (Vocabulary instruction)

New vocabulary: Germs, healthy, exercise, clean, dirty

The new vocabulary was explained as discussed, using English explanations, visual aids, as well as code-switching by learners who knew what the words meant in their mother tongue, and were explained to learners with the same home language.

Date: 31 May 2012 (Art-making)

Visual art activity: Happy Hygiene Hero

I divided learners into groups of 4 to 5. Each group had the opportunity to make a Hygiene Superhero puppet. The group had to decide on a name and a superpower for their hero, and had to draw a picture of what their hero was going to look like. Using a paper bag as the face (stuffed with newspaper later), egg-tray holders as eyes, bottle lid for the nose, crinkle paper for the mouth, and string/wool for the hair, the group then had to work together to make their puppet. They could have coloured, painted and decorated any of the material to their liking. The paper bag was then filled with newspaper and placed on a stick, with a black bag as a cape.



Figure 4-4: Examples of “Hygiene Heroes”

4.3.2.1.7 Lesson 7: My teeth

Date: 06 June 2012 (Vocabulary instruction)

New vocabulary: Calcium, plaque, dentist, cavities, products

The new vocabulary was explained as discussed, using English explanations, visual aids, as well as code-switching by learners who knew what the words meant in their mother tongue, and were explained to learners with the same home language.

Date: 7 June 2012 (Art-making)

Visual art activity: Group smile collage

I divided learners into groups of 3 to 4. Each group selected a cardboard tooth (A3) they would like to collage. Learners were given strips of material which they could have either teared or cut into smaller pieces for their collage. Learners had to use small pieces of white paper (different shades), newspaper, brown crinkle paper, and black plastic (black bag cut into small pieces). When the group was finished with their tooth, they had to find its correct spot on the group “smile” (big paper with smile and teeth outline drawn) and paste it onto the paper.



Figure 4-5: Example of “Group smile” activity

4.3.3 Phase III: Post-programme interviews

As noted at the beginning of this section, the programme was followed by a post-programme interview with each learner. The question in the pre-programme interviews were identical to those in the post-programme interviews. Learners' scores during the post-programme interviews were measured using the same rubric as with the pre-programme interviews.

The data collected during both interview sessions were analysed, as indicated in Addendum C.

In addition to ongoing informal discussions with learners during art-making activities in Phase II, parents gave voluntary feedback on the programme. These interviews or discussion were not planned and were therefore not included in the research design. However, parents felt the need to communicate the progress in oral proficiency they noticed at home.

4.4 DATA INTERPRETATION OF ART-MAKING SESSIONS

In the next section, a summary of the overall patterns of the change and the individual changes between the pre- and post-progress interviews will be provided. Next, three sample sessions will be described, examining how three learners interacted within the particular art-making session to illustrate efficacy of art-making activities to promote oral proficiency. Finally, three individual case studies will be presented to examine the role of art-making activities and how it can be utilised as a vocabulary instruction tool.

The pre-programme interview results showed that most of the students struggled to arrange words in the correct sequence to form meaningful sentences. In most cases, only one-word answers were given to simple questions. Most learners also had difficulty with fluency and often stopped to think of a word or stuttered during sentences. These findings were not surprising, since teachers were asked to nominate only learners who showed oral proficiency difficulties.

Following the programme, self-confidence, vocabulary use, and sentence construction skills were evaluated again. Results showed that most (n=16 out of n=21) of the learners gained confidence when communicating orally in English. In general, learners' sentence structure, use of new vocabulary, and self-confidence when speaking increased. Learners' understanding of oral instructions also improved, which resulted in better execution of the art-making activities and higher quality of work. Two (n=2) of the learners also exhibited natural leadership skills and could help and explain tasks to other learners in the group.

4.4.1 Identified patterns in change

All twenty-one (n=21) learners showed more confidence while communicating with me during the post-programme progress interviews. Learners made better eye contact, had more confidence, and answered in fuller sentences. These results are included in Addendum D.

Comprehension of oral instructions improved with all learners during the research programme. At the beginning of the programme, learners struggled to understand what was expected of them, since there was not a clear outcome in the form of a finished product. The fear was that should

the finished product be displayed, learners will simply copy what I have done. This was not desirable, since the focus of the study was on the art-making process to encourage learners to enter into discussion of what needs to be done, giving learners the opportunity to practise oral proficiency, as well as problem-solving and leadership skills.

As learners' oral proficiency skills developed, so did their understanding of oral instructions. This was evident in the quality of final art products later in the programme compared to those at the beginning programme. Discussions during the art-making process also shifted from a mainly "what should I do" discussion to a "how can we do this" conversation later.

During discussions with parents (n=16), it became evident that learners understood the theme discussed during the week in the Grade R class. The learners would talk about what they had learned in school, as well as what they had learned during the art-making activities. Parents (n=8) also indicated that because of the opportunity to use new vocabulary during art-making sessions, teachers noticed that learners participated with more confidence when the same theme was discussed in school.

Photo analysis showed a systematic change in group performance. At the beginning, learners would work on their own and only did the part of the project assigned to them. By the fourth session, learners started interacting more, helping each other if needed. By the final lesson, learners were working as a team, and communicated and interacted with confidence. This could be seen in the photos of the completed artworks.

By the final two weeks, learners spontaneously started to talk about what they had learned, explaining and showing what the group had made during the art-making activity. They were proud of their accomplishments and were eager to share their work with the other groups. This was in sharp contrast to the shy, quiet learners who sat and worked by themselves during the introduction to art-making, and the first vocabulary introductory and art-making session.

4.4.2 Individual change in oral proficiency skills

The analysis of the pre-programme progress interviews indicated that two of the students had extreme difficulties in understanding oral instructions. With very little basic vocabulary, the original interview showed them to be frustrated with the formal school situation, since they could understand very little of what was going on around them. To support these learners, they could have brought one of their friends as well as their school teacher into the room during the pre-programme interviews. This improved their pre-programme interview greatly, enabling them to feel more secure and willing to participate. The same learners, who needed the support of a friend and a teacher, showed the significant improvement during the post-programme progress

interview. They were able to communicate using a wider vocabulary, spoke in fluent sentences, and showed more understanding of questions.

Audio and video recordings showed that learners progressed at their individual pace. However, almost all learners showed an increase in oral proficiency skills.

Two learners, *Andrico and *Hannes³, showed a surprisingly strong rise in confidence. Andrico could work independently during the last art-making activity without relying on another learner to translate and guide him in his home language. He also showed improvement in most oral proficiency skills, as mentioned above. These significant increases in oral proficiency may be attributed to an increased familiarity with the English language, as well as opportunities provided during art-making activities to practise English oral proficiency skills. As an ESL student, Hannes made pronunciation mistakes and several miscues were recorded in his pre-programme interview, especially with words and sounds that are seldom heard in English. In his post-programme interview, two changes occurred: firstly, Hannes pronounced sounds more accurately, and secondly, he had been in an English-speaking environment (in school as well as art-making sessions) for three additional months, which gave him time to absorb a larger vocabulary as well as opportunities for practising using new words and pronunciation of sounds. Both learners structured sentences better and spoke more fluently.

Because of learners' difficulty to communicate effectively in oral English, most (n=13 out of the n=21 learner group) had issues with confidence. This was especially true with regard to *Lena, who only answered pre-programme interview questions with one-word answers, and sometimes only with a nod or a blank stare. She remained quiet during the first two art-making activities and did not attempt to communicate with me or her peers. During the third art-making activity, she started communicating in short sentences with peers when she thought I could not hear her. This behaviour continued for the next two lessons, after which she started asking questions during the introduction of new vocabulary. Although Lena remained a shy and soft-spoken learner throughout the research process, her confidence grew every week, enabling her to practise oral proficiency skills. During the post-programme interview, Lena made more eye contact, she spoke more audibly, communicated in fuller sentences, and showed improvement in the pronunciation of sounds.

³* Pseudonyms have been used.

4.4.3 Overall patterns of change in vocabulary

Vocabulary development was approached in two different ways during the programme. Firstly, there was direct vocabulary instruction where new words related to the topic discussed was explained to learners. Secondly, the aim was that incidental vocabulary instruction would take place during group art-making activities where learners had the opportunity to communicate in English, practising new words and sentence structure.

During the pre-programme interviews, it became clear that most learners simply did not know enough English words to communicate effectively. They struggled to express themselves, even when it was clear that they knew the answer to the question. Most (n=15) of the learners resorted to using home language words in English sentences when they were unsure of the correct English words.

A growth in vocabulary from the pre- to the post-programme progress interviews was found. In general, learners communicated in fuller sentences, using the vocabulary taught during the direct vocabulary instruction. It was also noticeable that incidental vocabulary acquisition took place during group discussions, since basic words not taught directly were used more frequently when learners answered interview questions.

4.4.4 Individual patterns of change in vocabulary

*Queride, *Lena, and *Simpiwe seemed to have had the smallest vocabulary during the pre-programme progress interviews. They answered questions in one-word sentences and Simpiwe often asked one of the other learners to help him in his home language when he did not understand a question or was not sure what the correct English word was. During the post-programme interview, Simpiwe showed significant improvement in his vocabulary. He could answer most of the interview questions in short English sentences, only using a home language word in the middle of an English sentence on four occasions. This is an impressive improvement, which might not only indicate an increase in vocabulary, but also a rise in confidence. Queride and Lena made use of code-switching, using a home language word in the middle of an English sentence to answer the interview question. Both Queride and Lena could only use English sentences during the post-programme progress interview.

