

**Investigating kinds of support
provided to primary school
learners to alleviate language as
a barrier to learning with specific
reference to grades 4-6**

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DECLARATION

I declare that investigating kinds of support provided to primary school learners to alleviate language as a barrier to learning; with specific reference to grades 4-6 is my own work, and that all the sources that have been quoted are indicated and acknowledged by means of reference.

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08/ 08/2022

DATE

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Abstract

The main purpose of the study is to investigate the kinds of support given to learners who experience language as a barrier to learning, and the support given to educators in order to support learners with this barrier. The study was interested in learners who experience language as a barrier to teaching and learning, triggered by the learners who are unable to read and write in class in grades 4 to 6 at the primary school. The study was carried out in five primary schools that fall under Ngaka Modiri Molema Municipality in Ratlou sub-district. The researcher selected ten English educators, 2 in each of the selected primary schools who are teaching language in grades 4-6. The 10 grade 4-6 educators were easily accessible and were willing to participate. One-on-one semi-structured interviews were carried out with these educators. A one-on-one semi-structured interview was carried out with two officials from DBST, and one educator from the SBST from each of the five selected schools.

Thematic data analysis was used to interpret data from interviews. Four themes emerged from data analysis. The themes that emerged are challenges faced by grade 4-6 learners in acquiring speaking, reading, writing, and spelling skills, factors causing language barriers, support given to educators for learners with language barriers, and strategies that can be used to help learners with language barriers. The themes were discussed making reference to literature in the study. The findings reveal that some learners are encountering language barriers for listening, speaking, reading and writing. The Department is assisting learners with barriers, but such learners need to be provided with the necessary support that encompasses provision of necessary teaching and learning materials and application of relevant teaching approaches. The study recommends that the Department of Basic Education (DBE) should provide the necessary support on screened learners with English language learning barriers. After being screened, then the support that is necessary must be offered to such learners in an inclusive classroom.

Keywords: Language learning barrier, English as a second language, inclusive education, learners, and learner support, Mother tongue, Primary school learners, Grade 4-6 learners.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
Abstract	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
1 PROBLEM ORIENTATION	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 BACKGROUND	3
1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT	5
1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS:	6
1.4.1 Primary question	6
1.4.2 Secondary questions	6
1.5 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY	7
1.5.1 Purpose	7
1.5.2 Objectives	7
1.6 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS	7
1.7 RATIONALE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	8
1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN	14
1.8.1 Philosophical Orientation	15
1.8.2 Qualitative Research method	15
1.9 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE STUDY	15
1.10 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH	15

1.10.1	Site selection	15
1.10.2	Participant selection	15
1.10.3	Data collection	16
1.10.4	Data analysis and interpretation	17
1.10.5	Trustworthiness	17
1.10.6	Researcher's role	17
1.10.7	Ethical considerations	18
1.11	CHAPTER DIVISION	18
1.12	CHAPTER SUMMARY	19
2	REVIEW OF LITERATURE	20
2.1	INTRODUCTION	20
2.2	CHALLENGES FACED BY GRADE 4-6 LEARNERS IN ACQUIRING LISTENING, SPEAKING, READING, AND WRITING.	22
2.2.1	Basic facilities and equipment for effective language learning	23
2.2.2	Psychological problems as a hindrance	23
2.2.3	Educators using wrong techniques in language teaching	24
2.2.4	Different cultural background and values between the educators and learners	24
2.2.5	Mother tongue interference	25
2.2.6	Lack of priority given to English as a subject	25
2.2.7	Lack of vocabulary	26
2.2.8	Concentration of learners and support	26
2.3	FACTORS CAUSING LANGUAGE BARRIERS.	27
2.3.1	Accent being used by the teacher	27
2.3.2	Misusing and misinterpretation of words.....	28
2.3.3	Geographical difficulties and difficulties with handling the technology	29

2.3.4	Health and psychological problems	29
2.4	STRATEGIES THAT CAN BE USED TO ASSIST LEARNERS WITH LANGUAGE BARRIERS	30
2.4.1	Inclusive classroom	30
2.4.2	Teachers' teaching approaches	32
2.4.3	Collaboration among educators	35
2.4.4	Classroom organisation, management and environment	36
2.4.5	Language focus	36
2.4.6	Marking and feedback	37
2.4.7	Communication at home	38
2.4.8	Assessment	38
2.4.9	Using technology and other visual aids	39
2.4.10	Teacher training, support and empowerment	39
2.4.11	The role of the School-based Support Team (SBST)	40
2.5	CHAPTER SUMMARY	41
3	RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	42
3.1	INTRODUCTION	42
3.2	THE PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH	42
3.3	RESEARCH DESIGN	43
3.4	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	44
3.4.1	Site selection	44
3.4.2	Participant selection	44
3.4.3	Data analysis and interpretation	47
3.5	TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY	49
3.5.1	Credibility	49
3.5.2	Confirmability	50

3.5.3	Participants` language and verbatim accounts	50
3.6	Ethical considerations	50
3.7	CHAPTER SUMMARY	51
4	DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION	52
4.1	Introduction	52
4.2	Profile of the participants	52
4.3	Data analysis process	55
4.4	Data presentation, analysis, and discussion	57
4.4.1	Theme one: Challenges faced by grade 4-6 learners in acquiring reading, writing, speaking, and spelling skills	58
4.4.2	Theme two: Factors causing language barriers	59
4.4.3	Theme three: Support to be given to educators for learners with barriers..	64
4.4.4	Theme four: Strategies that can be used to help learners with language barriers	66
5	SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION	71
5.1	Introduction	71
5.2	Summary of findings	71
5.3	Recommendations	75
5.4	Conclusion	75
5.5	Limitations to the study	76
	REFERENCES	75
	APPENDICES	82
	APPENDIX A – Language editing certificate	82
	APPENDIX B – Ethics certificate	83
	APPENDIX C– Permission letter	86
	APPENDIX – D: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS.....	88

APPENDIX - E: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR (SBST) TEACHERS 90

APPENDIX – F: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR (DBST) 92

APPENDIX G – Plagiarism report 94

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1 Schools conveniently sampled for the study	46
Table 4.1 Profile of participants	53
Table 4.2 Themes and sub-themes	56

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1 Analysing and interpretation of data steps	48
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CHAPTER ONE

1 ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study investigated the kinds of support provided to primary school learners by coordinators and educators to alleviate the problem of the English language as a barrier to learning, with specific reference to grades 4 to 6, referred to as the Intermediate Phase in the South African context. Coordinators refers to the District Based Support Teams (DBST) and the School Based Support Teams (SBST). It is important to note that, before educators are involved, support is provided at school level and district level by the coordinators, i.e. the DBST and SBST. Primary school learners in the Intermediate Phase experience a sudden shift from their mother tongue, which is Setswana (one of eleven official languages in the South Africa) in the context of this study, to the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT), which is English in this study. In Grades 1-3, LoLT is mainly Setswana in most of the primary schools in the North-West Province, one of the nine provinces in South Africa. Due to this sudden change, learners are faced with the challenge of learning another language, i.e. English, which is new to most of them. Intermediate Phase educators, on the other hand, are faced with a challenge of shifting the mindset of their learners in the teaching and learning where LoLT is English. Sookrajh and Joshua (2009:334) highlighted the predicament of educators and learners by stating that from Grade 4, the LoLT shifts from mother tongue to English language, which is foreign to them.

A study carried out by Sookrajh and Joshua (2006:27) in a rural district of Gauteng on language use, and the implementation of the Language-in-Education Policy (LiEP) in four schools, found out that most of the educators are English second-language speakers and have to cope with preparing learners to communicate effectively in English. The educators had to resort to code-switching in order to make learners understand. In a study by Sookrajh and Joshua (2006:27:28) educators revealed their learners have very little acquaintance with the English Language outside the classroom, and could therefore not

engage meaningfully with English as the LoLT. Thus, most of the learners are unable to cope with English as the LoLT, and this results in those learners lagging behind on acquisition of English language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Language is acquired in various forms, which include listening, speaking, reading, and writing, which a learner has to master in order to show understanding of the content and be able to communicate, particularly during teaching and learning. This is further supported by Eloff and Swart (2018:170), who describe language as the process that supports individuals' ability to communicate their thoughts, opinions, and wishes to other. Language supports a child's ability to express ideas and emotions to others. Language also plays a part in a child's ability to process and understand information received from others. According to Landsberg, Kruger and Swart (2019:126), communication through language is the main ability which distinguishes humans from all other species on earth.

Despite the challenges faced by some learners by using English as LoLT, this study argues that those learners should not be excluded from the mainstream classroom. The Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 1994) sanctioned the concept of inclusive education, and put forward the idea that inclusive schooling would effectively eliminate discrimination and achieve equity in education. The concept of inclusion was then perceived to be a process to identify and eliminate barriers, thus ensuring participation and achievement for all learners (UNESCO, 2005:15-16). Equality and access to quality education are embedded in the Constitution of South Africa (RSA, 1996), and the Education White Paper 6 (DoE,2001) on Special Needs Education suggested that building an inclusive education and training education system will help to develop and create positive learning conditions for all learners in an inclusive education system (DoE, 2001; Hay & Beyers, 2011:235). As a result, learners facing barriers to the learning of English in grades 4 to 6 need to be integrated in the classroom and offered the necessary support in order to master skills such listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

1.2 BACKGROUND

Historically, discrimination in the provision of quality education and support was most evident in the 'special needs sector' of the report of the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) of 2004, which showed that learners with special needs in rural areas experience the worst forms of education exclusion.

The South African Constitution (1996) promotes multilingualism and cultural diversity, underpinned by respect for all languages, while acknowledging the maintenance of home languages in schools. The South African Schools Act [SASA] (RSA,1996) allows for the medium of instruction to be the mother tongue in the Foundation Phase (Grade R -3), with a switch to English or Afrikaans as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) from Grade 4, for those learners whose mother tongue is neither English nor Afrikaans (Department of Basic Education [DBE] 2011a; 2011b). Thus, where a language barrier exists, learners experience language as a barrier to learning in the sense whereby they find difficulty with their home language (Setswana) together with the first additional language (English).

This inequality in the provision of education support to learners with special needs was further confirmed by the Department of Education (DoE) report of 2007. According to this report, 408 special schools across the country provided education to 91280 learners identified with special needs (DoE,2007). Typically, the best-resourced special schools are in urban areas, and they attract the best qualified specialists. The quality of education offered in many of these special schools is very limited. Some of the challenges that contribute to the poor provision of education and support in special schools include "limited skills among educators and support personnel, unavailability of professional expert support personnel, inadequate personnel or non-teaching personnel and care professional in hostels, lack of assistive devices, poverty and the reliance on disability grants for payment of school fees, inadequate transport, and infrastructure challenges" (DoE, 2007:5).

The Government Gazette (No. 38356 of 19 December 2014) refers to language barrier as inaccurate or slow and effortful word reading, difficulty in understanding the meaning of what is read, difficulty with spelling, and difficulties with written expression, although there are a number of barriers to learning like dyscalculia, dyslexia, and dysgraphia (RSA,1996). The concern is that many learners experience language as a barrier, especially in the basic skills of writing grammar, reading, spelling, and using language adequately, and find it difficult to express themselves through the English language. Donohue and Bornman (2014:257) state that schools currently lack educators who have the capacity and knowledge to instruct a diverse body of learners in a single classroom without considerably increasing their workload. Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2010: 328) state that other reasons for learners having language difficulties are due to poor teaching, frequent changing of educators or schools, or missing out on a period of schooling. However, with appropriate teaching and supportive parenting or caregiving from the beginning, the difficulties can be overcome.

The researcher's experience at their current school is that learners who experience English language as a barrier to learning cannot read and write, which makes it difficult for them to spell words properly or speak proficiently (SASA, 1996). The researcher's observation is that learners struggle with English as the LOLT when they arrive in the intermediate phase (grades 4-6). Classes are overcrowded and under-resourced, which create obstacles for educators to support learners with English language learning barriers. Many educators themselves are English second-language speakers and are not proficient in teaching in English, and most learners are from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds, and have little exposure to English outside the classroom.

According to the report of the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training, (NCSNET) (2007), learners with language barriers to learning and development are faced with the following challenges: access to special services and facilities is limited; and support for learners with language barriers to learning in respect of speaking, reading, and writing is inadequately provided. Thus, the main concern of the researcher is that, at

several schools, many learners are experiencing language as a barrier to learning which seems to be the main problem in rural schools. This study seeks to investigate the support provided to intermediate phase (grades 4-6) learners to alleviate the problem of language as a barrier to learning.

To address these past and current challenges, South Africa adopted the inclusive education policy Education White Paper 6 in 2001(DoE,2001). This policy outlines strategies for the provision of education support for those learners who experience barriers to learning and development. According to this policy, one of the key strategies for improving education support to learners experiencing barriers to learning and development is through the establishment of an inclusive education and training system (DBE, 2014:1).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem under study is that primary school learners in grades 4-6 experience a sudden shift from their mother tongue, which is Setswana, to the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT), which is English. As a result, this study investigated the kinds of support provided to primary school learners by educators and district officials to alleviate the barrier to learning posed by the English language. To teach well requires more than technical know-how. Conceptual knowledge about education concerns the framework within which educators live their professional lives. Hattie (2009:259) believes educators teach through values, aims, curricula, pedagogy, resources and assessment, together with the ways in which they are connected. While educators' conceptual knowledge is important, there is no evidence to suggest that this on its own, combined with classroom experience, will guarantee teaching success. Educators need other kinds of theoretical knowledge and understanding too, including an understanding of empirical research on teaching. For example, to evaluate how well they have matched their lesson objectives to the needs of the children they teach, educators need some insight into what pupil progression might look like in principle. This argument is supported by empirical evidence, which suggests that effective educators are able to identify and respond to pupils'

difficulties in understanding the material presented (Hattie, 2009:259). In order to initiate progress on inclusive education, the national Department of Education must take some steps when addressing school-level barriers to implementation, the Department must determine the extent to which educators are prepared to educate a diverse body of learners within one classroom. Educators then need to receive comprehensive training programmes in areas where they lack skills. These training programmes can be supplemented with specialised support teams that have the capacity to enter classrooms and provide educators with the hands-on training and practical skills that they need to address learners' barriers to learning (Donohue & Bornman, 2014: 256).

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1.4.1 Primary question

How are primary school learners supported to alleviate English language as a barrier to learning in grades 4 to 6 (Intermediate Phase)?

Secondary questions

1. What are the challenges faced by grades 4-6 (or Intermediate Phase) learners in acquiring reading, writing, speaking, and spelling skills in English language in Ratlou sub-district, South Africa?
2. What factors cause barriers to learning English language in grade 4-6 (or Intermediate Phase) learners in Ratlou sub-district, South Africa?
3. Which strategies can be used to help learners with English language barriers in grade 4-6 (or Intermediate Phase) learners in Ratlou sub-district ,South Africa?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

1.4.2 Aim

This study investigates the support provided to primary school learners to alleviate their

English language as a barrier to learning in grades 4 to 6 (or Intermediate Phase) in Ratlou sub-district, South Africa.

Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

1. To explore the challenges faced by grades 4-6 (or Intermediate Phase) learners in acquiring reading, writing, speaking, and spelling skills in English language in Ratlou sub-district, South Africa.
2. To identify which factors cause English language learning barriers in grade 4-6 (or Intermediate Phase) learners in Ratlou sub-district, South Africa.
3. To establish different strategies that can be used by educators to support learners with English language learning barriers in grade 4-6 (or Intermediate Phase) learners in Ratlou sub-district, South Africa.

1.5 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS Language

Landsberg *et al.* (2019:126) describe language as a multidimensional and open system through which human beings communicate their thoughts to others who are familiar with a specific language system. It is also supported by Eloff and Swart (2018:170), who indicate that language is a process that supports an individual's ability to communicate their thoughts, opinions and wishes to others.

- **Barrier**

Barrier is an obstacle or circumstance that keeps people or things apart; it prevents communication and bars access to advancement. Applied to the social scene in South Africa, it forces educators and education policy makers to take cognizance of the changing social issues that impact on successful learning and teaching in the country (Landsberg *et al.*, 2019:29).

- **Support**

Support refers to different strategies used to assist schools in a bid to enable effective teaching and learning to take place. It includes everything that enables learners to learn a language in schools, and providing a suitable environment and educators who minimize barriers to learning (DOE, 2009:7).

- **English as a Second Language**

English as a second language is a traditional term for the use or study of the English language by non-native speakers in an English-speaking environment (it is also known as English for speakers of other languages). English as a second language also refers to specialized approaches to language teaching designed for those whose primary language is not English (Fairjones, 2018: 66).

Language learning

In natural second language learning, the language is being used for communication, but in the formal situation it is used only to teach. In natural language learning, the learner is surrounded by fluent speakers of the target language, and the language used is free and normal, but in the formal classroom, only the teacher is fluent, and the language is carefully controlled and simplified (Norton, 2013:171).

1.6 RATIONALE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The researcher's interest in learners who experience language as a barrier to teaching and learning was triggered by the learners who are unable to read and write in class, and in various grades at the primary school. The frustrating part is that classrooms are overcrowded. There is a School Based Support Team (SBST), which the researcher is currently actively participating in, but the large number of learners who cannot read and write is making it difficult to attend to all of them. The study will help to identify the gaps and problems based in our schools and classrooms, and the methods of teaching and assisting learners with language barriers, and to see how best the district and the department can assist in closing the gap.

It is foreseen that when language barriers to learning are detected early and proper intervention strategies are used, maximum participation in teaching and learning should improve, through support for learners with language barriers to learning. The study aims to assist the schools on how to improve support for learners who experience language as a barrier to learning, and improving the quality of teaching and learning in mainstream primary schools of Madibogo village. The study aims at minimising the number of referrals to special schools due to language barriers, and this can be done if educators are trained regularly on how to help learners who experience the English language as a barrier to learning.

1.7 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

1.7.1 Theoretical framework

The theory underpinning this study is the constructivism learning theory, which states that learners construct their own knowledge and understanding based on their prior knowledge and experiences. Constructivism puts the learner in the centre of the learning process, while the teacher acts as a facilitator. Introduction of social constructivism can be seen as variation of cognitive constructivism, in which learning is seen as a social process during which learners interact with the environment to gain new knowledge. This means that learning is seen as an active process during which learners make intellectual sense of the material during a process of problem-solving until the knowledge and skills are mastered to ensure self-regulation and independence (Donald *et al.*, 2010:55).

Looking at the centrality of language theory, one of Vygotsky's main contributions was showing how language plays a central role in cognitive development. Language includes spoken and written language, as well as sign language and other symbol systems. Reading is no different, as it is an interaction between the outer written languages. Since language contains the cumulative social constructions of any community of people, it is a powerful carrier of values, information, and world views (Donald *et al.*, 2010:55).

Landsberg *et al.* (2019:174) underscore the importance and understanding of language. Learners need to write things down and then read them later, so that they can allow effective recall and building on what has been learned. Writing things down gives us things to think about, to work with and to check, so that we can engage deeply and flexibly with possible solutions. Developing reading is critical for learning, because learners need to work with the text to structure, organize and make sense of what is written (Eloff & Swart, 2018: 137).

The main purpose of the literature review in this study is to explore the support given to primary school learners who experience language as a barrier to learning. The literature focused on how to equip educators to deal with learners with barriers in the English language. The literature study is guided by the objectives of the study.

The Department of Education (2001:15) describes learner support as any form of help, assistance, and guidance given to individual learners or groups of learners who experience language as a barrier to learning. Eloff and Swart (2018: 191) state that most children in South Africa experience learning difficulties as a result of problems related to language, both spoken and written. These include challenges or limited abilities to listen, speak, read, write, spell, and think. At the heart of developing effective learning, support programmes are an ongoing identification of learners' needs and to address these needs accordingly. In supporting the needs of a learner with learning difficulties, the core aims should be to make the curriculum accessible for all learners, and focus on reading, spelling, and writing. When the learner experiences difficulties in a specific aspect of language, the teacher should strive to address that aspect while maintaining links with all the components of language.

Educator training is a key need to support the proper implementation of the Language in Education Policy in a multilingual approach to education. In the South African context, educators need training in the teaching and learning of second language acquisition.

Moreover, educators need language awareness and sensitivity about how different environmental contexts (home, community, and school) affect the learner. Educators

need to know the difference between learning difficulties and language-based academic problems, to avoid the mistaken diagnosis of a learning difficulty in English as Second Language (ESL) learners. Language across the curriculum should form part of South African education system, as the approach involves using each learning area in the school curriculum in order to improve learners' understanding, and English language as a medium of instruction (Saleh, 2021:11).

1.7.2 Developing language skills for grade 4-6 learners

According to the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) document, language is divided into four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing –not forgetting spelling – which a learner should master in order to overcome the language as a barrier to learning.

a. Speaking

Speaking is an interactive communication process between speaker and listener in order to achieve their communicative goals. When the English language is taught in educational institution such as schools and universities, speaking will be part of the main skills to learn. Speaking is a communication tool called the target language, which is used by the community like a second language for students studying. Speaking is learning about two big contexts; the first is a stranger language and second is the language situation. Therefore, fluency is the crucial thing in learning speaking, especially for learners of English. In this case, students need to develop their speaking skill in class. Students need to develop their ability to speak by implementing the language confidently and fluently, with little hesitation and sufficient vocabulary (Winaryo & Gusdian, 2021:119).

b. Reading

It is a highly multifaceted task that requires extensive knowledge and a broad range of skills. Landsberg *et al.* (2019:174) describe reading as an act where the reader uses complex skills to understand the meaning of printed and written text. It is an integrative mode of communication, with intra-active as well as interactive facets. According to Biemiller (2011:208), learning to read text in a second language is more challenging than in the home language because of a limited vocabulary to choose from.

There are different levels of complexity in reading; firstly, the independent level, wherein learners are able to read the text with ease and without any support. The instructional level is wherein learners are able to read adequately with some support from the teacher to guide them with regard to word recognition as well as comprehension. Then finally there is the level of frustration, wherein learners find the word complexity and content of the text altogether too difficult for them to engage with the text effectively.

The value of early intervention for learners experiencing challenges in learning to read cannot be overrated. Effective reading intervention involves an integrated strategy of assessment and learning support. An important component of reading support (that could be offered outside the school) is reading aloud regularly to the learner, or with the learner (shared reading), and also teaching the learner to read with understanding (Landsberg *et al.*, 2019:181). Key words in reading selections are marked sparingly and selectively to encourage learners to practice discovering meaning from context (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012:303).

c. Writing

Communicating adequately in writing is an essential skill for all learners. It is a form which they must apply several times a day in order to demonstrate that they know and understand the work being done in class. Writing consists of several processes, which include text construction, and the physical act of writing and spelling. Many learners who experience challenges in spoken language and reading also struggle with writing. Sentences tend to lack logical order and may be repeated, which suggests disordered thinking (Landsberg *et al.*, 2019:184). Learners having difficulty in writing frequently omit capital letters and punctuation marks. When rendering support to learners with language skills, it is often feasible from the learner's perspective to attend to one aspect at a time.

On the other hand, it makes good sense to focus on text construction first, while handwriting and spelling errors could be corrected later (Landsberg *et al.*, 2019:184).

d. Spelling

Spelling is the skill of representing words in print by relating sounds to letters in accordance with the spelling rules of a particular language. Spelling correctly is essentially an act of close detail that utilises a variety of strategies (Owens, 2012:186). The frequency of spelling errors is a strong indication of the degree of challenge experienced by the learner. To support a learner who is challenged in his or her spelling development requires clarity, not only about which spelling rules need to be taught, but more essentially about the learner's cognitive processing during the writing of a text. Phonics plays a key role, as every phoneme needs to be processed and produced in writing (Blevins, 2019:186).

1.7.3 To identify the causes of language barriers in learning:

According to Landsberg *et al.* (2019:187), there are intrinsic and extrinsic factors that can cause language barriers. One extrinsic factor that operates essentially from outside the learner could be inadequate learning support at school. Intrinsic factors are essentially or inherently within the learner, which could be intellectual disability. Both factors will be broken down and discussed further in the study. Besides the cognitive challenges that learners experience, it is also imperative to be aware of the variation of phonological and linguistic demands between learners' mother tongue and English. Learners already have a deep knowledge of one language, and coming into contact with English often results in confusion, leading to errors in the use of English.

Furthermore, Cummins (2001:121) found that children with a strong mother tongue found it easier to pick up a second language and develop their literacy skills. He concluded that children's knowledge and skills transfer across languages. However, skills learnt in mother tongue could also be transferred into the language learning approach, so if a child has to think more about how to deliver the sentence and when to use it, their cultural identity is also easily adapted. Therefore, it is a healthy approach to learning for parents to teach second languages at home and also develop the child's use of language and expression. It is also well-known that a strong mother tongue foundation equips children with the skills they need to learn additional languages, allowing them to transfer their understanding of the structure of language to several new languages. The intuitive

understanding of grammar that develops when children learn their first language can easily be passed on to other languages (<https://ie-today.co.uk/comment/the-importanceof-mother-tongue-in-education/>).

1.7.3 Different strategies that can be used to support learners with language barriers in learning:

Helping learners overcome language barriers to learning in South Africa was inspired by projects like “Sisonke” (2007) which means ‘we are together.’ “Sisonke” sought to provide information on learning support strategies for all learners in mainstream schools. The Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) (2014) strategies enhance such scaffolding for all learners. Many South African foundation phase and intermediate phase educators testify they have participated in different programmes of the SIAS projects (SIAS, 2014:1). The purpose of these projects was to enhance the teaching practice of educators and help learners to overcome barriers to learning in classroom situations. Different strategies will be guided by different language components in the literature, such as development of listening and speaking skills, and learning support for reading, writing, and spelling skills.

1.8 OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1.8.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Maree (2016:72), research design is a plan or strategy that moves from the underlying philosophical assumptions to specifying the selection of participants, the data gathering methods to be used and the data analysis to be done. Hesser-Biber and Leavy (2011:32) refer to research design as the plan set out in a knowledge-building inquiry. The study utilised design descriptive research design, whereby the researcher seeks to explore the language barriers that learners are experiencing.

1.8.2 Philosophical Orientation: The constructivist worldview

Constructivist theory believes that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work (Kuyini, 2017:35). Kuyini (2017:35) further says these meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views instead of narrowing the meanings of ideas. The study relied to a large extent on the participants' views of the situation being studied. The researcher's intention is to make sense of the meanings the participants have about the language barriers learners are experiencing. The questions are broad and general so that participants can construct the meaning of the situation (Creswell, 2014:8).

1.8.3 Qualitative Research method

The study made use of the qualitative research method. According to Rossman and Rallies (2012:8), qualitative research is a broad approach to the study of social phenomena, which has various genres that are naturalistic, interpretive, and increasingly critical, and they typically draw on multiple methods of inquiry. Qualitative research relies on linguistic (words) rather than numerical data, and is based on meaning, rather than on statistical forms of data analysis. In this study, the qualitative method was used to gather information in the form of interviews.

The importance of using the qualitative method is that it allows the researcher to ask questions which enable deeper understanding, and that cannot be easily put into numbers, to understand human experience. Hence interviews will be used so that there is an interaction amongst the participants and understanding of the derived meaning from their surroundings and how their meaning influences their behaviour.

1.8.4 Site selection

Five primary schools in Madibogo cluster made up the target population for this research study. The five primary schools are located in the Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality in Ratlou sub-district where the researcher is an educator. These are public schools located in a rural area.

1.8.5 Participant selection

The sample will be drawn from the overall population using convenience sampling. This method refers to situations where population elements are selected by virtue of the fact that they are easily and conveniently available, which is usually quick and less expensive. The researcher selected 2 language (English) educators in each of the selected primary schools who are teaching language in grade 4-6. The selection of two subject educators per school was based on the premise that between grades 4 to 6 there are at least 2 educators offering the subject. One member was selected from the SBST per school. The SBST member should be knowledgeable about issues of learning barriers in the school, because they have been trained on SIAS, and some have a qualification in learner support. A total of 10 educators in grade 4-6 made up the sample size, one member from School Based Support Team (SBST) from the five selected schools, and 2 members of the District Based Support Team from the sampled schools. Therefore, a total of 17 participants participated in the study. Qualified teachers with more than 2 years of experience in teaching the language were selected for the study.

1.8.6 Data collection

Data forms the core of research and is regarded as manifestations of reality. Data is therefore used to find the truth (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015:47). In this study, data was collected by means of individual semi-structured interviews, where the questions will be detailed and developed in advance, and treated in a standardised and straightforward manner. The interviews offer an opportunity for the interviewee and the interviewer to interact. As they interact, they will answer the interview questions on the interview guide. The data collected from the interviews is crucial for the study.

The data collected through interviews was utilised to make recommendations. Participants received the same set of questions, asked in the same sequence by the same interviewer. Very little flexibility in the way that questions will be asked or answered will be allowed in the semi-structured interview setting. In this study, interviews were conducted to scrutinise the support given to learners who experience language barriers,

what causes language barriers, as well as strategies that will be used to help overcome language barriers.

1.8.7 Data analysis and interpretation

According to Maree (2016:109), qualitative data analysis is an ongoing and iterative process, implying that the data collection process, analysis, and reporting are intertwined and not merely a number of successive steps. This means the researcher can go back to the original field notes to verify conclusions, or to the participants to collect additional data and to verify it, or to ask feedback from participants consulted in the research. The data was analysed by means of the qualitative approach using interim data analysis based on the aims and research questions of the study from the interviews. The data was divided into meaningful analytical units i.e. segmenting the data and, by doing this, the data will be coded. Coding is defined as marking the segments of data with symbols, descriptive words, or category names (Johnson & Christensen, 2014:109). When using coding, a master list will be kept, namely a list of all the codes that are developed and used in the research study. The codes will be reapplied to new segments of data each time an appropriate segment is encountered. (Johnson & Christensen, 2014:109).

