

Baseline Assessments for Foundation Phase Reading in isiXhosa: A Case Study

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DECLARATION

I, Nolubabalo Amanda Nesi (G07N5943) the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Signature

Date: May 2022

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Firstly, and above all, I thank God the Lord Almighty for my existence in this world and for granting me the opportunity and capability to proceed successfully, and my ancestors for being my guardian angels in leading me towards the light when I was unable to see it.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my two sons, Avuzwa and Leano. I want them to never lose sight of the 'prize', and most of all to never give up on their dreams. My mother, enkosi Mam'Qocwa.

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study was to investigate the use of baseline assessments for reading in isiXhosa in Foundation Phase. It focused on how teachers conduct baseline assessments, the assessment tools they use, and their responsiveness to baseline assessments data in terms of curriculum planning and practice, given the lack of explicit guidelines and tools specifically developed for African languages. The lack of clarity may lead teachers to assume that the same assessment approaches and practices apply across all official languages despite their linguistic and sociolinguistic differences. Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory of learning and Biggs' concept on constructive alignment are used as the theoretical and conceptual framework for this study. The premise for this study was that it would be problematic to apply similar assessment approaches and use the same tools for all official South African languages. The socio-cultural approach emphasises the importance of language learning and learning generally according to the context within which language occurs. The main research sites are two Quintile 1 schools in a township in Makhanda District. These schools have been receiving external intervention which includes a baseline assessment for isiXhosa reading from Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). This study sought to provide some insights on whether previous assessments have informed subsequent teaching practices.

The findings of the study revealed that the most prominent tool for assessing reading in isiXhosa is Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) and the tools used by external literacy interventions in the two schools were adapted versions of EGRA. Additionally, the subtasks in the baseline assessment tools used were aligned to the linguistic features of isiXhosa besides the nonsense word component. Furthermore, teachers were assessing and teaching reading at lower levels than expected in the grades 2 and 3 in this study. This study recommends that teachers respond to the baseline assessment data appropriately to develop reading competencies. In addition, there is need for an alignment between the linguistic features, the curriculum and strategies of teaching reading.

KEYWORDS: Baseline assessment, EGRA, IsiXhosa reading, Socio-cultural theory, dynamic assessment, assessment approaches, reading pedagogy

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents

DECLARATION.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xii
DEFINITIONS OF TERMS AND CONCEPTS SPECIFIC TO THE RESEARCH.....	xiv
CHAPTER 1: SITUATING THE STUDY	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Contextual background of the study.....	1
1.2.1 What is a Baseline Assessment for reading?	5
1.2.2 Baseline Assessment tools for reading	6
1.3 Rationale of the study.....	11
1.3.1 Educational and literacy issues in SA and Eastern Cape Province	11
1.3.2 Under-researched baseline assessment tools for African languages	13
1.4 Problem statement	15
1.5 Research questions and objectives	16
1.6 Thesis outline	16
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	18
2.1 Introduction	18
2.2 What is reading?.....	18
2.3 Assessment of reading in South Africa	21
2.4 The influence of language structure on reading acquisition	26

2.5 Chapter summary	30
CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	32
3.1 Introduction	32
3.2 Formal and informal assessment	32
3.3 Formative assessment.....	33
3.4 Summative assessment.....	34
3.5 Diagnostic/baseline assessment.....	35
3.6 Theoretical framework	35
3.6.1 Mediation of learning	37
3.6.2 Dynamic assessment.....	38
3.7 Constructive alignment	39
3.8 Chapter summary	41
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	42
4.1 Introduction	42
4.2 Research paradigm	42
4.3 Research site.....	43
4.4 Sampling of participants	45
4.5 Instruments and procedures.....	46
4.5.1 Survey/questionnaire	47
4.5.2 Semi-structured interviews	48
4.5.3 Participant observation: Assessment instrument	49
4.6 Data analysis	52
4.6.1 Validity, trustworthiness, and reliability	54
4.7 Ethical consideration	54
4.8 Chapter summary	55

CHAPTER 5: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS.....56

5.1 Introduction	56
5.2 Biographical information of participants	56
5.2.1 Teachers who completed survey questionnaires	56
5.2.2 Interviewed teachers	58
5.2.3 Subject advisor	58
5.2.4 Learners	58
5.3 Thematic presentation and analysis of data.....	59
5.3.1 Teachers' general perspectives on the importance of BA	60
5.3.2 Baseline assessment tools for reading in isiXhosa FP.....	61
5.4 Specific components and focus of reading in the BA Tools	67
5.4.1 Letter-sound knowledge	68
5.4.2 Word recognition.....	69
5.4.3 Nonsense word subtask	72
5.4.4 Blends and syllables subtask	74
5.4.5 Passage reading (ORF) subtask	76
5.5 Pedagogical responsiveness of teachers	80
5.5.1 The administration and pedagogical integration of baseline assessment	80
5.5.2 Influence of baseline assessment data on teachers' pedagogy	83
5.6 Challenges	88
5.7 Chapter summary	90