4.5 INDIVIDUAL CASE STUDIES

Looking at the general change in vocabulary and oral proficiency, provided a holistic look at what was going on with the learners throughout the process; it did not give an idea of each learner's individual profile. To solve this problem, at least partially, three case studies will be provided,

demonstrating individual progress (if any) throughout the 14 vocabulary introductory and art-making sessions.

4.5.1 Lena

Lena was one of the most successful students in this study. This was confirmed by the data acquired during the 14 vocabulary introductory and art-making sessions, as well as the comparison between the pre- and post-programme interviews. At the time of research, Lena was in the Reception Year (Grade R). She is a Lebanese girl who was very shy and made a lot of pronunciation mistakes. Her favourite art-making activities were activities using paint. She enjoyed art-making activities because “it’s better than doing maths because you get to do fun stuff.” She seemed well-liked by both her peers and her teacher. During observation of her actions during art-making sessions, Lena watched me attentively, participating without talking during the first two lessons. Judging from her participation during art-making sessions as well as finished visual art projects, Lena was a learner who relied heavily on the context of the instructions and the actions of other learners, which might indicate that all words were not understood.

4.5.1.1 Pre-programme interview

Lena’s pre-programme progress interview showed that she had difficulty with pronunciation, grammar, and sentence structure. This improved greatly during the 14 vocabulary introductory and art-making sessions, to the point where she answered post-programme interview questions in short sentences. Her pronunciation of words improved and by the 10th vocabulary introductory and art-making session, she was participating eagerly in discussions, and did not rely as heavily on the context of the instructions and the actions of other learners to understand instructions.

4.5.1.2 Introductory activity

Lena remained quiet throughout the art-making session. She picked a shape of a girl wearing a skirt to represent herself. After collecting her shape outline, she went to a table and sat by herself watching the other learners. After about 5 minutes, she stood up and collected a magazine and started cutting out pictures. Lena seemed extremely unsure of what was expected of her and waited for other learners to complete tasks before starting the task herself.

Lena had trouble understanding instructions without visual cues. This was especially clear during the 4th art-making session when she asked: “I want to see.” Not understanding her question, I asked: “What do you want to see?” Lena answered: “I want to see man.” I soon realised that Lena wanted to see the finished product to be sure of what was expected of her.

Although Lena did not fully understand instructions by this point in the study, it was encouraging

to hear her asking questions and participating orally during lessons. She was speaking with more confidence, and was not afraid of making pronunciation and grammatical mistakes.

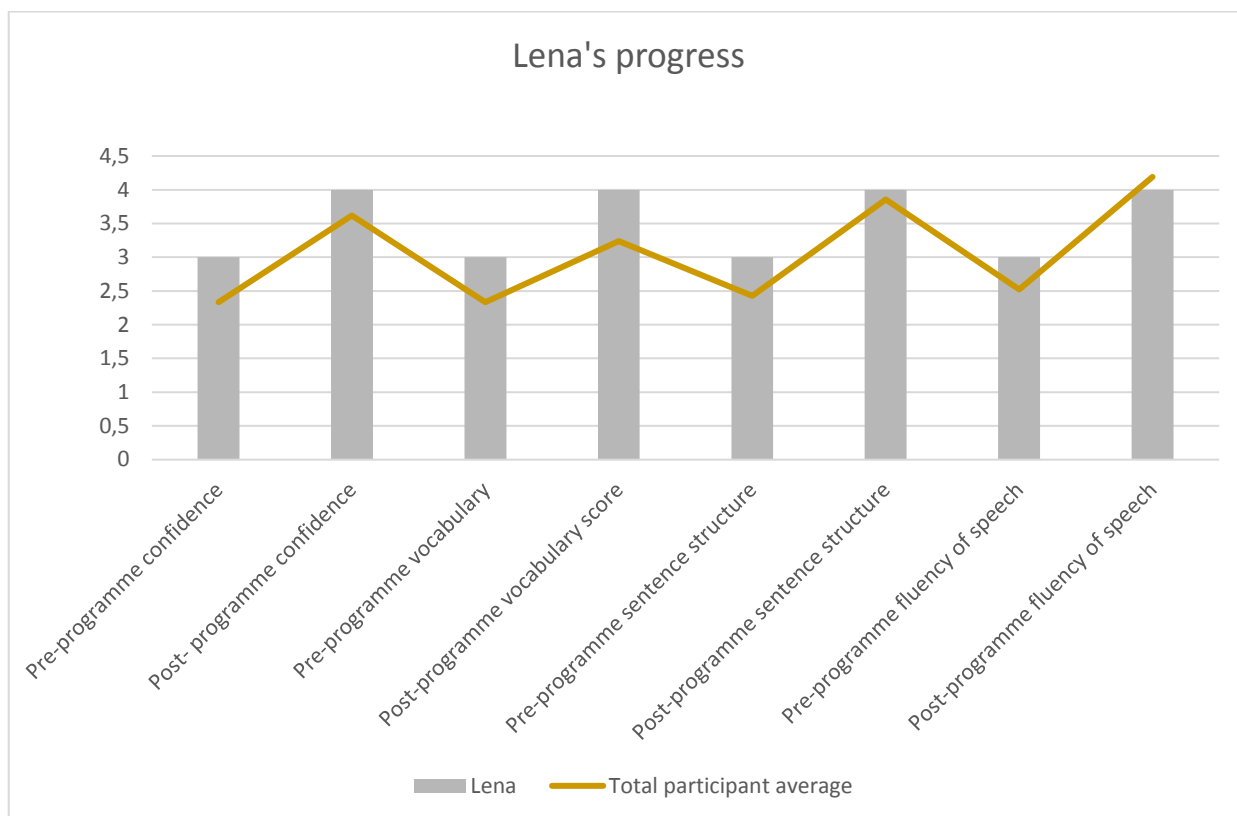


Figure 4-6: Lena: Analysis after post-programme interview

4.5.2 Ivanca

Ivanca was one of the learners who showed strengths in oral proficiency from the beginning of the programme. Although she sometimes struggled to find the correct English word to use in a sentence and used code-switching between English and Czech words to communicate, she still communicated with more confidence than most of the other learners. This is confirmed by the data acquired during the 14 vocabulary introductory and art-making sessions, as well as the comparison between her pre- and post-programme interviews. At the time of research, Ivanca was in the Reception Year (Grade R).

She is a Czech girl who was eager to communicate and had a lively personality. Her favourite art-making activities were activities using art materials that she found new and exciting. She enjoyed art-making activities because “you do a lot of things with your friends”. Ivanca seemed well-liked by both her peers and her teacher. During observation of her actions during art-making sessions, Ivanca watched me attentively, participating with enthusiasm and excitement.

Judging from her participation during art-making sessions as well as finished visual art projects, Ivanca was a learner who liked to take control when she understood the task and would help other learners if she felt it was needed.

4.5.2.1 Pre-programme interview

Ivanca's pre-programme progress interview showed that she had difficulty with vocabulary, fluency of speech, and sentence structure. This improved during the 14 vocabulary introductory and art-making sessions, to the point where she answered post-programme interview questions in near perfect sentences. Her pronunciation of words also improved.

4.5.2.2 Introductory activity

Ivanca participated with confidence throughout the art-making session. She picked a shape of a girl wearing a dress to represent herself. After collecting her shape outline, she went to a table and sat with two of her group members, and instantly started to communicate with them. Ivanca was the first of her group to stand up to collect a magazine: she took three books and shredded the extra with other members of her group. Ivanca displayed confidence and was eager to assist other learners of her group, she asked questions when she was unsure of the task, and tried to explain it to other members of her group.

She could understand most instructions without visual cues. Although Ivanca did not fully understand all words at this point of the study, it was encouraging to hear her ask questions and participate orally during lessons. By the third lesson, she was speaking with more confidence, and was not afraid of making pronunciation and grammatical mistakes.