1.8.8 Trustworthiness

Creswell (2014: 200) explains trustworthiness as the manner in which the researcher convinces the audience that the research findings are dependable and credible. The researcher will determine the credibility and dependability of the received data through used methods of data collection and data analysis, and will also use a process of member checking after the data is analysed (Creswell, 2014: 202). The research participants were asked to verify the accuracy of their responses. The researcher ensured the reliability and consistency of answers provided by participants through member checking and prolonged time in the field.

1.8.9 Researcher's role

In essence, the role of the researcher lies with understanding, interpreting and making sense of the phenomena according to the participants' experiences (Mertens, 2015:236). In this research study, the researcher was a facilitator, as he allowed an objective construction of meaning in the process of the research interview. The researcher was unbiased in creating meanings or answers from the participants.

1.8.10 Ethical considerations

The research project went through the process of approval by the North-West Department of Education. Permission will be requested from the Ethics Committee of North-West University. The Department of Education at Ratlou Sub-district in Mafikeng will be approached by the researcher to obtain permission to conduct the research, namely on the support given to learners who experience language as a barrier to learning at five selected primary schools in Madibogo village. Although confidentiality in respect of respondents will be closely guarded, the anonymity cannot be guaranteed. The participation will be voluntary, and participants have the right to withdraw at any stage or time during the course of the study.

1.9 CHAPTER DIVISION

This study is divided according to these chapters.

Chapter One

Problem orientation

This chapter covered an overview of the study. This included the rationale for the study, background of the study, problem statement, questions, aims and objectives, research design, methodology and contribution of the study.

Chapter Two

Literature review

This chapter will cover the literature review related to the support given to learners who experience language as a barrier to learning, the expected language skills that learners

should develop in order to overcome such barriers, the main causes of language barriers, and strategies that can be used to assist learners with language barriers.

Chapter Three

Research design and methodology

This chapter will deal with the discussion of the research design, site and participant selection, collection of data, data analysis and interpretation; trustworthiness as well as ethical considerations will be outlined.

Chapter Four

Data presentation and analysis

In this chapter, the research results will be analysed, presented, and compared to what was written in the literature review in respect of support given to learners who experience language as a barrier to learning.

Chapter Five

Findings, conclusion and recommendations

This chapter is made up of the findings, conclusion and recommendations made by the researcher.

1.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter one dealt with the introduction, problem statement, rationale, research questions and objectives, scope of the study, and research design. In addition, the structure of the chapters was outlined. Chapter two will deal with a literature review.

CHAPTER TWO

2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter outlined the background of the study, problem statement, aims and objectives as well as an overview of the methodology of the study. This chapter will gather more insight into the topic, through consulting different sources which are significant to the focus of the research. The review of literature should provide answers to the research sub-questions. The literature will review the constructivism learning theory, the challenges faced by grade 4-6 learners in acquiring reading, writing, and speaking skills, factors causing language barriers, and strategies that can be used to assist learners with language barriers.

2.1.1 CONSTRUCTIVISM LEARNING THEORY

The learning theory of constructivism is basically a theory based on observation and scientific study of how people learn. Constructivist conceptions of learning have their historical origins in the work of Dewey (1929), Bruner (1961), Vygotsky (1962) and Piaget (1980). Bednar, Cunningham, Duffy and Perry (1992) and von Glasersfeld (1995) have proposed several implications of constructivist theory to educational developers, emphasising that learning outcomes should focus on the process of knowledge construction (Bada and Olusegu, 2015). Sjøberg (2010) argues that many critics say that the label of constructivist teaching is used by many authors as more or less synonymous with any teaching that is somewhat child-centred, caring, inclusive, or based on research, discovery, or any form of active involvement of learners.

Bada and Olusegu (2015) say that the theory states that people build their own understanding and knowledge of the world, by experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences. Santos, Castro and Jesusa (2020) explains that theory postulates that when we encounter something new, we must reconcile it with our previous ideas and

experience, perhaps by changing what we believe, or perhaps by dismissing new information as irrelevant. In any case we are active creators of our own knowledge. To do this, we need to ask questions, explore and evaluate what we know. In the classroom, the constructivist view of learning can point to a number of different pedagogical practices. In the most general sense, this usually means encouraging students to use active techniques (experiments, real-world problem solving) to create knowledge. Therefore, the duty of the teacher is to make sure he/she understands the students' pre-existing conceptions, and guides the activity to address them and then build on them (Oliver, 2000).

The theory states that learners acquire new knowledge based on previous learning. According to Bada and Olusegu (2015), this view of learning contrasts sharply with one in which learning is the passive transmission of information from one individual to another, a vision in which reception, not construction, is key. According to Bada and Olusegu (2015), learners gain new understandings using what they already know. This is also supported by Sjøberg (2010) who asserts that knowledge is actively constructed by the learner, and not passively received from the outside. Thus, learning is something that is done by the learner, not something imposed on him. Therefore, learners arrive at learning situations with knowledge acquired from previous experiences, and this prior knowledge influences new or modifying knowledge. In relation with the teaching of language such as English learners must be given opportunities to make use of their prior knowledge in order to construct new ones. According to Pulmone (2010) learners must be able to discuss, negotiate and defend their solutions to the problems. If these are consistently done in a language class, then, meaningful learning will most likely occur. One promising way by which students can achieve meaningful learning is by letting them engage in academic tasks designed in a constructivist environment (Pulmones, 2010). According to Santos, Castro, and Jesusa (2020) in English class learners must be given to engage in reflective abstractions, where they deliberately reflect on their thinking processes, how they discover their capabilities in learning, how they plan and execute academic tasks, and how they solve problems are part of constructivism. Therefore, teachers have to take the learner's existing ideas seriously if they want to change or challenge these.

Sjøberg (2010), on the other hand, argues that although knowledge in a sense is personal and individual, learners construct their knowledge through their interaction with the physical world, in collaboration in social contexts and in a cultural and linguistic environment. Therefore, constructivism promotes social and communication skills by creating a classroom environment that emphasises collaboration and the exchange of ideas. Santos, Castro and Jesusa (2020) say that learners need to learn to clearly articulate their ideas and collaborate effectively on tasks by sharing group projects. Students must therefore exchange ideas and must therefore learn to "negotiate" with others and evaluate their contributions in a socially acceptable way.

Santos, Castro and Jesusa (2020) argue that teachers, nowadays, need to help students develop conscious practices while reading, which, in turn, can lead to more effective language learning. In the constructivist approach, academic tasks will be designed to foster students' awareness of their ability to learn while learning and applying linguistic concepts and ideas. In addition, this approach aims to hone students' higher-order thinking (HOTS) strategies, such as interpretation, criticism, synthesis, and creation as students move through the learning stages. In summary, understanding and teaching these practices can help students become better communicators and users of the language.

2.2 CHALLENGES FACED BY GRADE 4-6 LEARNERS IN ACQUIRING LISTENING, SPEAKING, READING, AND WRITING.

Learners face major challenges which come with their mother tongue, because the skills of listening, speaking reading and writing generally come at a later stage in their process of social formation. For grade 4-6 learners, the problem is worse, mainly because the environment is not conducive to make them familiar with the newly introduced language, with very few learners having contact with English speakers (Fatiloro, 2015:26). There is no active role for English outside the classroom, so learners do not feel the immediate

need to learn (Akbari, 2015:395). The situation is made even worse, as WildsmithCromarty and Balfour (2019:299) view that English-speaking learners and most Afrikaans-speaking learners learn through the medium of their home language throughout their schooling, and also take it as a school subject; while on the other hand the speakers of African language in Grades 1, 2 and 3 are taught in their home language, and then switch to a different medium of instruction (usually English) from Grade 4, with home language (HL), first additional language (FAL) and second additional language (SAL) offered as subjects. Wildsmith-Cromarty and Balfour (2019:299) argue that most African parents choose English for their children out of necessity, because it is highly resourced and is perceived as the language of progress and of access to higher education and social mobility.

2.2.1 Basic facilities and equipment for effective language learning

There is a lack of basic facilities and equipment to facilitate effective learning in schools the world over, and South Africa is no exception, with most schools not having a language laboratory and well-equipped libraries (Fatiloro, 2015:28). This lack of basic facilities and equipment as a challenge hinders effective teaching and learning that could have strengthened learners' skills in one way or another (Fatiloro, 2015:28). Devices such as LCD projectors, computers, listening devices, and sound systems, are limited and insufficiently available, with textbooks barely available. In schools where these facilities are available, the unfortunate part is that these facilities do not support the English teaching and learning process; instead, they focus on other areas (Songbatumis, 2017:57-62).

2.2.2 Psychological problems as a hindrance

Some learners fear and have difficulties in speaking English in front of their classmates because they feel inadequate to speak it, which, according to Fatiloro (2015:28), may lead to incoherence and incorrect expressions. This psychological problem of student's fearful attitude towards the use of English, especially in the presence of a competent user, has proven to be a hindrance in speaking English to learners, because speaking the language requires confidence and readiness. Such students are afraid of making mistakes, especially in pronouncing or spelling words incorrectly (Songbatumis, 2017:61).

Therefore, they become timid in performing their speaking skills and lack confidence in front of others, especially their classmates, particularly in speaking a foreign language since it can threaten them with losing face. Unfortunately, educators worsen the situation, as they are not aware that their students have distinct and unique needs and interests, as some of the students are emotionally volatile and need self-confidence and self-esteem (Brining, 2015:167).

2.2.3 Educators using wrong techniques in language teaching

In most schools educators do not use appropriate teaching techniques to guide students with activities which are included in their textbooks in order to achieve the desired learning outcomes; consequently, this affects learners negatively (Akbari, 2015:398). Sometimes educators use wrong techniques when teaching English, mainly because they lack the skills, as they are not trained to teach the language. More so, a severe shortage of trained or workshopped and developed English educators result in educators finding themselves teaching English without proper training and struggling to use teaching methods effectively (Songbatumis, 2017:56). Consequently, these educators end up teaching a specific curriculum, a body of knowledge and skills, which students would not have encountered in their lives outside of school. This presents a challenge, as young learners are more receptive to sounds, and have no strategies to address such issues because they are not trained in that area (Brining, 2015:167).

2.2.4 Different cultural background and values between the educators and learners

Different cultural backgrounds leading to varied values between educators and learners, as well as amongst learners themselves, prove to be a barrier because there is a great risk of misunderstanding between them. This notion is supported by Akbari (2015:396), who states that distance between learner and teacher creates anxiety, frustration, and alienation, and consequently the learner becomes less receptive to the learning process. Also, students do not have a common background knowledge, because some of them are trained in rural areas where no qualified English educators are available to teach them.

On the other hand, students who are taught in urban areas have access to several classroom facilities, which is of great benefit to them. Most learners simply have their textbooks as the only source of learning English, and under such circumstances there is no placement test to put students into different groups according to their language proficiency levels. Instead, they are treated homogeneously, making the situation much worse for the weaker students (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019: 1)

Byrne (2009: 169-170) noted that there are differences in academic ability amongst students in the class, the rates at which they learn, and the range of learning levels within a class. Consequently, these disparities between learners' levels of understanding within a class place extra demands on educators, which they rarely attend to. Moreover, these cultural barriers often make it difficult for educators to inform parents about standards, and exchanging ideas and information with their students, resulting in poor communication between learners and educators, which hampers efforts to learn English (Khong & Saito, 2014: 217).

2.2.5 Mother tongue interference

According to Fatiloro (2015:27), learners find it difficult to learn English as a second language because there is a sudden break from a familiar language to a non-familiar language, resulting in phonetical, morphological, and semantic errors being committed.

2.2.6 Lack of priority given to English as a subject

Akbari (2015:396) asserts that English is considered as a general subject when compared to special subjects such as physics, chemistry, mathematics, and biology, hence students spend more time studying their special subjects rather than general ones such as English. Learners are made to learn basic grammar at school level only for the purpose of passing exams, hence application-oriented advanced grammar is not taught in schools (Fatiloro, 2015:27). Furthermore, learners' belief about the nature of learning English as a subject that consists of a list of words and a set of grammatical rules that are to be memorized becomes another challenge as some students will not have the same motivation or purpose to learn English. Some of them look at English merely as a course that should be passed, and do not understand its importance as a means of communication (Akbari,

2015:396). Hence, English is not given as much attention as that given to subjects such as mathematics, which are considered as challenging to learners.

2.2.7 Lack of vocabulary

Mastering vocabulary is a challenge that is encountered by Batswana learners when learning English because of words not commonly used in their daily lives, which has a negative impact on them learning the words. This new vocabulary hinders the learners to understand the subject, and as a result they will end up not actively participating in the classroom (Songbatumis, 2017:60). Fatiloro (2015:28) further elaborates that the rarely used words usually contain spellings that are new and difficult to grasp, posing a major challenge to learners in mastering the language (Fatiloro, 2015: 28).

2.2.8 Concentration of learners and support

To be successful, there is a need for certain levels of concentration; however, students' low concentration in classrooms poses a serious challenge in comprehending knowledge transferred by the teacher. According to Songbatumis (2017:61), some learners do not concentrate in class because the process of learning can be interrupted by others who are busy talking and doing other things. Also, some students get bored when studying and speaking English. Specific aspects connected to pronunciation, stress, and intonation become a problem for students, making concentration very difficult. Byrne (2009:47) further states that students' health, career, socio-economic status, family, and school environments have a negative impact on learners, and are associated with an array of learning difficulties.

Lack of motivational support from parents, which in most cases is caused by the absence of parents, or lack of their support, also affects learners (Songbatumis, 2017:60). Mostly parents are reluctant to acknowledge the learning problems faced by their children and are not willing to allow their children to be in a special education class (Khalid, 2017:45). The situation is aggravated by students who do not pay sufficient attention to the task of learning a foreign language, either because they do not have sufficient know-how, or due to negligence despite having studied for a number of years, posits Akbari (2015:396).

This is further corroborated by Songbatumis (2017:57), who suggests that lack of English exposure demotivates students.

On the other hand, textbooks lack the variety of communication tasks which motivate and give learners a purpose for doing them. Usually, tasks included in textbooks do not give enough practice in skills needed. Furthermore, there is no place for group work discussion in effectively acquiring the target language, as learners need to actively engage in the processing of whatever they read and hear (Akbari, 2015:387).

