

CHAPTER 6: METHOD OF RESEARCH

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the method of research for the dissertation is discussed. This will be discussed under the headings of a survey of the literature, as well as the empirical research design which will include the design itself, the subjects, the instrumentation and the procedure. Finally the process of the analysis of the data will be discussed.

6.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Five case studies of preschool children of the ages of 4 - 6 years were conducted in order to do the situation analysis, and thus determine the factors that might influence the design of an ESL course for African preprimary children. The design is therefore primarily qualitative.

6.2 SUBJECTS

Five preschools in Ikageng (a township near Potchefstroom) were selected for the case studies. These chosen preschools differed from each other with regard to their location, size, available resources and facilities, and the qualification of the reception year teachers. The subjects were divided into three groups.

- (i) A group of 5 preschoolers - one from each selected preschool. These preschoolers were 4 to 6 years of age and in the intact reception year classes of the different preschools. The children were selected with the help of the teachers as the teachers knew which children's parents would be willing and able to participate in the research.
- (ii) A group of 5 preschool teachers, specifically those teachers responsible for the reception year class in each preschool.
- (iii) A group of 5 parents or guardians - either the mother or the father or the

person responsible for the selected child in each preschool.

6.4 INSTRUMENTATION AND PROCEDURE:

Different types of instrumentation were used for the different subjects:

- (i) The preschoolers: They were shown pictures from storybooks and magazines. Then the preschool learners were asked to describe these pictures so that their current level of proficiency in English could be established. They were also asked to recite English rhymes and sing English songs that they have learnt at school. Furthermore, they were observed in the school environment for a week .
- (ii) The preschool teachers: Unstructured interviews were conducted with the teachers. The aim of these interviews was to determine which resources are available at the preschools, the current syllabus content with regard to English as a second language and the preschoolers' prior knowledge of English. The teachers were also observed for a week at the preschool to determine their English proficiency, as well as the place of English in the currently used syllabus.
- (iii) The parents of the preschoolers: Unstructured interviews were conducted with the parents, or guardians. These interviews consisted of questions to determine, e.g. the amount of English the children are exposed to at home, their exposure to television, radio, books and magazines. It also determined whether the parents would prefer an ESL syllabus for their preschoolers and if so, what it should aim at.

The preschools were visited over a period of two months - one week at each preschool, allowing for public holidays or unrest that erupted in Ikageng during that time. Appointments were made beforehand at the selected preschools. The selected parents were also contacted beforehand and appointments were made to interview them at times convenient for them. These interviews were

done with the help of a mother tongue speaker.

6.5 ANALYSIS

The data for each case study were collected, systematically analysed and then categorized. The data acquired and analysed from the case studies were then compared in order to find similarities between the different case studies. These similarities were used as a starting point for the design of an ESL Programme.

6.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the method of research was set out. As a situation analysis had to be done in a socially, economically and politically very complex situation, a qualitative research method was chosen. This is the case study method. This method proved to be effective in gaining information for the design of an ESL programme for preschool children in Ikageng.