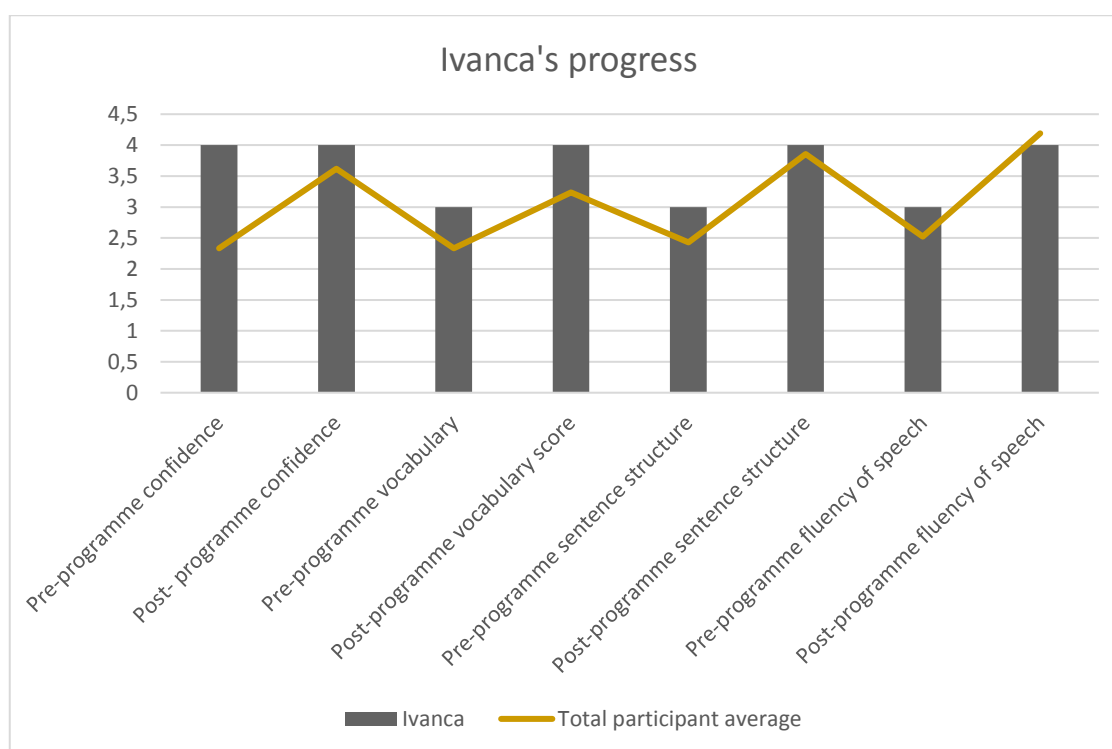


Figure 4-7: Ivanca: Analysis after post-programme interview

4.5.3 Josha

At the time of the research, Josha was in the Reception Year (Grade R) and one of the shyer learners participating in the programme. Sometimes he used English words incorrectly, using a word that sounded similar to the appropriate word.

He is an English boy who had a lively personality when surrounded by close friends, but tended to be shy among unfamiliar peers. His favourite art-making activities included working with play dough and construction. He enjoyed art-making activities because “it is a lot of fun to build stuff”. Josha seemed well-liked by both his peers and his teacher. Judging from his participation during art-making sessions as well as finished visual art projects, Josha was a learner who liked to take control when he understood tasks, and would help other learners that he perceived as friends and that were familiar to him.

4.5.3.1 Introductory activity

Josha participated with confidence throughout the art-making session. He picked a shape of a boy with a hat to represent herself. After collecting his shape outline, he went to a table and sat with a friend who was assigned to another group. Josha waited until one of the other group members stood up to collect a magazine before he went to collect his own.

He could understand most instructions without visual cues. By the third lesson, he was speaking with more confidence and did not make as many vocabulary mistakes. Josha's pre-programme progress interview showed that he had difficulty with vocabulary, fluency of speech, and sentence structure. This improved during the 14 vocabulary introductory and art-making sessions, to the point where he answered post-programme interview questions in near perfect sentences. His pronunciation of words also improved.

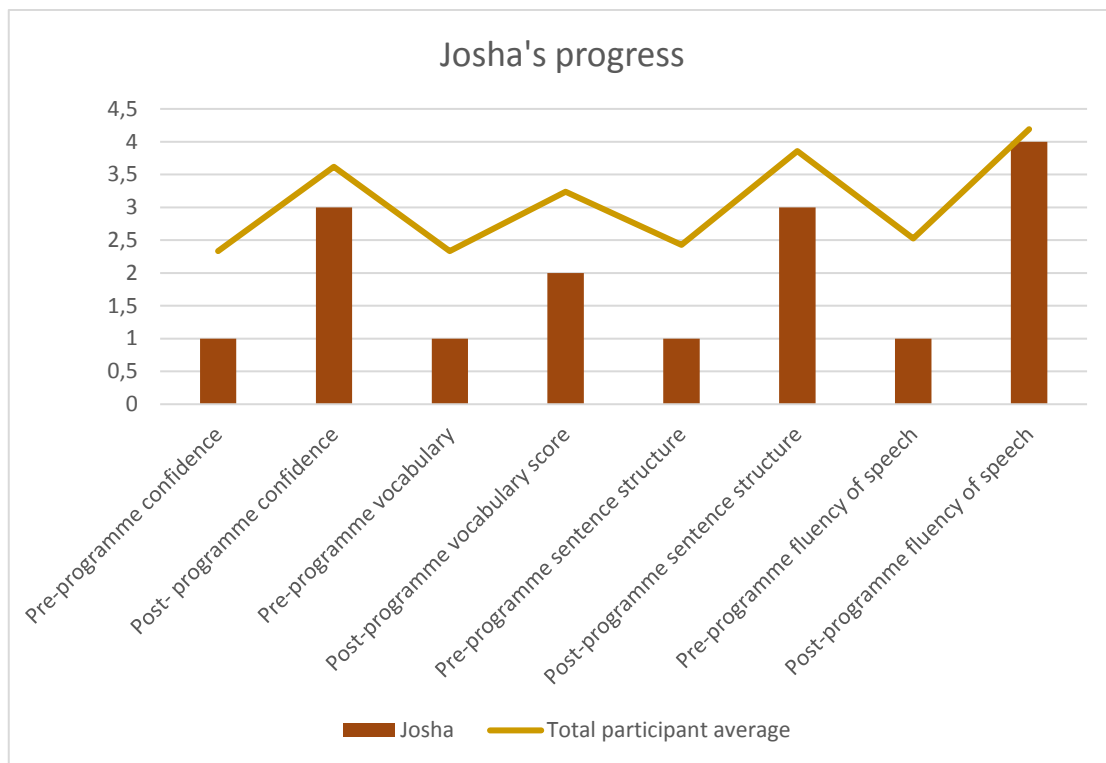


Figure 4-8: Josha: Analysis after post-programme interview

4.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter gave an overview of how visual art activities were structured to promote oral proficiency for grade R learners. Additionally, the chapter reflected on the pre-programme baseline assessments, how data were collected for the study, as well as interview notes and reflective discussions. It also described overall patterns of change in oral proficiency and vocabulary. The chapter concluded with a discussion of individual patterns of change in oral proficiency and vocabulary by means of a discussion of three individual case studies of learners. In the next chapter, a summary and conclusions of the study, as well as recommendations for further studies, will be discussed.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the major findings and results of the study will be summarised by using the following themes: the development of language; the pre-operational stage of cognitive development; the importance of vocabulary to improve oral competence; art-making as tool to enhance oral competence; and the benefits of art-making as a teaching tool. Conclusions drawn from the study will also be presented in the discussion of the different themes that the literature study and data collection methods revealed. The chapter will conclude with a discussion on the limitations of the study and recommendations for further research.

5.2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF LANGUAGE

Piaget believed that children construct an understanding of the world around them, experience discrepancies between what they already know and what they discover in their environment, then adjust their ideas accordingly. Additionally, in Piaget's view, a schema includes both a category of knowledge and the process of obtaining that knowledge. As experiences happen, this new information is used to modify, add to, or change previously existing schemas (Piaget, 2011, 2006; Piaget & Inhelder, 2008). In this study, art-making activities were used to introduce new vocabulary and promote oral skills. In this way, the primary research question was answered by utilising art-making activities to promote oral proficiency.

For the five to six years before learners enter school, they develop oral language foundations that will affect them for the rest of their lives. In the best circumstances, learners have many opportunities to hear good language models, to interact with others, and to speak (see par. 2.2). In this study, I investigated the role of the Grade R teacher as language model and facilitator of oral interaction between learners. This study also demonstrated how the zone of proximal development, as described by Vygotsky (see par. 2.9.2), can be utilised by teachers when they promote oral skills during art-making activities.

Art-making in Grade R is also a perfect example of the child-centred classroom setting, another one of Piaget's beliefs, which is important for effective learning (in the case of this study, oral proficiency) to take place (see par. 2.2.1).

The implications of the pre-operational stage of cognitive development in this study will be discussed next.

5.3 THE PRE-OPERATIONAL STAGE OF COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

The pre-operational stage (2 to 7 years) includes the target group for this study, namely Grade R children. According to Donald et al. (2002), thinking, imagining and problem-solving skills develop faster for children in this stage (ranging between 2 to 7). Additionally, young children in this stage can think about things symbolically. Repetition occurs, where words and syllables are repeated by children without real engagement in talk with anyone.

Children talk merely for the pleasure of talking. Monologue (where children talk to themselves as if they are thinking aloud) can be encouraged during art-making. The important part that a teacher plays in this stage is clear. Teachers can, for instance, deliberately use words and syllables which learners can repeat.

5.4 THE IMPORTANCE OF VOCABULARY TO IMPROVE ORAL COMPETENCE

Vocabulary is an important part of oral proficiency. A learner with insufficient vocabulary might have oral proficiency problems, which may result in difficulty getting along with other learners, having less confidence to connect, and an inability to form positive relations with peers. A learner with insufficient oral proficiency will have difficulty recognising and labelling his feelings, and lacks skills necessary to express his needs, desires and interests in a confident manner, which may lead to frustration.

Building a learner's vocabulary can be an important part of overall language development, and more specifically, the promotion of oral proficiency. Helping young learners acquire new vocabulary will assist them in verbalising thoughts, emotions and concepts related to what they see and what they create (this includes aesthetic development) (Koster, 2009). New vocabulary can be introduced through art-making or visual art-viewing activities in the Grade R classroom. This can be done by means of assisting them in verbalising thoughts, emotions, and concepts related to what they see and what they create (this includes aesthetic development) (see par. 2.4).