2.3 FACTORS CAUSING LANGUAGE BARRIERS.

Channels of communication are regarded as effective when both parties are involved in the process. The moment there are challenges in communication, barriers are created that hinder effective communication. Barriers to effective communication, according to Buarqoub (2019:68), are obstacles or problems that break down the communication process, because they prevent the flow of information between a sender and a receiver, with language being the most powerful tool of communication. Pal, Halder and Guha (2016:105) classified barriers as process barriers, physical barriers, semantic barriers and emotional barriers. All these barriers to effective communication can retard or distort the message at any stage in the communication process. According to Buarqoub (2019:68), these language barriers arise in five areas, namely, the way a message is originated, and sent, environmental interruptions, and the way it is received and understood by the receiver. This author also believes that there are obstacles which lead to ineffective communication, and these include filtering, selective perceptions, information overload, emotions, language, silence, anxiety, and gender difference (Buarqoub, 2019:68).

2.3.1 Accent being used by the teacher

Pronunciation of words normally is determined by the accent of the speaker, and some words can be misheard and misinterpreted, resulting in barriers to effective communication. The notion is supported by Buarqoub (2019: 69), who states that poorly understood messages can confuse learners, because these educators use language and accents that are not familiar to all learners (Hallberg, 2010:114).

According to Buarqoub (2019:69-72), the use of words or phrases of people belonging to different places or regions may differ in meaning or interpretation, even if their language is the same. This may lead to various kinds of conflicts which could have disastrous consequences, since a language barrier can appear when the sender and receiver do speak the same language but are from different regions of the same country. Buarqoub (2019: 72) further asserts that differences in dialects and accents create a misunderstanding and gaps in communication, because the meanings, implications and interpretation of words differ. The use of slang and regional colloquialisms can also create problems that may lead to misunderstanding and gaps in communication (Buarqoub, 2019:72).

2.3.2 Misusing and misinterpretation of words

Sometimes when a sender conveys messages, grammatical and spelling errors cause language barriers. These mistakes create communication problems when writing, and one word can change the whole meaning of the sentence or make sentences not understandable (Buarqoub, 2019:70). In oral communication, the main barriers that prevent learners from understanding and conveying a message are inability to discriminate between long and short vowels, failure to pronounce sounds unavailable in their first language, an inadequate range of vocabulary, passive sentences, and reported speech (Pal *et al.*, 2016:106). The use of ambiguous, or vague words or phrases, which are not clearly stated or expressed, causes barriers in communication. The ambiguity arises when the teacher and learners assume different meanings for the same words and sentences, or use different words to convey the same meaning. An example of ambiguity in a sentence is *the chicken is ready to eat*. There are two meanings; the first one is that the chicken is already cooked and people are going to eat that chicken; the other meaning is a chicken is going to eat. Misinterpretation of words arising because of the gap between the meaning as intended by the sender, and that as understood by the receiver create a barrier, as the word, can express a variety of meanings depending upon the context in which they are used (Buarqoub, 2019: 71:72).

People, especially receivers, translate words incorrectly, creating more barriers due to lack of sufficient knowledge of a language, which leads to misunderstandings. Therefore,

there is a need for effective translation of words with accuracy, clarity, and impartiality (Buarqoub, 2019:73). Using impolite words, or informal words and phrases, can impede all the efforts of verbal communication. More so, using abusive words leads to communication barriers, as no one can bear inappropriate use of language (Buarqoub, 2019:71).

2.3.3 Geographical difficulties and difficulties with handling the technology

Geographic dispersion and difficulties in handling the technology cause general communication barriers, no matter the geographical distance. This is so because of inadequate account being taken on both the individual's background and the technology (Hallberg, 2010:111). According to Pal *et al.* (2016:114), there are differences in the opinion of those teaching in an urban locality compared to those in rural areas, due to local or socio-cultural factors influencing the teacher, learners, and the classroom environment. Rural schools perceive a greater difficulty in communication due to the classroom environment, means of instruction, technology, and the teacher. Therefore, language barriers, to a large extent, according to Hallberg (2010:117), are caused by taking too little account of both the individual and the technology in learning.

2.3.4 Health and psychological problems

According to Hallberg (2010:113) communication barriers can be caused by learners' lack of hearing, or by speech or language impairment. Some of these children stammer, or cannot organise their words, and others cannot find the words they need to express themselves. Usually, people who speak softly or in a low voice cannot be understood properly. Also, some children are immature at their age when it comes to talking; they do not easily understand or cannot use as many words as other children of their age; their sentences are short, and they have poor listening skills (Hallberg, 2010:113).

Some of the learners may find it difficult to express their emotions or ideas (Buarqoub, 2019:73). Monyai (2010:33) states that learners see themselves as failures in general because they struggle with self-esteem, motivation, attitude, anxiety, empathy, or risktaking. Generally, learners will be unable to cope with learning requirements owing to their lack of English proficiency, especially in front of their peers. Pal *et al.* (2016:106)

pointed out that classrooms which are overcrowded add to environmental stress, leading to negative outcomes. Therefore, ineffective classroom environment added to a faulty medium of instruction, inappropriate curriculum, the attitude of students, the lack of response and feedback, cause poor classroom communication (Pal *et al.*, 2016:106).

2.4 STRATEGIES THAT CAN BE USED TO ASSIST LEARNERS WITH LANGUAGE BARRIERS

To achieve certain goals, the development of strategies is required, and according to Wahl (2017:60), teaching strategies are defined as broad plans of action for teaching and learning activities to achieve aims in the desired course content, with setting of goals and developing plans to achieve these goals. Wahl (2017:60) asserts that these teaching strategies involve methods educators use to help learners access information and can be done, for example, through visualising (displaying pictures), auditory methods (listening to the teacher or a recording), or kinesthetically (letting learners experience a situation and actually doing an experiment). The use of different strategies is important to accommodate the diverse learning needs, like group work and peer teaching, because of their effectiveness as teaching strategies.

2.4.1 Inclusive classroom

According to Magodla (2019:17), inclusive education fosters the personal, intellectual, emotional, and social development of all learners, according to their needs. Magodla (2019:17) further says the Department of Basic of Education relegated the previous use of a twofold system of education, which is mainstream education and special education, but instead introduced a distinct system of education that is inclusive. This type of education offers prospects to all learners, including those with special needs or disabilities (Magodla, 2019:17).

Masango (2013:8) holds the view that an inclusive classroom should be arranged in such a way that a teacher is able to see learners with attention disorder when instructing the whole group at one time. On the other hand, an inclusive classroom must include activities such as a variety of teaching methods, such as direct teaching by the teacher, a differentiated approach, and peer teaching in pairs or groups so that no child is left out

(Wahl, 2017:61). During evaluation of learners in inclusive classrooms, educators need to use different strategies to identify learners who need support, and such educators need a special type of training in special needs education in order to provide support to learners in their classrooms. If school funds permit hiring of some assistant teachers when necessary, it can be done in a single classroom setting, since one teacher will lead the lesson and, the co-teacher will play the assistant role by checking written work or gathering observational data on targeted learners (Masango, 2013:8-10).

2.4.1.1 Teaching methods for inclusive classroom

There are various teaching methods that an educator can use in the classroom to enhance inclusivity. The teaching methods are class or group discussion and differentiation, namely:

2.4.1.2 Class or group discussion

Working collaboratively is important since, according to Helfrich and Bosh (2011:265), what students learn from their peers is more than what they learn from educators, and also learners come to understand the social background of one another (Hallberg, 2010:117), whilst encouraging and accepting each other's effort. This effort serves to always foster mutual respect among learners as well as between educators and learners. Conflict is easier to control in a group where there is trust despite differences (Wahl, 2017:65).

Furthermore, brainstorming within groups or class exercise is important because all ideas are accepted, enabling learner participation in choosing the best one. This cooperative learning enhances group dynamics, and the teacher ensures full participation, with learners reading aloud or independently, and shared readings in groups or small groups. There is respect of options and understanding of work, which includes problem solving and prediction. Partner-sharing, group activities and peer tutoring include students whose knowledge and use of the language is further improved by other learners, which helps overcome language barriers (Wahl, 2017:61-62).

According to Bell and Bogan (2013:20), cooperative learning increases the opportunities for peer interactions in a semi-structured way. Bell and Bogan (2013:20) further assert

that group discussion or cooperative learning involves team effort, where individuals work in groups to reach a common goal, with tasks being divided among group members and roles being specifically assigned. This means that cooperative learning increases self-esteem, self-worth, a positive attitude to learning, social interaction, and peer acceptance, which ultimately provides a platform where learners can assist each other, posits Wahl (2017:66).

2.4.1.3 Differentiation

The differentiation strategy allows educators to offer new avenues of learning to learners in response to differences in readiness, interests, and learning profiles (Wahl, 2017:74). This gives learners the opportunity to experience and practice the English language in different situations when the language is incorporated with differentiation of instruction methods (Bell Foundation, 2017:5). According to the Department of Basic Education, differentiation is explained in terms of when challenged learners draw a picture to show what they have understood, while others write a paragraph. Therefore, educators have to adjust how they communicate with learners and present information to them, according to their ability. Educators can divide activities into various tasks that are on different levels of difficulty to accomplish, where learners may be reading at different levels of competency and understanding (Wahl, 2017:75). Learners need to be given their own vocabulary book to write down keywords and phrases with translation if they are literate, as their first language forms part and parcel of differentiation (Bell Foundation, 2017:8).

Wahl (2017:79) further indicates that multi-level teaching as a differentiation strategy revolves around the teacher designing a lesson on a topic that provides multiple opportunities at varying levels, whereby all learners in the class can participate and demonstrate their skills through assigned tasks. This helps learners to feel more confident to tackle a task and be encouraged to work independently, and learners can demonstrate their competence. This is corroborated by Fatiloro (2015:20), who states that small groups and one-on-one instruction allows the teacher to focus in on the needs and levels of each child, and this individualized instruction creates an avenue for needed differentiation to occur.

2.4.2 Teachers' teaching approaches

Educators can use different teaching approaches in a classroom set-up as a strategy to overcome language barriers. These approaches include the deductive approach, the inductive approach, the cubing teaching strategy, the scaffolding teaching strategy, and repetition.

2.4.2.1 Deductive approach

The deductive approach is a teacher-centred approach whereby the teacher explains a new concept and learners put it into practice. The approach depends on the educator introducing rules to learning a specific concept in language such as reading. Then learners are given the opportunity to practice the rule with various exercises related to the rule. The approach is effective with highly-motivated learners and is seen as a quicker method of teaching in overcrowded classrooms. The teacher-centred teaching approach requires learners to listen while the lesson is being delivered by the teacher. The classroom remains orderly, and the teacher intervenes and controls tasks. This approach encourages learners to be independent and to make their own decisions (Wahl, 2017:63).

2.4.2.2 Inductive approach

Wahl (2017:63) believes that the teacher who applies the inductive approach presents his lesson to learners with demonstrations, and allows them to take note of how the work is done, thereby enabling them to make their own application. This approach further enables learners to be more actively involved in their learning experience, at the same time encouraging learners to be independent to make their own decisions where English is not the home language. It is also suggested by Bell and Bogan (2013:20) that by using this approach, learners become committed in trying to understand the teacher better. Consequently, the interaction that educators have with children, demonstrates care and respect while remaining educationally focused. Educators can thus send messages using smiles when the language barrier is high (Bell & Bogan, 2013:20).

2.4.2.3 Cubing teaching strategy

Cubing is one of the strategies applied by English educators with the goal of improving learners' reading and writing skills. Elradii (2014: 12-13) asserts that reading is a valuable

skill as it assists learners in speaking and widens their vocabulary. The cubing strategy was designed by Cowan and Cowan in 1980, with the aim of assisting learners with reading and writing from different angles (Alquraishy, Sagban & Alumumar, 2020: 344). Cubing is an instructional strategy that asks learners to consider a concept from a variety of different perspectives.

The cubing strategy makes use of Bloom's six levels of understanding, namely knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Amka, 2020:342). Alquraishy, Sagban and Alumumar (2020: 344) hold the view that cubing encourages problem-solving and thinking skills, as it taps into different abilities since it strengthens the learners who are struggling with reading and writing. On the other hand, the cubing activities can be stimulating, interesting and motivating to learners (Alquraishy, Sagban & Alumumar, 2020: 344).

2.4.2.4 Scaffolding teaching strategy

This teaching theory is based on Vgotsky's sociocultural theory (SCT), in particular the concept of zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Bigdeli & Rahimi, 2015: 144). The method states that, although learning is a mental activity, but it is through social interactions that cognitive learning takes place (Gonulal & Loewen, 2018: 1). Gonulal and Loewen (2018: 1) assert that scaffolding is a term applied to the assistance a child gets from an adult. The assistance offered will assist a child to solve a problem or a task that was beyond her or his capability.

The strategy can be applied in the classroom context by referring to the interventions that educators give to their learners' ZPD to facilitate their learning and improve their current knowledge and skills (Gonulal & Loewen, 2018: 2). In this method, the teacher models the expected problem-solving technique, presents new approaches to solve the problem, and encourages learners to use personal skills. Peer support is employed during scaffolding, which helps learners to feel more comfortable interacting with peers (Wahl, 2017:68). Hence, the strategy can be applied to English learners who are struggling with the language.

2.4.2.5 Having a flexible curriculum

Getterud (2015:24) states that a flexible curriculum means that classroom organization and management revolve around the type of activity using different tools, methods, and techniques to ensure successful learning takes place. A variety of materials and equipment should be available during activities to address all learning styles and needs. The Department of Basic Education advocates that the curriculum is the best means for educators to respond to the diverse needs of learners and support those with barriers to learning by treating each learner with respect (Wahl, 2017:69).

Getterud (2015:24) suggests that educators must make changes designed to meet the needs of different students. Getterud (2015:24) further argues that the curriculum in schools must encompass methods of teaching, assessment, and decisions that accommodate the diverse needs of learners. These diverse needs can be as a result of learners' level of ability, home circumstances, and life experience. Therefore, educators need to be aware of any barriers that learners may experience in order to adapt the curriculum by addressing the needs of all learners while still achieving the outcomes, indicates Getterud (2015:24).

For learners with serious intrinsic barriers to learning, the Department of Basic Education designed a guideline where a teacher can compile a learner profile to determine strengths, weaknesses, home background, and specific needs. Educators should consult parents to identify barriers (Wahl, 2017:70). Relevant teacher training should be provided, support for specific curriculum development projects as well as learners with disabilities must be accommodated, and referred to the School Based Support Team (Masango, 2013:12).

A flexible curriculum can have a universal design of learning or be an individual support plan. According to Wahl (2017:81), a universal design of learning refers to designing products and an environment that provides access to everyone and without the need for much redesigning. It creates a harmonious classroom atmosphere that encourages effective interaction among learners, ensuring the safety and accessibility of facilities, activities, and materials. On the other hand, an individual support plan is done by

compiling a plan which can be developed by educators in collaboration with parents, the school support team, and district support staff (Wahl, 2017:81).

2.4.3 Collaboration among educators

Collaboration among all educators at a school is important in an inclusive environment, as it allows for advancement in an individual's learning. Through collaboration with each other they promote inclusive practice and provide quality education to all learners.

Educators can encourage one another to become actively involved and participate in many activities revolving around their learners (Wahl, 2017:82-83).