During art-making, learners work interactively in pairs or groups to solve problems (Wachowiak & Clements, 2001). Small group discussions during art-making offered a helpful context within which powerful vocabulary learning could occur in this study (see Doyle & Bramwell, 2006).

In order to teach explicit vocabulary, teachers need to explain or demonstrate the meaning of words. They should also give examples of the word in a sentence, encourage learners to use the word orally (by saying it aloud) in sentences of their own, and display the new words and the

meanings of the words on a word wall or a chart. In this study, I indicated how different words related to themes were introduced and practised during art-making activities. I also followed up on vocabulary activities to ensure that learners get ample opportunity to practise using their new words (see par. 2.9).

It is suggested that vocabulary instruction should be appropriate for the age and ability of the learner to lead to optimal gains in reading comprehension.

Research indicates that dependence on a single vocabulary instruction method will not result in optimal learning (Armbruster & Osborn, 2001; Hart & Risley, 1999; Weizman & Snow, 2001), but that various instruction methods should be used in a balanced way to promote optimal learning. Art is an excellent medium through which vocabulary can be instructed.

5.5 ART-MAKING AS TOOL TO ENHANCE ORAL COMPETENCE

The literature studied as well as the outcome of this study indicate one outstanding theme – that art is extremely important in preschool and especially in Grade R. Firstly, art-making activities in Grade R should be less structured and end-product driven. Art-making activities should also be self-directed, as opposed to teacher-directed activities, where a teacher often gives a model of what she expects and all creativity is discouraged.

It would seem from feedback from parents that teachers were not ready for the task of letting children paint and mess during art-making activities. When these activities are, however, designed to encourage free exploration and communication between learners, as well as between learners and the teacher, it provides a safe environment where learners can express themselves. In this instance, art-making becomes not just learning about art, but learning through art.

From the data that was collected and analysed, it became clear that at the beginning of the art-making programme, learners did not have sufficient oral proficiency to follow instructions. This was reflected in the photos analysed, which showed that some errors were made in the execution of the “play-dough man”, where colours used were not consistent with the instructions. By the “group smile” activity, learners understood and remembered instructions much better. They communicated more effectively with each other and this showed in the final product.

Learners understood instructions better, they were more relaxed, and eager to converse with the other learners and me. They regarded art-making as a fun activity, while accumulating valuable information and vocabulary. These actions during art-making activities included talking about the art-making process where language rich in theme-related vocabulary was used. Photo analysis

showed a systematic change in group performance: learners worked as a team, and communicated and interacted with confidence. By the final two weeks, learners spontaneously began to talk about what they have learned, explaining and showing what the group had made during the art-making activity. They were proud of their accomplishments and were eager to share their work with the other groups.

The use of new words in context was far better by the end of the programme, especially if we consider that they had had formal education in these specific topics before. I sensed a better relationship with their peers and a more spontaneous response to the teacher. They were eager to discuss school with their parents. They were working better as a team and not for individual satisfaction and praise.

Learners need recognition and acknowledgement of their achievements. Teachers show recognition in many ways: praising efforts; telling others what the learner had done; celebrating their successes; taking photographs; and taking an interest in and displaying their art work (see par. 2.9.2). These were all strategies that promoted oral proficiency and vocabulary in this study.

5.6 BENEFITS OF ART-MAKING AS TEACHING TOOL

There are many benefits of participating in art-making activities. These include the following aspects:

- Not only do they provide a means of expression, creativity and imagination, but they also aid in the development of perception and memory, problem-solving skills, empathy, feelings and emotions.
- Language, oral and written, share much common ground with the visual arts and share a focus on means of expression by using symbols as well as similar methods of critical analysis and interpretation. The creative exploration of their bodies, the materials and tools of the visual art form, and the environment of the learner artist begin to develop visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, and graphic symbols with which to represent their thoughts.
- Art-making activities provide concrete experiences in which learners may encounter and interact with the world in ways that are unique and special to them.
- Art and writing both offer representations of a window into the learner's world.
- Learners share their visual art creations in various ways – some nonverbally, some through sound effects or movements, and others with intricate oral explanations and stories. The receptive teacher who understands that this is an important part of language development will provide art opportunities through which oral development can be enhanced.

- Art-making is also a sensory exploration activity for young learners through which learners are enabled to explore, express, create, and represent ideas using one of their many languages (that of art-making).
- Drawing activities allow learners to symbolise what they know and feel. It is a crucial outlet for learners whose vocabulary, written or verbal, may be limited.
- The early use of symbols in artwork is very important because it provides a foundation for learners' later use of words to symbolise objects and actions in formal writing. Using symbols in visual artwork can, in this way, be linked with what is known in literature as *semiotics*.
- Learners' language abilities are enhanced through the arts when they: (1) learn ways to describe and discuss arts material, processes, visual art forms, and works of art; (2) observe and describe their actions and the objects in their environment using the arts and language; and (3) relate spoken language and graphic symbols (Camnitzer, 2009; Koster, 2009). Providing opportunities for learners to talk about their artwork allow learners to develop their communication skills. Learners learn new words to describe what they are doing as they explore new media (Koster, 2009).

As Grade R learners represent the preschematic stage, a broad review will follow:

Learners in this stage will begin to seek approval for their drawings if they have not already done so in the past, bringing them to adults for confirmation, and pointing out the various people and other objects that they have drawn (Koenig & Holbrook, 2000). Telling stories becomes a very important part of learners' drawings – a perfect way to give meaning to their symbols (Malchiodi, 1998; Koenig & Holbrook, 2000). At the end of this stage, detail becomes a very important issue for the learners to experiment with, for example, details for figures, such as buttons, decorations, ribbons, fingers (without heeding numbers), and so on (Alter-Muri, 2002; Lowenfeld, 1954; Lowenfeld & Brittan, 1982).

Visual art-making educates learners by requiring them to design, build, create, and solve problems. In visual art-making, there is development of problem-solving skills and the learner's thinking skills, along with the development of self-esteem through the joy of the success and received feedback.

It is, however, important to ensure that these art-making tasks are developmentally appropriate. Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) is based on the idea that teachers need to know how young learners typically develop, what variations may occur in this development, and how learners' learning and development can best be facilitated.

In creative and artistic expression for young learners, there is no one correct response, and no right or wrong way to create an art-making experience. The creative artistic process is a safe way for young learners to try out, explore, experiment, and learn about themselves.

Moreover, the integration of visual arts into the curriculum helps children to find different methods of expression, to understand their own cultures as well as others, and to improve their analytical thinking skills (Bloom & Hanny, 2006; Kerfoot & Simon-Vandenberg, 2015; Letts, 1991; Öztürk & Erden, 2011). Visual arts also help teachers to determine learners' understanding by using learners' products as a basis to show their progress in learning new content (Letts, 1991; Öztürk & Erden, 2011). Finally, art provides opportunities for learners with one more language to represent their products and work. In this way, teachers can better understand learners' current knowledge of a concept or understanding of an experience. Literature that relates to the research problem were consulted paragraph 2.14.

According to the parents (n=15), learners enjoyed the vocabulary and art-making sessions immensely. The parents stated that learners were more eager to go to school on the days these sessions took place and that the learners would eagerly communicate what they had learned.

Lastly, it was the aim of the sessions to provide learners with an environment in which they felt secure enough to acquire new vocabulary needed to complete art-making activities.

Comprehension of oral instructions improved with all learners during the research programme. At the beginning of the programme, learners struggled to understand what was expected of them, since there was not a clear outcome in the form of a finished product. The fear was that should the finished product be displayed, learners will simply copy what I have done. This was not desirable, since the focus of the study was on the art-making process to encourage learners to enter into discussion of what needs to be done, giving learners the opportunity to practise oral proficiency as well as problem-solving and leadership skills.

In summary, I would say that ESL learners definitely benefitted from the art-making programme by gaining a better vocabulary and understanding English as a language. This, in turn, led to better conversation, better confidence, better enjoyment, creativity, leadership, forward planning, and teamwork as fringe benefits that were subtly learned.

5.7 ANTICIPATED FUTURE OBSTACLES

The biggest anticipated obstacle with regard to utilising art-making to promote oral proficiency in Grade R, is the supply of art materials and areas that are art-proof. This would require at least

one designated art class in a school with protective clothing, or an undercover area where teachers and learners will not be afraid to make a mess and noise. Freedom of expression through art as well as verbal language is an integral part of this approach in promoting oral proficiency, and therefore learners should be allowed to talk (even if it is loudly).

Secondly, teachers must realise that art-making activities should not be rigidly structured. This will also mean less work for the teacher in the sense that learners will be in control of how to approach and execute an art-making project. This is in sharp contrast to the teacher-directed, copied art activities that must be marked and evaluated. When art-making is done to promote oral proficiency, only supervision is needed after a formal lesson, because the outcome is not as important as the process.

5.8 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

I would recommend that more research should be done on how art-making is structured in the Grade R classroom. This is especially true in competitive schools where a lot of emphasis is placed on the end product or result to send home a high-quality piece of art. It seems that the focus on end product makes the art-making activity too structured, and does not give learners opportunity for communication and practise of vocabulary that were taught, and therefore valuable time for the promotion of oral proficiency is lost. The question is whether teachers really promote and make art-making activities interesting in class or whether it is just a part of the curriculum that gets neglected in favour of mathematics and science?