2.4.4 Classroom organisation, management and environment

Classroom organization involves small adjustments which can make a huge difference to learners (Bell Foundation, 2017:5). In order to achieve this, the study environment must be neat, tidy, organized, and friendly. Educators can provide the necessary support by placing labels in the child's native language as well as in English around the classroom. When the environment is supportive and predictable, the learners feel safe and can use their cognitive energy to process content and language rather than focusing on the environment, posit Bell and Bogan (2013:20).

An inclusive environment needs to be accommodating and promoting social interaction, so the classroom needs to be organised and well managed (Wahl, 2017:83). Learners with barriers caused by visual and hearing impairment should be in proximity to the teacher where they can clearly see the teacher's facial expressions (Wahl, 2017:84), thus ensuring that they hear properly and pick up visual clues from facial expressions. This can also be achieved by letting learners with challenges sit next to those who are language role models (Bell Foundation, 2017:6).

2.4.5 Language focus

According to Helfrich and Bosh (2011:264:267), educators should adapt their speaking in a way that helps those with challenges without singling them out. This can be done by using hand gestures, pictures, repeating words, and paraphrasing, which helps in making meanings clearer, as well as one-on-one conversation which should take place to bring about individualised attention. Wahl (2017:62) therefore suggests that educators should

use open-ended questioning that requires learners to expand on their answers. He further points out that activities such as stories, poems, and excursions can be used to achieve contextualization and to explain new vocabulary.

On the other hand, teaching of vocabulary in small groups can be achieved by ensuring that learners are paying attention before speaking to them and reminding them to use good listening skills by praising them (Bell Foundation, 2017:9).

Masango (2013:13) holds the view that learners must be given clear instructions before an activity. This author further also suggests that learning should encompass fun activities of varied intricacy to facilitate all learners, such as games, simulation, word games, and crossword puzzles that enhance sequencing, and help with language barriers, as well as linking learning to real life situations through experiments, dramatisation, role play, field trips, recording, and audio tutorials (Wahl, 2017:62).

Educators should speak slowly and pause between key phrases for the children to understand the spoken language, using short and simple sentences. Masango (2013:13) argues that some children need time to process information so there is a need to pause, as this helps them to understand those phrases which are difficult. There is also the need to praise a child for asking for help when needed. To a large extent the teacher must limit the amount of new vocabulary introduced at one time to a minimum, and use visual support where possible (Masango, 2013:3-6).

2.4.6 Marking and feedback

One of the core duties of an educator is to mark and offer feedback to the learners.

O'Donovan, den Outer, Price and Lloyd (2021:642) state that feedback is what educators tells learners about their performance on the language used or a task given to learners. For feedback to be effective it should be given to learners timeously, consistently and continuously by the educator (O'Donovan, den Outer, Price & Lloyd, 2021:642). The major purpose of giving feedback to learners is to enable learners to identify and correct their errors or mistakes. During marking, educators are expected to identify and correct the mistakes made by the learners. According to the Bell Foundation (2017:5-8), there is a need to provide learners with feedback to help develop their English language proficiency.

This strategy should help guide learners to a better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, and target areas that need work. Also educators should use the speaking and listening descriptors to check progress and set appropriate targets that promote learning positively, acknowledging attempts at content regardless of errors (<https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/eal-programme/eal-assessment-framework/>).

2.4.7 Communication at home

Educators should work to understand the role of literacy development in diverse cultures, and work towards preservation of cultural values. They need to acquire background knowledge to help support the learners (Helfrich & Bosh, 2011:262), thus keeping parents informed of topics being covered in class by sending home visual vocabulary flashcards relating to topics being covered and encourage them to discuss (Bell Foundation, 2017:7) (<https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/eal-programme/eal-assessment-framework/>)

Fatiloro (2015:21) holds the view that parents should be involved, consequently arguing that when families feel involved in the learning programme of their child, better learning outcomes can be expected. Also if children feel their parents are respected, they are more likely to participate and be motivated (Fatiloro, 2015:21). Largely, school information should be clear and accessible to parents through the use of visuals, clear language, and use of translations where necessary, and giving parents useful websites which have grammar exercises (Bell Foundation, 2017:7).

2.4.8 Assessment

Helfrich and Bosh (2011:266) state that educators should not be hesitant in using assessment and progress monitoring tools in the form of oral questioning and discussions. Frequent ongoing assessment of the child's language, second language and other domains of development is necessary. A strong assessment programme and appropriate assessment practice benefit English language learners because the teacher is aware of the effectiveness of instruction. The use of appropriate assessment strategies helps the teacher to gain an understanding of the child's current proficiency in the native and second language. Additionally, educators employ formal and informal means of gathering information on learners' weaknesses and strengths (Bell & Bogan, 2013: 20).

Language skills can also be used in assessment, learning to check learners' progress in understanding skills, concepts and terminology by using different assessment strategies, methods, and tools, and establish a routine for observing and recording the progress of individual learners (Department of Basic Education, 2014:5). The educators use written, oral or narrative report as a strategy to assess learners with challenges (Masango, 2013:8). Educators may use self-developed assessments like curriculum-based measures, that require students to orally read aloud a passage while the teacher records the marks (Helfrich & Bosh, 2011:267).

2.4.9 Using technology and other visual aids

According to Masango (2013:12), there is a need for the provision of resources that would enable the teacher to support learners who are experiencing challenges. Use of technology and instructional resources such as flow charts, flash cards, flannel boards, globes, maps, transparencies, models, slides, exhibits, posters, murals, and montages are crucial (Wahl, 2017:62). There is a need for different teaching methods and techniques, particularly matching the method to establish an effective teaching process, and educators need to improve teaching facilities including space, books, and teaching aids (Songbatumis, 2017: 58). Teaching devices should be designed in a way that make available language switching and translation of keywords easier (Hallberg, 2010:117).

The use of role play encourages and motivates students, and helps less motivated learners to take part in the lesson, hence the need for the application of various teaching methods and techniques in the classroom, since learners are more attracted to images and photographs (Songbatumis, 2017: 63).

2.4.10 Teacher training, support and empowerment

Buarqoub (2019:74) maintains that individual linguistic ability is important to teach learners. Government support programmes help learners facing language barriers through financial assistance for implementation, staffing, staff training, and programme maintenance so as to provide access to the curriculum for second language learners who have limited means. High quality programmes require the employment of and utilisation of educators with specialized training and preparation in working with ELLs and, in

addition, educators receive ongoing training to build proficiency required for working with children (Fatiloro, 2015:21). Additional support from all stakeholders and relevant extended therapy is of paramount importance (Monyai, 2010:33).

There is need to improve the teaching of English through the use of textbooks, dictionaries, chalkboards, workbooks, and posters. Also, use can be made of internet facilities, newspapers, and language laboratories, suggests Fatiloro (2015:29). Physical and human resources support is necessary to provide the necessary training and resources to assist educators and learners in developing skills to ensure they are adequately equipped to participate fully in the integration of technology. It is necessary to provide educators with basic computer technological skills in order to store information and facilitate their teaching (Masango, 2013:14).

2.4.11 The role of the School-based Support Team (SBST)

One of the major stakeholders in assisting learners with barriers to English learning is the SBST. Nong (2020:1246) outlined the composition of the SBST at a school as:

- The coordinator of SBST, Departmental Head (DH) for Life Orientation or chosen by staff, senior educator (Thus educators with more than ten years teaching experience)
- The referring educator – Thus any educator referring a learner to the SBST
- The minutes writer
- An Educator representing a phase
- The elected educator from the following committees: LTSM (Learning and Teaching Support Material), SAT (School Assessment Team), Sports, Care and Support (HIV and AIDS)
- School Governing Body (SGB): one member (optional) either from the teacher or parental component.
- Psychologist, Occupational Therapist, Speech Therapist, NGO and other stakeholders, for example, the Departments of Health and Social Development, and other relevant departments.

Nong (2020:1246) postulates that the main role of the SBST is to identify and address the barriers to learning at the school. In order to achieve this, Nong (2020:1246) points out that the SBST works hand-in-hand with the District-Based Support Team (DBST). The major duty of the DBST is to set up the SBST in schools and monitor it (DoE, 2014: 32). DoE (2021: 32) states that the SBST should provide the necessary support to educators and caregivers in this process by providing opportunities for regular, collaborative problem-solving in areas of concern by facilitating the provision of support where needed. Hence, each school must have a SBST to work hand-in-hand with the English educators and other educators at a school by helping them to identify learners with difficulties in comprehending, reading, writing, and speaking skills in English.

2.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter offered a review of the literature which answered the sub-questions. The literature review focused on the challenges faced by grade 4-6 learners in acquiring reading, writing and speaking skills in English as their second language. Factors causing language barriers were discussed as well as the strategies that can be applied to help learners with language barriers in the learning area such as English First Additional language. The next chapter will focus mainly on the research design and methodolog

CHAPTER THREE

3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter focused on a review of literature which was answering the main research questions. To realize the research aims, a specific research design and methodology needs to be followed, as will be discussed in this chapter. This chapter covers a description of the research paradigm, the qualitative research design, the research approach, the setting of the study, the data collection procedures, trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and a description of how the data will be analysed.

3.2 THE PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH

The constructivist worldview

The study applied the interpretive paradigm, which adheres to a constructivist philosophical epistemology, which regards reality as subjective (Ritchie, Lewis, Ormston & Nicholls, 2013:12). Creswell *et al.* (2012: 58) state that most authors refer to qualitative research as being anchored by the interpretive paradigm. In interpretivism, the researcher considers that there is no true objective position. Kuyini (2017: 35) argues that the assumption is based on subjectivist epistemology, which implies that the researcher makes meaning from the data through their own interpretation of data informed by their interactions with participants. Hence the researcher and the participants in the research engage in an interactive process in which they intermingle, dialogue, question, listen, read, write, and record research data (Kuyini, 2017:35). This implies that it is the people who give meaning to their social world, hence interpretive researchers seek to investigate how human beings (such as the participants in this research) perceive and make sense of the problem, in this case, that of learners with language barriers in grades 4 to 6.

According to Ritchie, Lewis and Nicholls (2013:12), the researcher also becomes part of the research as a meaning-maker interacting with other meaning-makers. In this regard, the research becomes a construction of meanings between participants, one of whom being the researcher. The researcher will achieve this by interviewing educators who are teaching and interacting with the learners with learning barriers such as language in reading, writing and speaking. The educators have experience of working with learners who experience learning barriers with language. As educators, they understand their situation, hence they are able to explain it better. The researcher will participate in the whole process of data gathering, analysing, and interpreting the data gathered from the participants.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Creswell (2014: 3), there are three types of research design, namely qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. This study is based on a qualitative method. According to Creswell (2013:47), the qualitative design is most applicable when a problem is to be explored. The problem explored is that of learners having difficulty in reading, writing and speaking English as a first additional language at primary schools, especially with regard to grades 4 to 6. Creswell *et al.* (2012: 51) suggest that qualitative research is a form of social inquiry that focuses on the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences and the world they live in. The researchers who use a qualitative design explore the behaviour, perspectives, and experiences of the people they study (Creswell *et al.*, 2012: 51). The complex issue the researcher is interested in how educators help learners perceived to be encountering English language as a barrier to learning. The researcher is interested in finding out the forms of support educators will need to support learners with language barriers in grades 4 to 6. The details of these challenges and strategies will be investigated by talking with participants who are experiencing the problem of learners with language barriers in grades 4 to 6.

3.4 RESEARCH APPROACH

The study made use of case study approach. The choice of case study enables in-depth analysis of the phenomenon under study in its real-world context (Yin, 2009). Merriam (1998:9) defines a case study as being an examination of a specific phenomenon. Such a phenomenon may be an individual, a group, a program or an event, into which a researcher is interested in gaining insight through the interpretation of the case studied. In this study, the individual case is “*English language teachers teaching grades 4 to 6 in Ratlou sub-district, South Africa*”. The study of individual cases brings fine-grained understanding of a larger collection of cases, leading to the identification of common themes on kinds of support provided to primary school learners to alleviate language as a barrier to learning; with specific reference to grades 4-6.

3.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.5.1 Site selection

In this study five primary schools were selected in Madibogo village situated in North West Province in South Africa. The five primary schools located are in the North-West Province, Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality, Ratlou sub-district, where the researcher is an educator. The schools were chosen for the study as they were easily accessible to the educator. A total of 59 educators in grades 4-6 will make up the educator population. All the five schools are public schools located in the rural area of Madibogo. The schools chosen for the study are non-fee-paying. The educators in the schools are South Africans whose mother language is mainly Setswana.

3.5.2 Participant selection

After identifying the population of the study, there is a need to state the size of the population. Creswell (2014: 158) says the population size is determined by means of identifying individuals in the population. Creswell *et al.* (2012: 172) argue that it is not feasible to include the entire population in the study, with the two main restrictions being time and costs, hence a sample must be drawn. A sample of the population must be selected to learn more about the population that will be used to generalise the results to

the population (Creswell, *et al.*, 2012: 172). In order to do this, sampling techniques must be utilized and Maree (2016:172) indicates two types of sampling techniques which are available to us, namely, probability and non- probability methods.

This study made use of convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is also referred to as haphazard sampling or accidental sampling. Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2015:2) and Scholtz (2021: 2) describe convenience sampling as a type of non-probability sampling where members of the target population who meet certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or willingness to participate, are included for the purpose of the study. Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2015:2) further state that a convenience sample is sometimes viewed as an 'accidental sample' due the fact that participants in the study are sampled as a result of happening to be situated, spatially or administratively, near the researcher conducting data collection. The researcher conducted the study in her neighbouring schools. These schools are easily accessible to the researcher. No qualifications and experience was required.

There are some advantages to adopting convenience sampling. Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2015:2) assert that convenience sampling is affordable and easy, and the subjects who are the participants are freely available. The view is also that studies which adopt the convenience sampling technique have a high internal validity if results are trustworthy, the methodology well planned, and data properly analysed.

This is contradicted by Scholtz (2021: 2), who argues that results accruing from using convenience sampling can lead to strong biases, thus can only be generalised to the participants who have the same characteristics and are limited to participants who were sampled. He further indicates that the sample emanating from convenience sampling is not representative of the population at large. Consequently, the educators selected for the study do not represent the views of other educators in other environments such as township schools, private schools, and former model C schools.

The researcher selected 10 educators from the five schools. They are English educators in each of the selected primary schools who are teaching English language in grades 46.

The 10 grade 4-6 educators were easily accessible and were willing to participate. A one-on-one semi-structured interview was also carried out with 2 officials from the DBST, and 1 educator from the SBST from each of the five selected schools. Therefore, the total number of participants is 17.

The table below shows the sampled primary schools as well as the number of educators in each school and the number of educators who participated in the study.