I also recommend that research is done on how many words learners pick up during formal class instruction compared to the visual art-making programme, as structured in this study, where learners were given opportunity to use words correctly and within context. During discussions with parents, it became clear that there is a definite need for more opportunities to promote oral proficiency in the Grade R classroom. They feel that ESL learners should do less “paperwork” and should be encouraged to talk more, especially with the teacher in a one-to-one or small group setting where they feel safe.

A new approach to art-making would require a paradigm shift from both parents and teachers to not expect high-quality artwork, but rather that art-making is a means to an end (that of promoting oral proficiency). In this way, art-making becomes a learning tool as well as a remedial activity for language skills, especially in the case of ESL learners.

We all know the saying: “a picture paints a thousand words” – so let us put this into practice. I

recommend that teachers should be trained and educated to understand the value of art-making in the school syllabus, especially as a means to teach in a multicultural society – thus not learning about art, but through art. Teachers should understand that art is not just a subject, but part of an integrated curriculum, and that the outcome is not important, but rather the activity. More teachers and assistants can be employed for this valuable task, since it will require intensive preparation and dedication.

If all the advantages of art-making activities are measured against the inconveniences of an unstructured class situation, it is my opinion that art-making as a tool towards better literacy in a multicultural society far outweighs the inconvenience. I can thus recommend that art-making classes as well as art-making areas be designed to accommodate both teachers and learners without interrupting the other school activities. I recommend that the DBE considers designated classes or areas, even outside, where learners can paint and mess without damaging anything. These areas should be easy to clean. Recycled material can be used to minimise costs and serves a role to also imprint the value of reuse.

As art transcends all barriers of literacy, culture, academic ability, gender, and many other disabilities and disadvantages, I recommend that the school curriculum supports art-making activities – not just as a necessary subject, but as a crucial part of the learners' education to promote better understanding, better vocabulary, better language skills, better teamwork, better interaction and tolerance, especially in the South African context.

Our children are subjected to so much formal and structured work, and therefore freedom of expression and interaction is much needed in Grade R. Learners need to be educated in an atmosphere of freedom and safety without the usual competition and assessment, even if it is only a small part of the time. Throughout the period that I have done the assignment, I felt the children's need to not only interact with each other, but also to have conversation with the teacher. At the end of the programme, I had the role of not only an instructor and educator, but also a friendly grownup who had a lot of fun with them, regardless of race and age. This is a wonderful situation where trust and relationships can be built and the value of teamwork can be learned, which will be priceless in a corporate world later in life.

5.9 CONCLUSION

After considerable deliberation on my side, I have concluded that the oral proficiency skills of Grade R learners in South Africa leaves much to be desired. Due to the nature of the Grade R classroom, it provides a great deal of opportunity for accidental vocabulary acquisition. However,

due to the multicultural context of South African schools, direct vocabulary teaching is also important, since learners will not be able to use new words if it is not explicitly taught. Allocating time for direct vocabulary instruction is a very important part of promoting oral proficiency and can therefore not be neglected. Opportunities to talk are, however, the most important part of promoting oral proficiency, and therefore it is not in the interest of learners to sit quietly and complete teacher-directed tasks. Through this research, it became apparent that art-making activities can be utilised to provide learners with a non-threatening situation to practise new vocabulary. This opportunity to practise oral language skills do indeed promote oral proficiency, as well as various social and emotional skills. In my opinion, structuring art-making activities around vocabulary instruction will be beneficial to learners' academic future.

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ADDENDUM A: CONSENT FORMS

INSTITUTION CONSENT OF PARTICIPATION

STUDY TITLE:

Promoting oral proficiency through art-making in Grade R.

STUDY PURPOSE AND RATIONALE:

The purpose of the study is to (determine):

Determine how art-making can promote learners' vocabulary and oral proficiency in Gr. R. In order to achieve this, the effect of learners' vocabulary on their oral proficiency in Grade R must be established. The influence of vocabulary and oral proficiency on reading readiness will also be clarified. Lastly, the researcher will investigate how art-making can be utilised to promote vocabulary within oral proficiency as a component of reading readiness in Grade R.

INCLUSION / EXCLUSION CRITERIA:

Participants consist of Grade R learners in an independent school in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District.

PARTICIPATION PROCEDURES AND DURATION:

Art-making activities will be structured around the theme discussed during a particular week and will include various art-making methods. These include but are not limited to collage, painting, drawing, working with clay or play dough, and structure building. In-depth individual dialogue will take place with the purpose of establishing the baseline level of oral proficiency of learners. Learners will work in groups of 2 to 5 to encourage learners to converse in English. All activities will be video and audio recorded with permission of parents. These recordings will be done to ensure accurate transcribing of the research process. Original artworks will be kept for the duration of the study and will be on display in an exhibition. The date of the exhibition will be announced after conclusion of the study.

The programme will run for eight (8) weeks, starting on Wednesday, May 02, 2012.

DATA CONFIDENTIALITY OR ANONYMITY:

All data will be maintained as confidential and no identifying information such as names will appear in any publication or presentation of the data.

STORAGE OF DATA:

Copies of recordings will be locked away for a period of 7 years after which it will be destroyed. The data will also be entered into a software program and stored on the researcher's password-protected computer for as long as needed and then deleted. Learners' artwork will be kept for the duration of the study. Only members from the research team will have access to the data.

RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS:

No possible risks to participants are envisaged. However, in the event of questions or activities that may be perceived as threatening or causing discomfort, participants may decline to answer such questions without providing any reason for doing so.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. Participants may at any stage refuse to participate and or withdraw at any time.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

The research is conducted by M.Ed. student, Sanja van Zyl, under the supervision Dr. Audrey Klopper from the School of Educational Sciences: North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus. Dr. Klopper can be reached at 018 299 4328 (o/h) for questions regarding this research project. This research has been ethical approved by the North-West Ethics Committee.

CONSENT:

I, _____ Executive Head of [redacted] [research site], agree that this research project entitled, "Promoting oral proficiency through art-making in Grade R", may take place at my school. I have read the description of this study, I have also had the study explained to me and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I will receive copies of all the letters of informed consent to keep for future references.

Name

Signature

Date

CONSENT:

I, _____ Primary School Head of [redacted] [research site], agree that this research project entitled, "Promoting oral proficiency through art-making in Grade R" may take place at my school. I have read the description of this study, I have also had the study explained to me and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I will receive copies of all the letters of informed consent to keep for future references.

Name

Signature

Date

The ability to communicate (including speaking and listening) is an essential life skill for all learners, as it underpins a learner's social, emotional and intellectual development: The development and use of communication and language is at the heart of young children's learning.

Several studies have indicated that South African learners perform below average with regards to literacy skills. These include the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (Centre of Evaluation and Assessment, 2006) as well as the report on Quality of Primary School Inputs in South Africa (Moloi & Chetty, 2011). A 2003 study by the Department of Education to determine the literacy skills of Grade 3-learners concluded that only 61% of tested learners are capable of reading and writing on their aged appropriate level. According to the Department of Education emergent literacy skills in Grade R form the basis for future cognitive competence.

Taking the above mentioned into consideration, it is important to take note of the importance of learners' language ability and especially their vocabulary as a component of oral proficiency (South Africa, 2003). Researchers are currently looking at ways to tackle literacy difficulties worldwide. I am specifically focussing on grade R learners. In my research, I will be focusing of vocabulary enrichment through art-making activities. These art-making activities will be structured around themes included in the grade R academic programme. Usually, the children experience this as a pleasant activity. However, participation is voluntary and children may at any stage, refuse to participate and or withdraw at any time.

Parents of participants will receive a free CD of their children's artwork and an art exhibition will be held after conclusion of the study. I would like to stress that your child's results will be handled sensitively. It will only be used together with the results of the other children and will be kept anonymous. Only by looking at the results of a large group of children, we would be able to draw reliable information. Your child's participation will therefore be much appreciated.

Mrs Gallagher and the Gr R teachers have kindly agreed that the research may be conducted as an extra mural activity at the school.

I trust that your child will be able to participate in the research project. If so, kindly fill in the permission slip below, which your child should return to his/her teacher. Thank you very much in advance!

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Miss Sanja van Zyl (cell phone: 082 498 0653).

Kind Regards.

Sanja van Zyl

I give permission for my child _____(name of child) to participate in the research project that will take place at [redacted] [research site].

Date: _____

Signature: _____

PERMISSION TO RECORD, USE AND DISPLAY ARTWORK

With your permission I would like to video and audio recorded all art-making activities. These recordings will be done to ensure accurate transcribing of the research process. A photo record will be kept and parents will receive a CD with photos of all finished products. Original artworks will be kept for the duration of the study and will be on display in an exhibition. The date of the exhibition will be announced after conclusion of the study.

During presentation of research papers at conferences and other academic summits it is sometimes helpful to include pictures and video clips in presentations. I would therefore also like to ask permission to use photos and other recordings of art-activities after completion of the study. Names and identities of all learners will remain private, the name of the school will not be revealed and learners' faces will be blurred in order for them to remain anonymous.