Table 3.1 Schools conveniently sampled for the study

SCHOOLS	POPULATION	SAMPLE –
		2 Language educators from each school and 1 SBST member from each school =15+2 DBST members =17
A	12	3
B	12	3
C	10	3
D	13	3
E	12	3
TOTAL	59	15+ 2 participants from DBST = 17

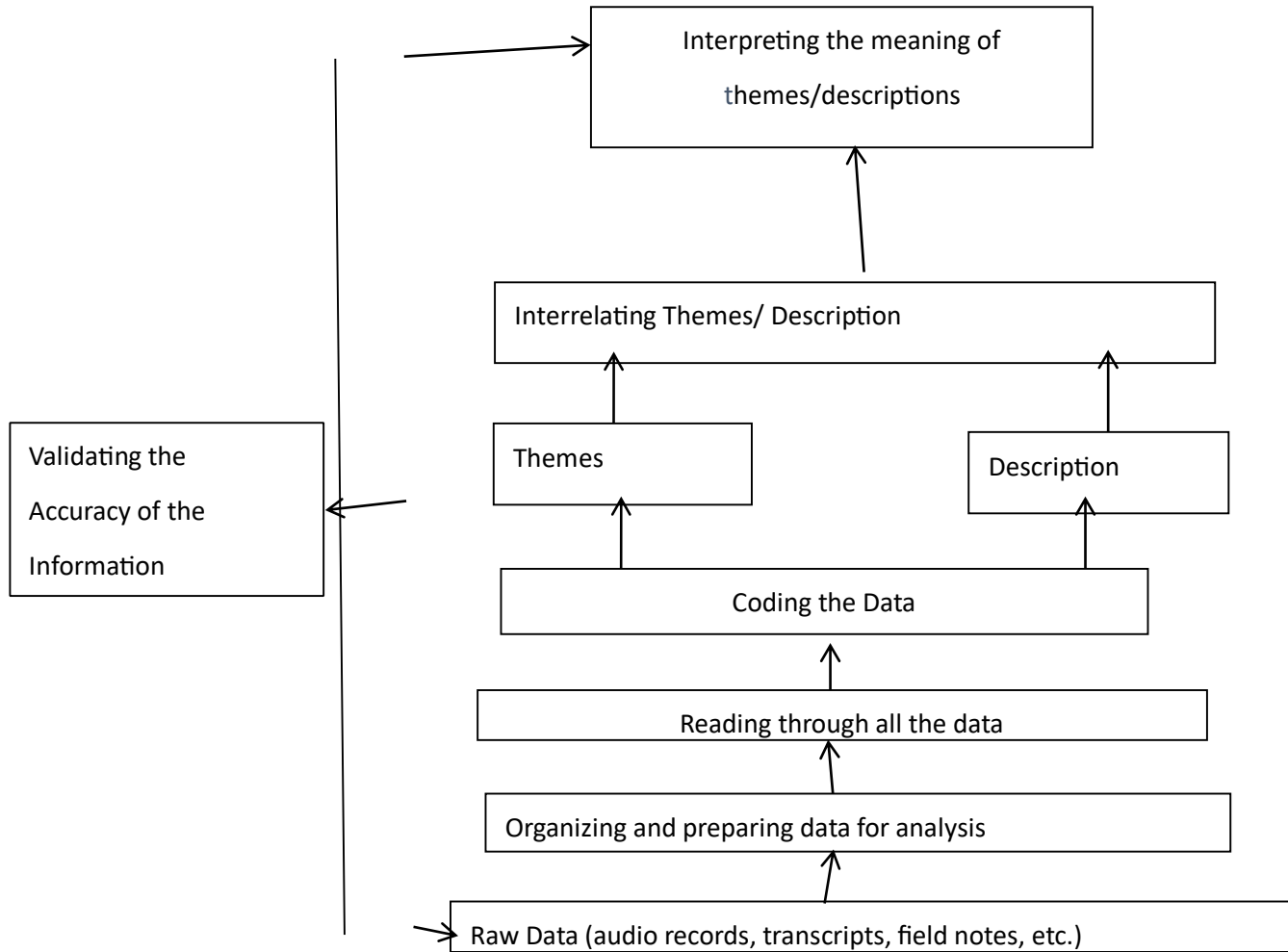
3.4.3 Data collection procedures

Data will be collected by means of individual semi-structured interviews, where the questions will be detailed and developed in advance and treated in a standardised and straightforward manner. The study will make use of one-on-one semi-structured interviews with English educators teaching in grades 4 to 6. DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019: 2) regard the semi-structured interviews as the most common data collection method in qualitative studies. The method is anchored by a list of questions, with follow-up questions referred to as probes (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019:2). DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019:2) further state that the sequence of the questions and wording of the questions are designed by the interviewer taking into cognisance the interviewee and the interview. In this study, interviews will be conducted to scrutinise the support given to learners who experience language barriers, the causes of language barriers, as well as strategies that will be used to help overcome language barriers.

3.5.3 Data analysis and interpretation

On analysing and interpretation of data, the researcher will determine and also use process of the steps indicated by Creswell (2014: 197). The researcher will transcribe recorded data from the interviews, ensuring that the data will be ready for analysis. After reading the transcripts, the researcher will commence with the coding. According to Creswell (2012:10), data analysis is the process consisting of “taking the data apart” to determine individual responses and then “putting it together again” to summarise it. Creswell (2012:698) emphasises that in qualitative research, the researcher makes sense out of text data, divides it into text or image segments, labels the segments, examines codes for overlap or redundancy, and collapses the code themes. On analysing and interpretation of data, the researcher will make use of the steps given by Creswell below (Creswell, 2014: 197).

Figure 3.1 Analysing and interpretation of data steps



Adapted from Creswell (2014: 197).

According to Ezzy (2013:92), data in open coding is expressed in words, and the researcher identifies different concepts and themes. The researcher will read data several times from transcripts or field notes and other resources to search for thematic connectivity that would lead to theme patterns. According to Creswell (2014: 197), coding involves organising the data by bracketing chunks and writing a word representing a category in the margins. Similar codes will be combined to form themes. According to Creswell (2014: 199), these themes must appear as the major findings of the study.

An audio recorder will be used to record the semi-structured interviews. The audio recorded information will be transcribed and analysed by coding in consultation with the main research question and the research questions. The coded information will be compared for similarities and grouped into categories; thereafter the categories will be analysed for their similarities and combined into the themes. The researcher will interpret the themes consulting the literature from chapter 2 for discussion.

3.6 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2016:324), validity in qualitative research refers to the degree to which the explanations of phenomena match the realities of the world. Assessing the trustworthiness of a study is a vital component of the data analysis, findings and conclusions in any qualitative research. Thus, trustworthiness is of utmost importance in qualitative research. In order to achieve trustworthiness and to reduce threats to the reliability of the study, the researcher ensured that the following criteria were met, namely credibility; dependability; confirmability; participant language, and verbatim accounts.

3.6.1 Credibility

In order to ensure the credibility of the study, the researcher conducted member-checking with the participants. This, in turn, meant that the researcher returned to the participants to check the accuracy and completeness of the data collected informally to ensure the information collected was not distorted during the data interpretation (Creswell 2013: 45). However, in line with the suggestions of Maree (2007:114), this was done in such a way that the researcher was not able to indicate specifically whether member-checking had been either formal or informal. However, the participants were used to the researcher and, hence, they were ready to verify what had been captured and transcribed from the interviews. While this was being done the researcher ensured that all ethical considerations were adhered to.

3.6.2 Confirmability

According to Rangongo (2011:87), conformability refers to the degree to which the research findings are the focus of the inquiry and not the researcher's bias. The study was carried out in no-fee schools and, thus, as a principal in a no-fee school, the researcher tried to keep his feelings, experience and understandings to himself and, therefore, to detach himself as far as possible from the participants in order to avoid the risk of bias affecting the study. The

researcher did not want to develop relationships with the participants through attachment to them, as this may have tempted him to see what he wanted to see and, therefore, miss issues relevant to the study. This self-reflection created an open and honest narrative between the researcher and the participants.

3.6.3 Participants` language and verbatim accounts

The researcher obtained both verbatim statements from the participants during the interviews and quotations from official documents. This was done by recording the exact responses of the participants and by using direct quotes from the participants when analysing data, in order to reinforce the trustworthiness of the study.

3.7 Ethical considerations

The research project went through the process of approval by the North-West Department of Education. Permission was requested from the Ethics Committee of North-West University. The Department of Education at Ratlou Sub-district in Mafikeng will be approached by the researcher to obtain permission to conduct the research, namely the support given to learners who experience language as a barrier to learning at five selected primary schools in Madibogo village. Although confidentiality in respect of respondents will be closely guarded, their anonymity cannot be guaranteed. The participants voluntarily participated in the study, and they were given the right to withdraw at any stage or time during the course of the study. Informed consent is one of the founding principles of research ethics, hence its intent is that participants can enter research voluntarily, with full information about what it means for them to take part, and that they give consent before they enter the research.

3.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the research design and the methodology that encompassed participant selection, methods of data collection, data analysis, and all the processes that were involved such as the ethical considerations that the researcher implemented. The chapter also outlined the researcher's role in the study as well as the measures that ensured trustworthiness of the study. The next chapter will focus on data presentation, interpretation, and discussion.

CHAPTER FOUR

4 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the research paradigm, the qualitative research design, the phenomenological approach, methodology, ethical considerations, and chapter outline. This chapter covers the data presentation, analysis, and discussion. Thematic analysis was applied for data analysis.

4.2 Profile of the participants

The participants were drawn from five schools in Ngaka Molema District. In total 17 participants participated in the study. For ethical reasons and protection of the participants, codes will be applied to identify the participants. Table 4.1 indicates the school, position, and code of each participant. On the codes S – stands for School, A for School A, T for Teacher. The numerals such as 1 and 2 distinguish the educators in a specific school. Then, on the other hand, in SBST, S stands for School, B for Based, S for Support and T for Team. From school A, the team member therefore is referred to as SBST1. Then from school B it is SBST2.

Table 4.1 Profile of participants

1. Table: Biographic results from Educators (SAT)						
Participants	schools	Positions	Age	Gender	Years of experience	Highest qualification
SAT1	School A	Grade 6 English FAL teacher	34	Male	7	BED
SAT2	School A	Grade 5 English FAL Teacher	38	Female	12	BED Hons
SBT1	School B	Grade 5, 6 English FAL Teacher	45	Female	20	Bed
SBT2	School B	Grade 4 English FAL Teacher	27	Female	5	Bed
SCT1	School C	Grade 4 English FAL Teacher	42	Male	10	Masters
SCT2	School C	Grade 5 English FAL Teacher	34	Female	8	BA hons
SDT1	School D	Grade 6 English FAL Teacher	49	Male	23	BED
SDT2	School D	Grade 4, 5 English FAL Teacher	54	Male	26	Diploma in education
SDT1	School E	Grade 4, 5 English FAL Teacher	47	Female	21	BED
SDT2	School E	Grade 5. 6 English FAL Teacher	29	Female	6	BED

2. Biographic results from SBST members

Participants	Schools	Positions	Age	Gender	Years of experience	Qualification
SBST 1	School A	SBST member	46	male	17	BA languages
SBST2	School B	SBST member	37	Female	12	BED
SBST3	School C	SBST member	33	Female	9	BED
SBST4	School D	SBST member	49	Female	16	BED Hons
SBST5	School E	SBST member	55	Male	20	Diploma in education

3. Biographic results from DBST members

Participants	DoE	Age	gender	Years of experience	Qualification
DBST official 1 (DBST1)	District Office	60	Male	30	MED
DBST official 2 (DBST2)	District Office	55	female	26	BED Hons

4.3 Data analysis process

Thematic analysis was used to analyze data presented by the participants. Due to COVID-19 regulations the researcher was not able to have face-to-face interviews with the participants as planned. The researcher interviewed the participants telephonically.

The data collected through audio recording was transcribed and analyzed. The researcher was interested in finding out the kind of learning support provided by the DoE, SBST, and educators to learners who experience language as a barrier to learning. Enquiring about the type of support they give to learners would assist the study to find out the possible strategies to be employed to find the best approaches that can be used to improve language acquisition and competency, especially among learners with barriers language acquisition and competency. The data that was collected telephonically was audio recorded, the recorded data was transcribed to analyse it. On analyzing the data from the transcripts, the researcher had to identify the major points that were answering the interview questions. These major points became the sub-themes. Similar sub-themes were grouped together to form the themes.

Sub-themes emerged and they were grouped into themes. Table 4.2 illustrates the subthemes and themes which emerged.

Table 3.1 Themes and sub-themes

Theme	Sub-themes
	- Speaking
Challenges faced by grade 4-6 learners acquiring speaking, reading, writing,	- Reading in and spelling skills
	- Reading
Factors causing language barriers	- Non-exposure to the language

- Overuse of home language in the classroom
- Fear to talk in the presence of the teacher and other learners
- Use of different accents

Support given to educators on learners with barriers □ The Department of Education use of SBST to support teacher

□ Encouragement of Inclusivity

Strategies that can be used to help learners with language barriers □ Usage of different learning styles

- Schools to employ support staff
- Providing the necessary learning materials
- Encourage learners to communicate in English

4.4 Data presentation, analysis, and discussion

After data analysis, four main themes emerged. The themes that emerged are challenges faced by grade 4-6 learners in acquiring reading, writing, speaking and spelling skills, factors causing language barriers, support given to educators or learners with barriers, and strategies that can be used to help learners with language barriers. The themes will be analysed and discussed referring to literature in the study.

4.4.1 Theme one: Challenges faced by grade 4-6 learners in acquiring reading, writing, speaking, and spelling skills

The participants stated various challenges faced by grade 4- 6 learners in acquisition of reading, writing, speaking, and spelling.

4.4.1.1 Writing

The participants highlighted that one of the major challenges facing learners with language barriers is writing. If learners are not able to write, then educators will not be able to read and make sense of what they have written. Participant **SBT 2** said: *“Learners struggle to construct meaningful sentences with correct words. In their minds they get it correct and even they can speak well but the problem is on writing.”*

This barrier was also echoed by **SCT2** who stated that *“One barrier learners have is on sentence construction.”*

The literature review discussed in 1.8 considers the inability to write as a language barrier. It argues that communicating adequately in writing is an essential skill for all learners. It is a form which they must apply several times a day in order to demonstrate what they know and that they understand the work done in class. Landsberg *et al.* (2019:184) assert that writing consists of several processes, including text construction, the physical act of writing, and spelling. Many learners who experience difficulties in spoken language and reading also struggle with writing. Sentences written by learners with such a barrier tend to lack logic and perhaps repeat the order, suggesting disordered thinking; capital letters, and punctuation are often omitted (Landsberg *et al.*, 2019:184).

On major problem linked to learners having difficulty in writing meaningful sentences is spelling errors. Literature study mentioned in 1.8 asserts that writing and correct spelling is essentially an act of close detail that utilises a variety of strategies (Owens, 2012:186). Owens (2012:186) argues that frequency of spelling mistakes is a strong indication of the degree of challenge experienced by the learner.

4.4.1.2 Speaking

When participants were asked about the major barriers that learners encounter, they stated that they encounter the problem of speaking fluently. The participants said; *“They know a lot of grammatical rules and vocabulary, but they struggle to speak fluently.”* [SBT 1]. The learners are finding it difficult to speak fluently due to the inability to pronounce words. SBT 2 said *“They have a problem with pronunciation of English words.”* The assertion is supported by SBT1 who says, *“We have learners who find it difficult to pronounce some words.”*

Literature data found that some learners fear and have difficulty in speaking English in front of their classmates because they feel inadequate to speak it, which, according to Fatiloro (2015:28) may lead to incoherence and incorrect expressions.

4.4.1.3 Reading

The literature review analysed in 1.8, found that some learners with barriers to learning have difficulty in reading. Landsberg *et al.* (2019:174) describe reading as an act where the reader uses complex skills to understand the meaning of a written text. It is an integrative mode of communication, with intra-active and interactive facets. According to Biemiller (2011:208), learning to read a text in a second language is more difficult than in the home language, which is the mother tongue. The difficulty to read is due to the new vocabulary in English. The assertion is supported by empirical evidence. SBT1 and SBT 2 stated that: *“Reading is a major barrier for learners with learning barriers in the language.”* [SDT1].

“They struggle to read English and as a result, they don’t understand the content from the passage.” [SDT2].

The empirical evidence indicates that the learners have difficulty in reading English and as a result they are not able to comprehend what is written in text they read.

4.4.2 Theme two: Factors causing language barriers

After analyses of data presented by participants, 5 sub-themes emerged. The sub-themes which emerged under the theme are:

- Non-exposure to the English language.
- Fear to talk in the presence of the teacher and other learners.
- Health problems.
- Incompetent educators.
- Use of different accents.

4.4.2.1 Non exposure to the language

The learners are not exposed much to the English language at home and at school. At home and in the community, learners communicate in their home language, which is mainly Setswana. In the foundation phase, learners are taught in their mother language. This has a ripple effect when they move to the intermediate phase, where English is introduced. **SET 1** stated that learners have barriers to language learning due to “*Non exposure to the language and late teaching or access to the language.*” This is also supported by **SCT1** and **SCT2**, who say “*Learner’s background, some parents are not speaking, or they don’t know English.*” [**SCT1**]. **SCT2** said; “*English language is a foreign language to our learners, it is not spoken at home.*” [**SCT2**]

Learners will be exposed to learning English very late. Due to the swift change at the intermediate phase, some learners might not cope with what is expected, mainly on reading, writing and speaking of the additional language, which is English. **SET 2** stated that; “*The problem is mainly due to learning the language very late.*”

What participants said is consistent with the literature review in 2.1, which highlights that very few learners have contact with English speakers in their early stage of development. In support, Akbari (2015:395) asserts that there is no active role for English learning outside the classroom, and as a result learners do not feel the immediate need to learn it (Akbari, 2015: 395).

The non-exposure is worsened by educators in the classroom. In the classroom there is overuse of home language. Learners and educators mainly communicate with their home language even if it is for subjects that require them to make use of English. The participants said; “*In most cases in the classroom the teacher and learners use the mother*

language Setswana while expressing themselves.” [SBT 2], and SCT2 said; “The learning environment sometimes promotes the native language. The blame should be put on the educators who over-depend on Setswana.”

Hence, the problem is made worse by educators as they do not expose the learners to English, as they teach with the mother language in subjects they are supposed to teach in English.

4.4.2.2 Incompetent educators

From the empirical evidence gathered, the participants state that some barriers experienced by learners are due to the educators’ teaching approaches. The participants further state that some of the approaches used by educators do not promote communication activities. The other participants suggested that the incompetency of educators might be a result of the unqualified educators assigned to teach English.

Other English educators make the situation worse by using non-interesting teaching techniques. **SAT 2** said *“Some educators don’t give time for communication activities.”* Mainly such educators make use of the lecture method. This method does not provide the learners opportunities to discuss and have an input on whatever the teacher presents. This is also supported by **SBT1**, who says *“Learners have a limited environment given in class to speak English.”*

The claim is supported by a literature review in 2.1.3, which says that most school educators do not use appropriate techniques to guide students with activities that are included in their textbooks in order to achieve desired goals, which, accordingly, negatively affects learners (Akbari, 2015: 398). Sometimes educators use bad techniques to teach English, mainly because they do not have the necessary skills because they are not trained to teach the language. This is supported by **SDT2**, who says;

“Not all educators who teach English are qualified. You might find that a teacher who is trained in another subject such as history will be teaching English to learners.”

The literature review indicates that a severe shortage of trained English educators results in educators finding themselves teaching English without proper training, and struggling to effectively use teaching methods (Songbatumis, 2017: 56). As a result, these educators end up teaching a specific curriculum, a set of knowledge and skills that students would not have encountered in their lives outside of school. This is a challenge, as young learners are more receptive to sounds and do not have strategies to solve these problems because they are not trained in this area (Brining, 2015: 167).

In support of what participants pointed out, the literature review indicates that sometimes educators use poor techniques when teaching English, mainly because they do not have the necessary skills since they are not trained to teach the language. Moreover, the severe shortage of trained English educators results in educators finding themselves teaching English without proper training and struggling to effectively use teaching methods (Songbatumis, 2017: 56). As a result, these educators end up teaching a specific curriculum, a set of knowledge and skills that learners would not have encountered in their lives outside of school.

4.4.2.3 Fear to talk in the presence of the teacher and other learners

The participants stated that there is fear which engulfs learners between grades 4 to 6 on speaking English. The learners fear to read and speak English as there is tendency among other learners and educators to laugh at the learner. Due to the fear of making errors in pronunciation and even failure to read, learners will not have the courage to read. The participants said; *“There is fear among learners that if they speak, others will judge them.”* [SCT 1]

“Learners want to avoid embarrassment on account of pronouncing words incorrectly.”

SBT 2. The assertion is supported by another participant who said: *“fear of making mistakes.”* [SDT1].

On the other hand, **SDT2** argues that what make learners to be afraid to read is *“Lack of self- confidence and low self-esteem.”* The main reason why learners lack selfconfidence

is due to embarrassment they are likely to face if they fail to read properly or pronounce some of the words incorrectly.

The literature data concurs with what the participants stated. The literature reviewed refers to fear as a psychological problem. Such students are afraid of making mistakes, especially in respect of pronouncing or spelling incorrectly the words at hand (Songbatumis, 2017:61), hence, they become timid if asked to exhibit their speaking skills. Songbatumis (2017:61) maintains that this is mainly due to lack of confidence in front of others, especially their classmates, particularly when speaking a foreign language since it can threaten them to lose face. On the other hand, literature indicates that educators worsen the situation, since they are not aware of their students' distinct and unique needs and interests, as some of the students are emotionally volatile, need selfconfidence and self-esteem (Brining, 2015:167).

4.4.2.4 Health problems

The participants stated that some learners with barriers in respect of English language activities might be having health problems. Some learners have health problems such as hearing or poor vision, and others are mentally challenged. The participants said:

“Some learners have a severe deformity that prevent them to cope with the skills required to master English, for example learners with Bipolar or brain damage. Such learners cannot read or write as expected by the teacher.” [SBST 5]

SCT1 in support of **SBST 5** indicated: *“.... obstacles such as inability to talk, see and hearing might negatively affect learners with regard to learning English. How do you expect a learner who is visually impaired to read?”*

To corroborate what participants stated, literature data shows that communication barriers can be caused by learners' lack of hearing, speech and language impairment. The literature further indicates that some of these children stammer, cannot organise their words and others cannot find the words they need (Hallberg, 2010:113). This author further asserts that some children are not mentally fit due to age immaturity, and this has a negative effect as far as talking is concerned. Hallberg (2010:113) further opines that such children do not comprehend easily and cannot use as many words as the other

children of their age; sentences written by such children are short, since they have poor listening skills.

4.4.2.5 Use of different accents

The issue of accent which was raised in the literature study was raised by participant **SBT1**. **SBT1** said; “*learners have different accents from the educators*”. Due to different accents used, misunderstanding is common, which hinders pronunciation.

Empirical evidence is supported by literature data, that pronunciation of the word is normally determined by the speaker's accent, and some words can be misheard and misinterpreted, resulting in barriers to effective communication. This notion is supported by Buarqoub (2019: 69), who argues that misunderstood messages can confuse learners, because these educators use language and accents that are not familiar to all learners (Hallberg, 2010: 114).

Literature data mentioned in 2.2.1 says the use of words or phrases of people belonging to different places or regions may differ in meaning and interpretation, even if their language is the same (Buarqoub, 2019:69&72). This can lead to various types of conflicts that could have disastrous consequences, since a language barrier can appear when the sender and recipient speak the same language but come from different regions of the same country. It is further stated by Buarqoub (2019:69&72), who says differences in dialects and accents create misunderstanding and gaps in communication, since the meanings, implications, and interpretation of words differ. On the other hand, the use of regional slang and colloquial expressions can also lead to serious problems of misunderstanding and gaps in communication (Buarqoub, 2019: 72).

4.4.3 Theme three: Support to be given to educators for learners with barriers

The sub-themes that shaped the above theme are:

- The Department of Education's use of SBST to support educators
- Encouragement of inclusivity

4.4.3.1 The Department of Basic Education's use of SBST to support teachers

The participants understood the roles of the SBST. According to participants, they

coordinate the support systems given to learners and educators on dealing with learners with barriers to learning. Participant **DBST 1** said:

“They receive a list of learners the teacher has already identified as having learning barriers, and they carry out their responsibility for determining the support needs of both educators and learners. They coordinate the provision of relevant support within the framework of identification, assessment and support policy. They identify school needs with a focus on barriers to learning at educators, learners, and curriculum and school levels.”

DBST2 in support of **DBST1** indicated:

“SBST will help in particular on needs and problems experienced by the teacher and learner in the school and come up with a plan or ideas for individual intervention as well as for general developmental and preventative action.”

Hence, the major task of the SBST is to coordinate the process of screening and referral of learners. That is stated by **DBST1** and **DBST2**, who said that the task of the SBST is; *“Identify the learners with the barriers and work closely with the parents to identify the needs of the learner.”* [**DBST 2**]. In support, **DBST1** said, *“We encourage educators to group learners according to their abilities.”*

On the other hand, the implementers or the SBSTs felt that the Department is not doing enough to support them. **SBST 5** said; *“The support is not effective. We always submit list of learners who need support, but the process takes long, and learners end up not being assisted.”*

The same sentiments were raised by **SBST3**, who mentioned that: *“they must speed up referral process so that learners with barriers can get relevant support.”*

What participants said is consistent with what is found in the literature, with Nong (2020: 1246) postulating that the primary role of the SBST is to identify barriers to learning in school. To do this, Nong (2020:1246) points out that the SBST works hand-in-hand with the District Based Support Team (DBST). The main task of the DBST is to implement the SBST in schools and monitor them (DoE, 2014: 32). DoE (2021:32) states that the SBST

should provide the necessary support to educators and caregivers in this process by providing opportunities for regular and collaborative problem-solving in areas of concern, by facilitating the provision of support as needed.

4.4.3.2 Encouragement of Inclusivity in the classroom

The participants stated that the Department of Basic Education encourages classes with learners with learning barriers and those without. If this is applied effectively, learners who are struggling with tasks such as speaking, reading, and writing will be assisted by those who are excelling in those activities. **DBST1** said: *“The Department is encouraging inclusive education.”* **SBT2** stated the same approach used by the Department of Inclusive classrooms. **SBT2** said; *“Pairing learners with barriers with knowledgeable classmates.”*

The literature study offers the explanation of what inclusive education is. The explanation is consistent with the explanation provided by the participants. Magodla (2019:17) argues that inclusive education promotes the personal, intellectual, emotional and social development of all learners, as needed. Magodla (2019:17) further claims that the South African Ministry of Education has rejected the use of a dual education system, which is ordinary education and special education, but has instead introduced a separate and inclusive education system. This type of education offers opportunities to all learners, including those with special needs or disabilities (Magodla, 2019: 17).

4.4.4 Theme four: Strategies that can be used to help learners with language barriers

- Usage of different teaching styles
- Schools to employ support staff
- Provide the necessary learning materials
- Encourage learners to communicate in English

4.4.4.1 Usage of different learning styles

To cater for the needs of different learners, participants emphasised that educators must apply different teaching methods. **SBST2** said *“English educators must use different learning styles as learners are different.”*

On the other hand, participant **SBST 1** suggested that educators should apply teaching methods such as cooperative learning and scaffolding. These methods promote interaction between the learners as well as between the learners and the teacher. This participant further mentioned that:

'The teacher should apply such teaching approaches as cooperative learning, scaffolding, listening and speaking, reading. Communicative language teaching and task-based learning.' [SBST 1].

SDT2 as well advocates for the teaching approaches that promote interactions between the learners and between the educators the educators and learners. Such methods will give the opportunity to learners with learning barriers to the English language to get help from their peers and the educators. **SDT2** said there is a need for *"Group work, discussion and teaching with material that they relate to such as pictures and other material."*

Working collaboratively is important because, according to Helfrich and Bosh (2011:265), what students learn from their peers is more than what they learn from educators, and learners also come to understand each other's social environment (Hallberg, 2010:117), while encouraging and accepting one another's efforts. This effort serves to always foster mutual respect between learners as well as between educators and learners. Conflicts are easier to control in a group where there is trust despite the differences (Wahl, 2017:65).

The scaffolding approach is discussed in detail in 2.4.2.4. The strategy can be applied in classroom environments by referring to the interventions that educators give to their learners to facilitate their learning and improve their current knowledge and skills (Gonulal & Loewen, 2018: 2). In this method, the teacher models the expected problem-solving technique, presents new approaches to solving the problem, and encourages learners to use personal skills. Peer support is used during scaffolding, which helps learners feel more comfortable interacting with their peers (Wahl, 2017: 68).

4.4.4.2 Providing the necessary learning materials

Learners with barriers to learning in English should be provided with relevant materials to facilitate learning. The devices such as LCD projectors, computers, listening devices, and sound systems are limited and insufficiently available.

The participants who were questioned in respect of this theme, proposed that educators should make use of interactive learning aids, namely both audio and visual teaching aids. These participants stated that:

“Tangible learning materials be provided, for example letters of alphabet, letters and words building blocks. Use correct teaching aids to enhance effective teaching and learning.” [DBST 1]

“The referral teacher must be provided with all the necessary materials that can be needed, being letter blocks, books with pictures, word puzzles, and other relevant materials.” [DBST2]

‘Supplement all lessons and instructions with visual aids such as images, sketches, audio-video clips, and others that will help learners to understand better.’ [SBT2]

The literature supports what was suggested by participants. Masango (2013:12) believes that it is necessary to provide resources that would allow the teacher to support learners who are experiencing difficulties. The use of technology and educational resources such as flowcharts, flash cards, flannel boards, globes, maps, transparencies, models, slides, exhibits, posters, murals, and montages is thus crucial, suggests Wahl (2017: 62). There is a need to put in place different teaching methods and techniques, especially to establish an effective teaching process, and educators need to improve teaching facilities, including space, books, and teaching materials (Songbatumis, 2017: 58). Teaching devices should be designed to facilitate language change and keyword translation (Hallberg, 2010:117).