DATA CONFIDENTIALITY OR ANONYMITY:

All data will be maintained as confidential and no identifying information such as names will appear in any publication or presentation of the data.

STORAGE OF DATA:

Copies of recordings will be locked away for a period of 7 years after which it will be destroyed. The data will also be entered into a software program and stored on the researcher's password-protected computer for as long as needed and then deleted. Learners' artwork will be kept for the duration of the study. Only members from the research team will have access to the data.

The programme will run for eight (8) weeks, starting on Wednesday, May 02, 2012.

If you agree to the terms and conditions regarding the recoding, usage and displaying of artworks kindly fill in the permission slip below, which your child should return to his/her teacher. Thank you very much in advance!

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Miss Sanja van Zyl (cell phone: 082 498 0653).

Kind Regards.

Sanja van Zyl

I give permission for my child _____(name of child) to participate in the research project that will take place at [redacted] [research site].

Date: _____

Signature: _____

ADDENDUM B: SAMPLE QUESTION FOR PRE-PROGRAMME INTERVIEWS

- Hallo, what is your name?
- What is the name of your best friend?
- What do you and (friend's name) like to play at school?
- What part of your body do you use when you play the game?
- How do you feel when (friend's name) doesn't want to play with you?
- Is the game that you like to play safe? And why do you think so?
- What do you need to eat to stay healthy enough to play the game with (friend's name)?

⁴Lena

Researcher: Hallo what is your name?
Lena: (Silence)
Researcher: Don't be scared, I just want to talk. Mommy said it's ok.
Do you want a friend to come and sit with you?
Lena: (Big eyes, no answer)

Researcher asks the help of Lena's teacher. Teacher find's Lena's friend and thy both sit with Lena for the interview

Interview starts again

Researcher: Hallo, what is your name?
Lena: *Very softly*

⁴ Note: The pre-program interview situation as well as the questions were altered to make the learner more comfortable and trusting. Lena was clearly scared and the best interest of the learner was considered a greater priority than following planned protocol.

It is my opinion that data gathered during the interview can still be considered as valid since neither Lebo (the friend) nor the teacher had an influence on Lena's verbal responses. They did not answer in her place nor did they lead her to give the correct/incorrect answer. They also did not explain questions or translate it to her mother tongue.

Lena

Researcher: What is the name of your friend?

Lena: *Looks at her friend sitting next to her*

Researcher: Is this your friend?

Lena: *Nod's yes*

Researcher: What is her name?

Lena: *Looks at her friend, smiles and answers*

Lebo

Researcher: What do you and Lebo like to play at school?

Lena: *Big eyes, looks at friend – Lebo.*

Outside

Researcher: What part of your body do you use when you play outside?

Lena: *No reaction*

Researcher: Do you run when you play outside?

Lena: *No verbal reaction*

Nods yes

Researcher: How do you feel when Lebo doesn't want to play with you?

Lena: *No reaction, looks like she is going to cry*

Researcher: Are you sad?

Lena: *No reaction*

Researcher: Are you scared?

Lena: Looks at Lebo, nods yes. No verbal reaction

Researcher: Ok, it's ok. You can just answer yes or no. If you don't understand just look at your teacher. Are you ok?

Lena: Yes

Researcher? Is the game you like to play safe?

Lena: Yes

Researcher? Do you like eating healthy food?

Lena: *Looks at teacher*

Researcher: Thank you Lena. You see that wasn't so scary.

Don't worry next time we will do some art-activities and it is going to be lots of fun. You can go and play with Lebo now.

ADDENDUM C: PRE-PROGRAMME AND POST-PROGRAMME COMPARISON

Table 7-1: Pre- and post-programme score analysis

Learner	Confidence score		Vocabulary score		Sentence structure score		Fluency of speech score	
⁵ Name	Pre-Programme	Post-Programme	Pre-Programme	Post-Programme	Pre-Programme	Post-Programme	Pre-Programme	Post-Programme
Abdel	1	3	1	2	1	3	1	4
Alicia	3	4	3	3	4	4	4	4
Andrico	2	3	2	4	2	3	2	4
Hannes	3	3	3	4	4	5	4	4
Bontle	3	5	3	4	3	5	3	4
Braam	3	4	3	3	3	4	4	4
Calvyn	3	5	3	4	3	4	3	4
Joshua	1	3	1	2	1	3	1	4
Ivanca	4	4	3	4	3	4	3	4
Jaun-Pierre	2	4	2	3	2	3	3	5
Jayden	4	4	3	4	3	5	3	5
Jonita	3	4	4	4	3	5	3	4
Lena	1	3	1	2	1	4	1	4
Lesedi	2	3	3	4	3	4	4	5
Lena	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	4
Miena	3	4	3	4	4	5	3	4
Queride	1	3	1	2	1	3	1	5
Simpiwe	1	3	1	2	1	3	1	4
Susanna	2	3	2	4	2	3	2	4
Thoko	2	3	2	3	2	3	2	4
Zodwa	2	4	2	2	2	4	2	4
Average	2,3	3,6	2,3	3,2	2,4	3,9	2,5	4,2

⁵ All learner names have been changed pseudo names, to protect the learner's identity

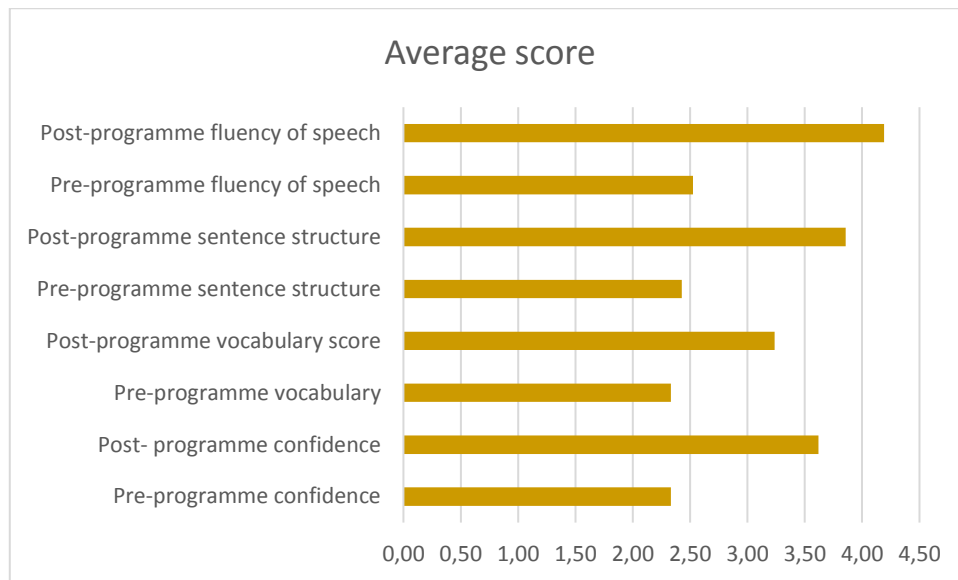
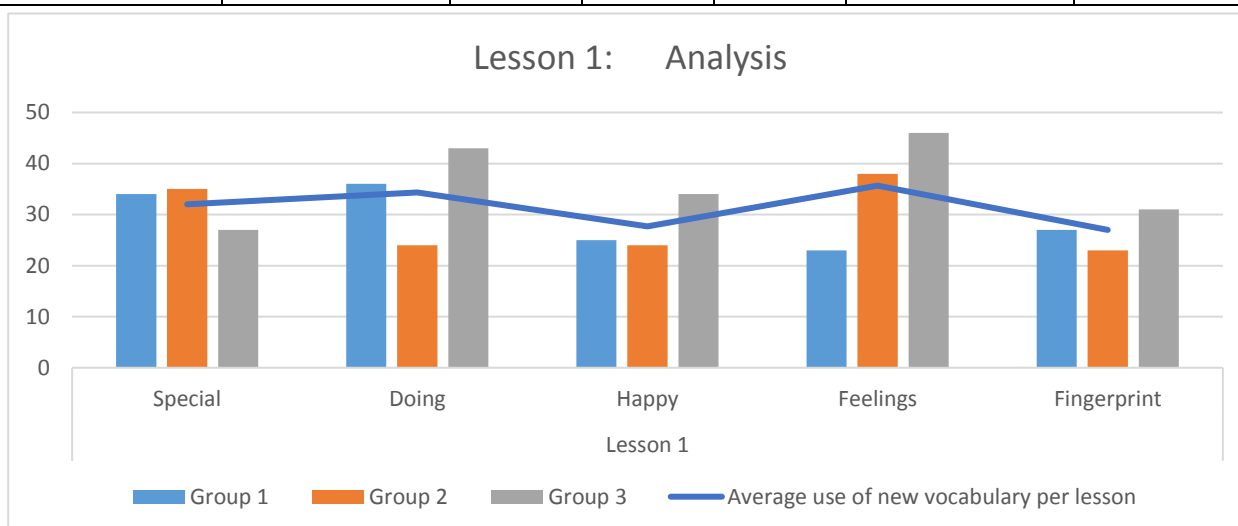