Furthermore, there is a need to empower the teaching of English through the use of textbooks, dictionaries, chalkboards, workbooks, and posters. Also, the use of internet

facilities, newspapers and language laboratories are imperative, indicates Fatiloro (2015:29).

Physical and human resources are needed to provide essential training, help, and resources to assist educators and learners in developing skills to ensure they are adequately equipped to participate fully in the integration of technology. It is necessary to provide educators with basic computer technology skills in order to store information. There is also a need to strengthen the teaching of English using textbooks, dictionaries, tables, workbooks, posters, internet facilities, newspapers and language laboratories (Fatiloro, 2015: 29-31). Teachers can also improvise by making charts, getting pictures, using sight words and teaching learners new vocabulary words daily. The school can also prepare classes after school and also organise reading competitions. The school can also hire educator assistants to help learners.

4.4.4.3 Schools to employ assistant educators

The educators who are directly involved with working with learners felt that they are not coping with the task of assisting learners with learning barriers. Hence, they are suggesting that the schools should employ assistant educators to assist learners with barriers.

DBST1 suggested the schools “assign a *support teacher who will only be in for the lookout for learners with learning barriers in English language at school.*”

What the participants stated is supported by what was suggested in the literature data, namely that, if school funds permit, schools must hire an assistant teacher, and this can be done in a single classroom, with the main teacher taking the lead on lesson delivery, while the co-teacher plays the assistant role by checking written work or gathering observational data on targeted learners (Masango, 2013:8-10).

4.4.4.4 Encourage learners to communicate in English.

The participants in the study hold the view that learners must be given more opportunities to learn the English language. They suggested that learners must be encouraged to speak English, and educators should be encouraged to teach other subjects through English. The teaching of English across the curriculum helps improve learners’ competency in the

English language. The participants suggested that; *“The best and safest thing to do is to overcome these barriers by speaking English as far as possible and to encourage learners to do so.”* [SBT1]. This is supported by SCT2 who indicated:

“Effectively support the Departments’ initiative of teaching English when dealing with subjects such as history, sciences, mathematics and other subjects which are not languages.”

The literature review is consistent with what was stated by participants, namely, that learners need to have more opportunities to learn the components of the English language such as speaking, reading, and writing. Raja and Selvi (2011:44) are of the view that the school administration should insist that English educators communicate in English with learners in the classroom and outside the school premises. Raja and Selvi (2011: 44) further state that to be effective regarding aspects of spoken language, schools should allocate a separate period for this or even extend school time. They could also extend the duration of the English course as well as encourage students to communicate in English.

Chapter summary

The chapter focused on data presented by participants, analysis of presented data and discussions of the findings by making references to relevant literature. The subsequent chapter will focus on summary of findings, recommendations, and a conclusion.

CHAPTER FIVE

5 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

The chapter analyses the summary of findings. Recommendations are presented based on the findings from the study utilising empirical findings and literature data. Finally, a conclusion for the study is offered at the end of the chapter.

5.2 Summary of findings

From the analysis, four themes emerged, which are;

- Challenges faced by grade 4-6 learners in acquiring reading, writing, speaking and spelling skills
- Factors causing language barriers
- Support given to educators to learners with barriers
- Strategies that can be used to help learners with language barriers.

A summary of findings is offered below:

Theme one: Challenges faced by grade 4-6 learners in acquiring reading, writing, speaking and spelling skills.

Participants reported on a variety of challenges that students in grades 4 to 6 face in developing reading, writing, speaking and reading skills. Participants highlighted that one of the main challenges faced by learners with language barriers is writing. If learners are not able to write, educators will not be able to read and make sense of what they have written. Landsberg *et al.* (2019: 184) argue that adequate communication in writing is an essential skill for all learners. It is a form which they must apply several times a day in order to demonstrate what they know, and that they understand the work done in class.

Another challenge encountered is speaking. When participants were asked about the major barriers to learning they encounter, they stated that they encounter the problem of speaking English fluently. Literature review showed that some learners fear and have

difficulties in speaking English in front of their classmates because they feel inadequate to speak it, which, according to Fatiloro (2015:28), may lead to incoherence and incorrect expressions. The participants identified reading as one of the barrier learners encountered when learning English in grades 4- 6. This is echoed by Biemiller (2011:208), who asserts that learning to read text in a second language is more difficult than in the original language due to the limited vocabulary.

Theme two: Factors causing language barriers

After analyzing the data presented by participants, 4 sub-themes emerged which are:

- Non-exposure to the English language
- Fear to talk in the presence of the teacher and other learners
- Health problems
- Incompetent educators

Learners are afraid to participate in activities pertaining to English such as speaking and reading. Due to the fear of making pronunciation mistakes, learners will not have the courage to read, and this fear is referred to as a psychological problem.

These students are afraid of making mistakes, especially in the incorrect pronunciation or spelling of words (Songbatumis, 2017: 61).

The participants stated that some learners with barriers to English language activities might be having health problems such as hearing or poor vision, and others are mentally challenged.

The issue of accent which was raised in the literature study and empirical data is supported by Buarqoub (2019: 69), who argues that misunderstood messages can confuse learners, because these educators use language and accents that are not familiar to all learners (Hallberg, 2010: 114). Buarqoub (2019:69&72) says the use of words or phrases of people belonging to different places or regions may differ in meaning, or interpretation, even if their language is the same.

Theme three: Support to be given to educators on learners with barriers

The sub-themes that are within the theme are:

- The Department of Education's use of SBST to support teachers
- Encouragement of inclusivity

Participants understood the roles of the SBST. They coordinate the provision of relevant support in the context of screening, identification, assessment, and support policy for learners with barriers to learning. What participants said is consistent with what is found in the literature data, with Nong (2020: 1246) advancing that the primary role of the SBST is to identify barriers to learning in the school. To do this, Nong (2020:1246) suggests that the SBST works hand in hand with the District Based Support Team (DBST).

Participants stated that the Ministry of Basic Education encourages classes which have learners with and without barriers to learning. If this is applied effectively, learners who have difficulty speaking, reading, and writing will be helped with those who excel in these activities. The explanation given by the participants is consistent with the literature on inclusive education.

Kapen (2010:7) defines it as a practice of teaching children with disabilities in regular classrooms with non-disabled children as much as possible; these children may have orthopedic, intellectual, emotional or visual difficulties, or disabilities associated with hearing or learning.

Theme four: Strategies that can be used to help learners with language barriers

Sub-themes for theme four are;

- Usage of different learning styles
- Schools to employ assistant educators
- Provide the necessary learning materials
- Encourage learners to communicate in English

To meet the needs of different learners, participants stressed that educators need to apply different teaching methods. Educators should apply teaching methods such as cooperative learning and scaffolding. The approach to scaffolding is discussed. Peer support is used during scaffolding, which helps learners feel more comfortable interacting with their classmates (Wahl, 2017: 68).

The participants hold the view that educators should make use of interactive learning aids, both audio and visual teaching aids. Literature, on the other hand, advocates for the use of different teaching methods and techniques, especially to establish an effective teaching process, and educators need to improve teaching facilities, including space, books, and teaching materials (Songbatumis, 2017: 58).

The participants in the study indicated that learners must be given more opportunities to learn the English language. They suggested that learners must be encouraged to speak English.

The findings of the study assisted in the formulation of recommendations as stated below:

5.3 Recommendations

- It is important that each school has a SBST to work hand-in-hand with the English educators by helping them to identify learners with difficulty in comprehending, reading, writing, and speaking skills in English.
- The teaching of English across the curriculum must be enforced by the Department of Basic Education.
- Educators should be trained effectively on the screening process.
- The Department of Basic of Education should employ assistant educators specifically to assist learners with learning barriers
- The Department of Basic Education must take the initiative and supply schools with all the necessary teaching aids such as audio and visual aids. The educators and schools can also improvise from the school budget if the Department is taking forever.
- The Department should act urgently if any referral has been made in respect of learners with learning barriers.
- Schools must work closely with parents in helping learners with learning barriers.
- Educators need to be trained in basic computer skills in order to store information and facilitate their teaching.

- After screening, learners with learning barriers should be provided with occupational therapists and psychologists by the district officials for further support.

5.4 Conclusion

Learners who are facing challenges with speaking, reading, and writing at Grade 4-6 level need special attention, since these learners were only exposed to the language when they commenced Grade 4. The learners who are struggling need special help that is to be given by educators who are well-qualified to work with such learners. The Department of Basic Education must work hand-in-hand with the parents of the learners who are facing challenges with the English language.

5.5 Limitations to the study

The study was carried out in five schools which are within Madibogo which falls under the Ngaka Modiri Molema Municipality in Ratlou sub-district, where the researcher is an educator. All schools which participated in the study are public schools located in a rural area. Hence, the contextual challenges in such schools may differ from other schools in urban areas, or in townships, or former group A schools. The other limitation was that although qualitative outcomes have some degree of reliability and validity, only a qualitative research approach was utilized. This means that the researcher only had a limited amount of data to work with; there was no quantitative analysis to back up the data gathered during interviews and openended questionnaires. The third limitation was that the study was limited to five schools in Madibogo village; 17 participants took part in the study. This is only a very small proportion of the entire population of educators, hence the results cannot be used for generalization purposes.

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[1690599](https://www.thoughtco.com/english-as-a-second-language-esl-1690599) (accessed on

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2022/06/01) <https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/eal-programme/eal-assessment-framework/>

(accessed on 2022/06/01)

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – Language editing certificate

House 367

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Rustenburg 0299

25/07/2022

This is to certify that the Masters' thesis entitled

**INVESTIGATING KINDS OF SUPPORT PROVIDED TO PRIMARY SCHOOL
LEARNERS TO ALLEVIATE LANGUAGE AS A BARRIER TO LEARNING
WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO GRADE 4-6.**

Submitted by **N.L TITIES** 21476667



orcid.org 0000-0002-5809-4893

For the degree of **MASTER OF EDUCATION
(SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION)**

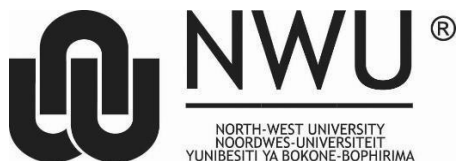
At the **NORTH WEST UNIVERSITY**

Has been edited for language by

Mary Helen Thomas (B.Sc. Hons. PGCE)

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Mary Helen Thomas'.

APPENDIX B – Ethics certificate



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**Senate Committee for
Research Ethics**

Tel: 018 299-4849

Email:

nkosinathi.machine@nwu.ac.za

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the **Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee (EduREC)** on 19/07/2020, this committee hereby **approves** your study as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Senate Committee for Research Ethics (NWU-SCRE) 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.

N	W	U	-	0	1	2	2	5	-	2	0	-	A	2
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Study title: The investigation of different kinds of support provided to primary school learners to alleviate language as a barrier to learning with specific reference to grades 4-6

Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher: Dr N Shaikhnag Student / Team:

NL Tities (MEd student – 21476667)

Ethics number:

Institution

Study Number

Year

Status

Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A

Commencement date: 17/09/2020 **Expiry**

Risk:

Low

date: 17/09/2021

Approval of the study is initially provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and

Special in process conditions of the research for approval (if applicable):

General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply:

- The study leader/supervisor/principal investigator/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the EduREC:
 - annually (or as otherwise requested) on the monitoring of the study, whereby a letter of continuation will be provided, and upon completion of the study; and
 - without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study.
- The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Should any amendments to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader/researcher must apply for approval of these amendments at the EduREC, prior to implementation. Should there be any deviations from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.

- 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 study are revealed or suspected;
 - it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the EduREC or that information has been false or misrepresented;
 - submission of the annual (or otherwise stipulated) monitoring report, the required amendments, or reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately; and / or
- new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.

The EduREC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your study. Please do not hesitate to contact the EduREC or the NWU-SCRE for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely



Prof JAK Olivier

Chairperson NWU Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee

Original details: (22351930)

C:\Users\22351930\Desktop\ETHICS

APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY.docm 8 November

2018

Current details: (22351930) M:\DSS1\8533\Monitoring and Reporting

Cluster\Ethics\Certificates\Templates\Research Ethics Approval Letters\9.1.5.4.1 ES-REC Ethical Approval Letter.docm

5 December 2018

File reference: 9.1.5.4.2

APPENDIX C– Permission letter



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Republic of South Africa

Tities NL

5 JULY 2020

To whom it may concern

Dear Sir/Madam

This is to certify that Tities NL is a registered student at the North West University – Mafikeng campus and is currently busy with her Masters degree in Education. Her research topic is “Investigate kind of support provided to primary school learners to alleviate language as a barrier to learning with specific references to grades 4-6” In view of this, we humbly request that you grant her permission to conduct her research and to have access to whatever documents that will be

required for the research. This research will be conducted in the Madibogo pan district of Mafikeng.

Kind regards and best wishes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N Shaihnag', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr N SHAIKHNAG (Supervisor- Faculty of Education – Mafikeng campus, NWU

**APPENDIX – D: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ENGLISH
LANGUAGE TEACHERS**

1. What do you understand by the term barriers to learning?

2. What factors cause English language barriers?

3. Which challenges are faced by learners on English language?

4. What form of support do you offer to your learners with barriers on English language?

5. What challenges do you encounter in assisting learners with barriers on English language learning?

6. What kind of support do you receive from SBST on assisting learners with English language barriers?

7. What form of support do you expect from SBST?

8. Which strategies can be implemented to assist learners with barriers on English language?

APPENDIX - E: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR (SBST) TEACHERS

1. What do you understand by the concept barriers to learning?

2. How do you support teachers to screen learners with barriers on learning English language?

3. What type of support do provide to the referring teacher who reported learners who struggle with English language?

4. What form of support do you receive from District Education Specialists?

5. How effective is the support you get from the District Education Specialists?

6. What type of support do you give to teachers who teach learners with barriers to learning?

7. What form support do you expect to be given by the Department officials on learners facing barriers in English language learning?

8. Which resource do English teachers need to effectively assist learners with English language learning barriers?

APPENDIX – F: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR (DBST)

1. What do you understand by the term barrier to learning?

2. What role do you in the District?

3. What kind of support do you offer to (SBST)?

4. What kind of support do you offer schools that identify learners with barriers to learning English language?

5. What challenges do you encounter in your functions of supporting educators teaching learners with barriers on learning English language?

6. Which resource do schools need to effectively assist learners with English language learning barriers?

7. Which strategies can be applied to assist educators facing challenges on assisting learners with barriers to English language learning?

APPENDIX G – Plagiarism report