Figure 7-1: Pre- and post-programme score comparison

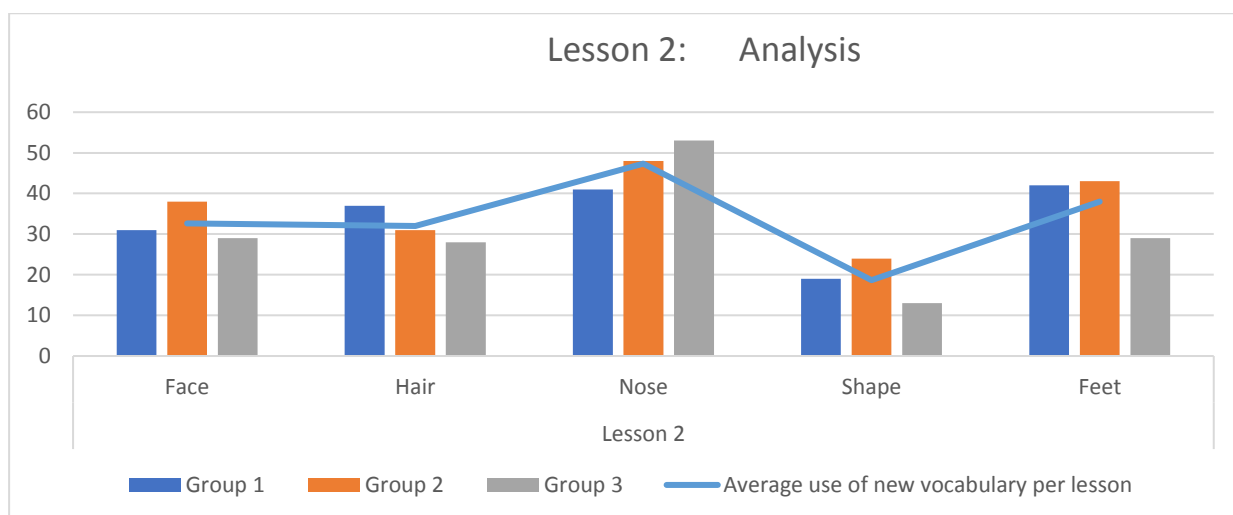
ADDENDUM D: FREQUENCY OF VOCABULARY USE

Lesson 1	New Vocabulary	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Average use of new vocabulary per lesson	Total use of new vocabulary
	Special	34	35	27	32	96
	Doing	36	24	43	34	103
	Happy	25	24	34	28	83
	Feelings	23	38	46	36	107
	Fingerprint	27	23	31	27	81



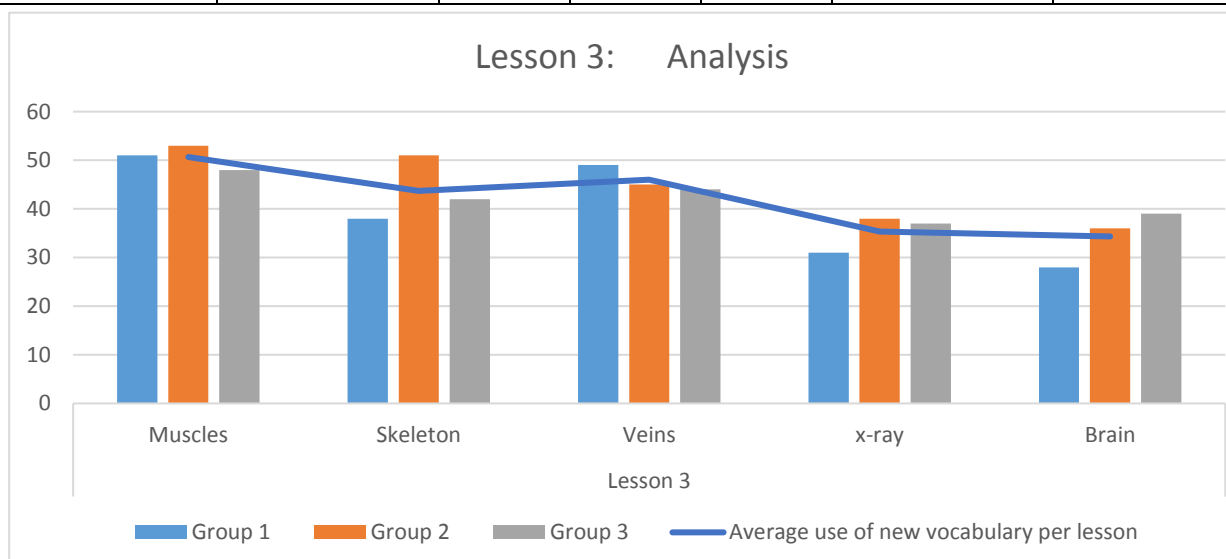
Lesson 1: Pre- and post-programme analysis

Lesson 2	New Vocabulary	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Average use of new vocabulary per lesson	Total use of new vocabulary
	Face	31	38	29	33	98
	Hair	37	31	28	32	96
	Nose	41	48	53	47	142
	Shape	19	24	13	19	56
	Feet	42	43	29	38	114



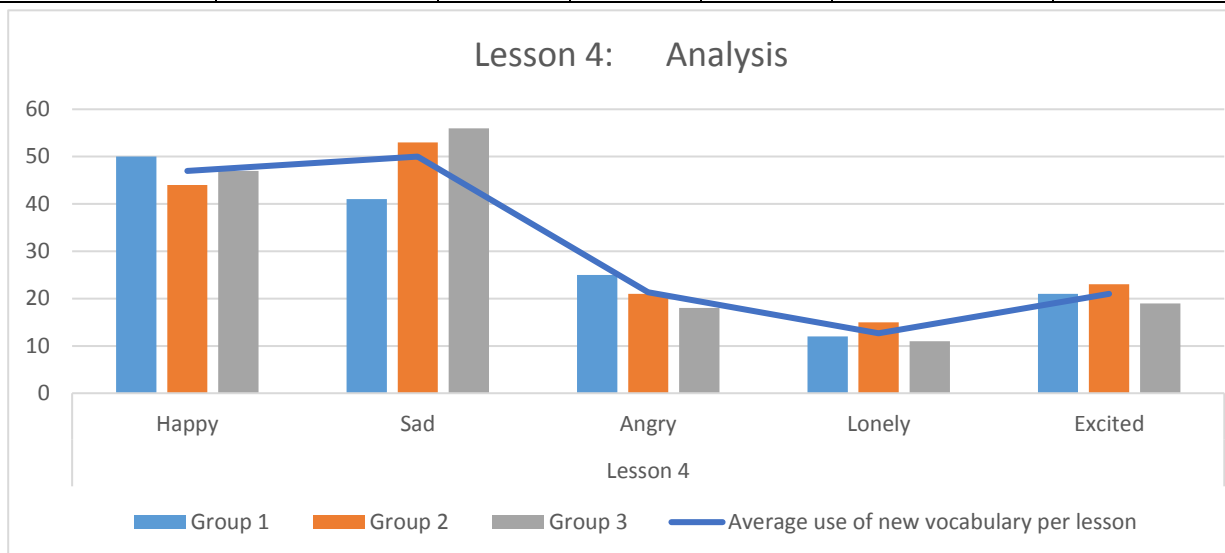
Lesson 2: Pre- and post-programme analysis

Lesson 3	New Vocabulary	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Average use of new vocabulary per lesson	Total use of new vocabulary
	Muscles	51	53	48	51	152
	Skeleton	38	51	42	44	131
	Veins	49	45	44	46	138
	x-ray	31	38	37	35	106
	Brain	28	36	39	34	103



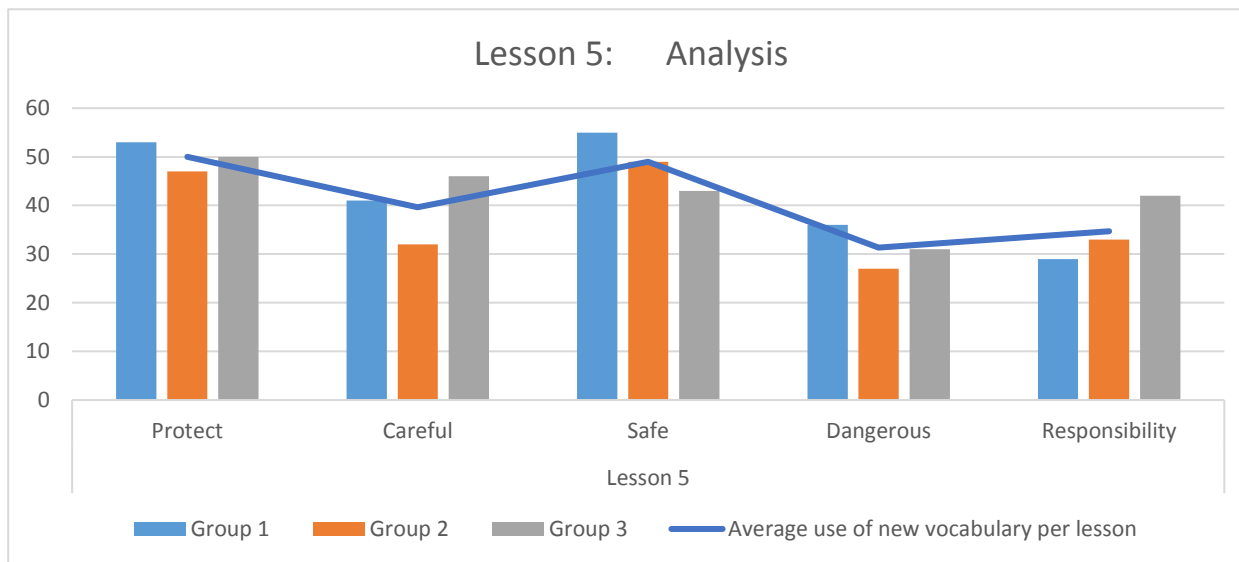
Lesson 3: Pre- and post-programme analysis

Lesson 4	New Vocabulary	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Average use of new vocabulary per lesson	Total use of new vocabulary
	Happy	50	44	47	47	141
	Sad	41	53	56	50	150
	Angry	25	21	18	21	64
	Lonely	12	15	11	13	38
	Excited	21	23	19	21	63



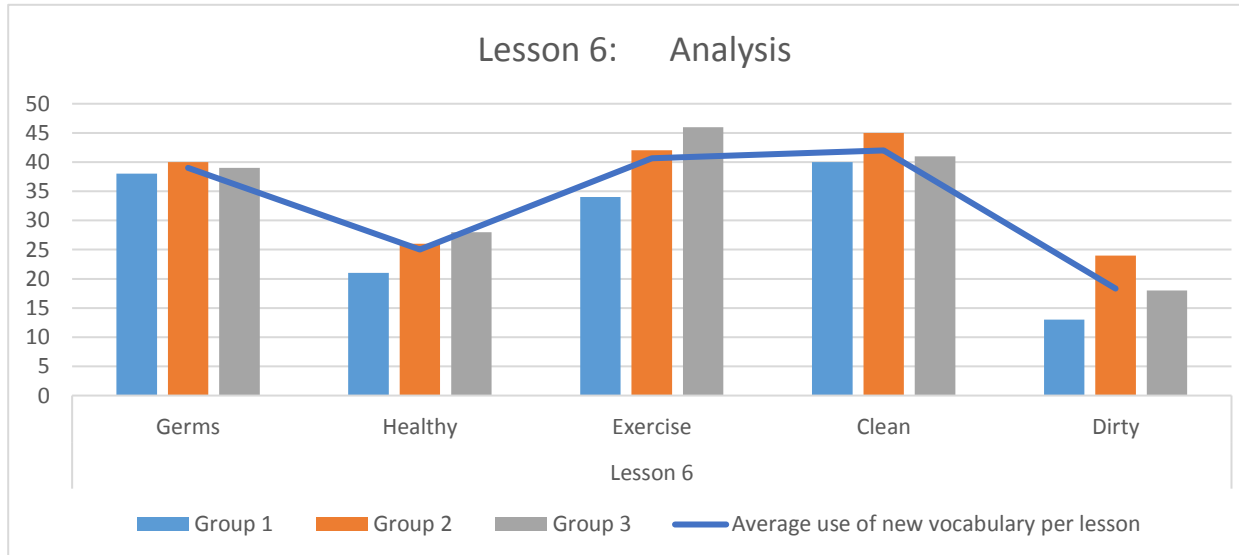
Lesson 4: Pre- and post-programme analysis

Lesson 5	New Vocabulary	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Average use of new vocabulary per lesson	Total use of new vocabulary
	Protect	53	47	50	50	150
	Careful	41	32	46	40	119
	Safe	55	49	43	49	147
	Dangerous	36	27	31	31	94
	Responsibility	29	33	42	35	104



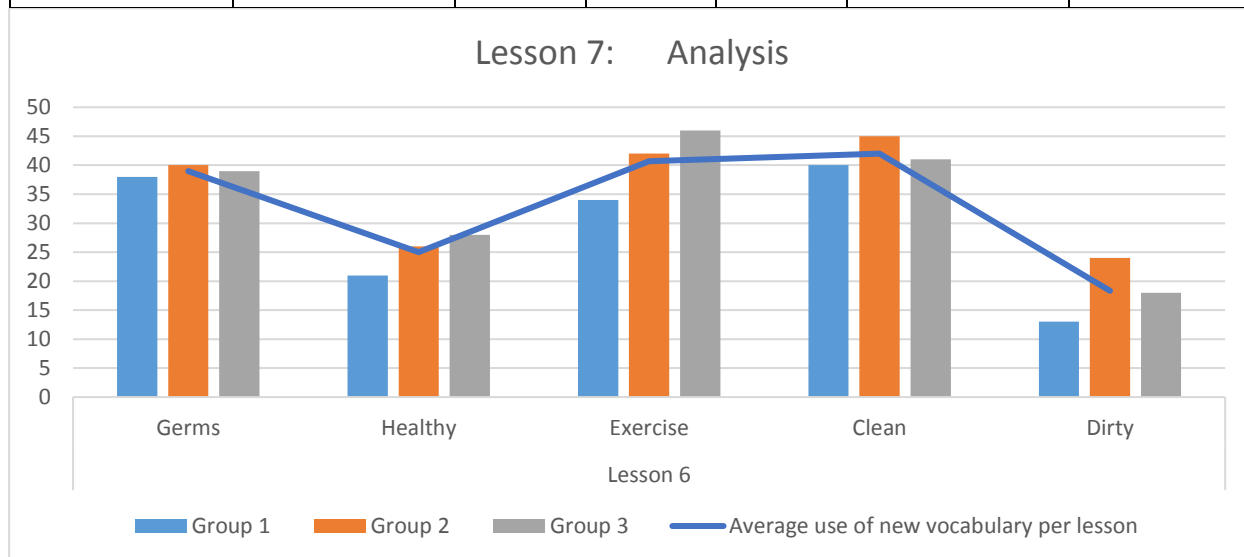
Lesson 5: Pre- and post-programme analysis

Lesson 6	New Vocabulary	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Average use of new vocabulary per lesson	Total use of new vocabulary
	Germs	38	40	39	39	117
	Healthy	21	26	28	25	75
	Exercise	34	42	46	41	122
	Clean	40	45	41	42	126
	Dirty	13	24	18	18	55



Lesson 6: Pre- and post-programme analysis

Lesson 7	New Vocabulary	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Average use of new vocabulary per lesson	Total use of new vocabulary
	Calcium	33	38	43	38	114
	Plaque	15	28	24	22	67
	Dentist	39	46	41	42	126
	Cavities	26	28	29	28	83
	Products	13	15	19	16	47



Lesson 7: Pre- and post-programme analysis

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LANGUAGE EDITING

(Exam: October 2016 – February 2017)

10 December 2016

I hereby confirm that the following dissertation was edited:

“Promoting oral proficiency through art-making in Grade R”

S.S. van Zyl

12531162

Clients may decide to amend text after the editing process, and may therefore possibly introduce errors.

Clients must make sure that all references have been cited and acknowledged adequately, and that they are satisfied with the final document before submitting for examination.

Please note that the proof of language-editing is valid for the examination period. Clients may not use Dr De Vos' name (or the proof of language editing) in any way if major amendments were made in the manuscript after examination, unless Dr De Vos revised the amendments.



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ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE OF STUDY

Based on approval by the **Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education Sciences (ESREC)** after being reviewed at the meeting held on **24/05/2012**, the North-West University Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (NWU-IRERC) hereby **approves** your study as indicated below. This implies that the NWU-IRERC grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Study title: Promoting oral proficiency through art making in Grade R.																														
Study Leader/Supervisor: Dr A Klopper																														
Student: SS van Zyl																														
Ethics number:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>N</td><td>W</td><td>U</td><td>-</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>8</td><td>0</td><td>-</td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>-</td><td>A</td><td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">Institution</td> <td colspan="5">Study Number</td> <td colspan="2">Year</td> <td colspan="4">Status</td> </tr> </table> Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation	N	W	U	-	0	0	0	8	0	-	1	2	-	A	2	Institution			Study Number					Year		Status			
N	W	U	-	0	0	0	8	0	-	1	2	-	A	2																
Institution			Study Number					Year		Status																				
Application Type: N/A																														
Commencement date: 2012-05-24	Expiry date: 2017-05-23																													
Risk:	N/A																													

Special conditions of the approval (if applicable):

- Translation of the informed consent document to the languages applicable to the study participants should be submitted to the ESREC (if applicable).
- Any research at governmental or private institutions, permission must still be obtained from relevant authorities and provided to the ESREC. Ethics approval is required BEFORE approval can be obtained from these authorities.

General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following:

- The study leader (principle investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the NWU-IRERC via ESREC:
 - annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the study, and upon completion of the project
 - without any delay in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project
 - Annually a number of projects may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader must apply for approval of these changes at the ESREC. Would there be deviation from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date, a new application must be made to the NWU-IRERC via ESREC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility the NWU-IRERC and ESREC retains the right to:
 - request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;
 - to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process.
 - withdraw or postpone approval if:
 - any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected,
 - it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the ESREC or that information has been false or misrepresented,
 - the required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately,
 - new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.
- ESREC can be contacted for further information or any report templates via Erna.Conradie@nwu.ac.za or 018 299 4656

The IRERC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your project. Please do not hesitate to contact the IRERC or ESREC for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely

Linda du Plessis

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ou=Vaal Triangle Campus,
email=linda.duplessis@nwu.ac.za,
c=ZA
Date: 2016.12.13 17:38:27 +02'00'

Prof Linda du Plessis

Chair NWU Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (IRERC)