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION..92

6.1 Introduction	92
6.2 Overview of study	92
6.3 Summary of findings.....	93

6.3.1 Research question one	93
6.3.2 Research question two	95
6.3.3 Research question three	97
6.4 Limitations	98
6.5 Conclusion and recommendations	99
References	100
APPENDICES	112
Appendix 1: Ethical Clearance.....	112
Appendix 2: Department of Basic Education Consent Letter	113
Appendix 3: School Principal Consent Letter.....	116
Appendix 4: School Principal Consent Letter.....	119
Appendix 5: Survey questionnaires for teachers.....	124
Appendix 6: Interview schedule for language subject advisor	129
Appendix 7: Interview schedule for teachers	131
Appendix 8: Assessment 1 set.....	133
Appendix 9: Assessment 2 set.....	137
Appendix 10: Assessment 3 set.....	141

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: South Africa’s Matric results from 2013 – 2020 (Dugmore, 2021).....	2
Figure 1.2: Letter-sound knowledge component (Funda Wandé, 2019)	9
Figure 1.3: IsiXhosa Phonological awareness subtask in Grade 1 (Funda Wandé, 2019)	9
Figure 1.4: South Africa learner performance in PIRLS 2016 by Language of the test (Howie et al., 2017)	12
Figure 2.1: Grade 4 PIRLS Literacy achievement by the language of the test (Howie et al. 2017)....	22
Figure 2.2: Percentage of learners who are emergent readers per province (DBE, 2010)	23
Figure 2.3: Five studies used to establish Nguni languages reading thresholds.....	25
Figure 3.1: Diagrammatic representation of the ZPD.....	36
Figure 3.2: Mediation triad linking adopted from Vygotsky (1978, p. 54)	37
Figure 4.1: Data techniques	43
Figure 5.1A: Assessment 1 EGRA Letter-sound component in Assessment 1 set.....	62
Figure 5.1B: Assessment 2 EGRA Letter-sound component in Assessment 2 set.....	63
Figure 5.2A: Assessment 1 EGRA Word recognition component	63
Figure 5.2B: Assessment 2 EGRA Word recognition component	64
Figure 5.3A: Assessment 1 EGRA Passage reading (ORF) component	64
Figure 5.3B: Assessment 2 EGRA Passage reading (ORF) component.....	65
Figure 5.4A: Assessment 1 EGRA Comprehension questions component	65
Figure 5.4B: Assessment 2 EGRA Comprehension questions component	66
Figure 5.5: EGRA recording sheet.....	66
Figure 5.6: External organisation Letter-sound component in School A	69

Figure 5.6A: Word recognition component in adapted BA tool in School A.....	72
Figure 5.6B: Word recognition component in adapted BA tool in School B	72
Figure 5.7: Nonsense word component in Adapted BA tool in School A.....	73
Figure 5.8A: Phonemic segmentation component for Grade 2 in School A	75
Figure 5.8B: Double consonants for Grade 2 in School B	75
Figure 5.9A: EGRA passage reading (ORF) subtask on Assessment 1 set.....	77
Figure 5.9B: EGRA passage reading (ORF) subtask on Assessment 2 set	77
Figure 5.10A: BA Tool in School A Passage reading (ORF) component.....	78
Figure 5.10B: BA Tool in School B Passage reading (ORF) component	79
Figure 5.11A: Letter-sound performance (baseline).....	84
Figure 5.11B: Letter-sound performance (end-line).....	84
Figure 5.12A: ORF Performance Grade 2 School A	87
Figure 5.12B: ORF Performance in Grade 2 School B	87
Figure 5.12C: ORF Performance in Grade 3 School B	88

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: The schools' profiles for grades 2 and 3.....	44
Table 5.1: Background of FP Teachers.....	57
Table 5.2: Biographic Information of learners in School A and B.....	59
Table 5.3: Summary FP Teachers questionnaire survey.....	59
Table 5.5: Intended learning outcome for learners for word recognition component	70

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAPS:	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
LoLT:	Language of Learning and Teaching
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organisation
ANAs:	Annual National Assessments
DBE:	Department of Basic Education, South Africa
HL:	Home language
PIRLS:	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
EGRA:	Early Grade Reading Assessment
DIBELS:	Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills
FP:	Foundation Phase (Grade R - 3)
LSA:	Language Subject Advisor
SAFC:	South African Certification Authority
SBA:	School Based Assessment
ORF:	Oral Reading Fluency
CWPM:	Correct Word Per Minute
EGRA II:	Early Grade Reading Studies II
SPS:	School Powered Schools Evaluation
LiEP:	Language in Education Policy
IEA:	International Association for Evaluation of Educational Achievement
CEA:	Centre of Evaluation and Assessment

SACMEQ: Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality

SCT: Sociocultural Theory

CA: Constructive Alignment

ZPD: Zone of Proximal Development

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS AND CONCEPTS SPECIFIC TO THE RESEARCH

Learner-centred intervention: The term learner-centred literacy intervention refers to NGO's providing literacy assistance to the schools, in the form of teaching resources, teaching the learners directly, and also administering assessments to the learners.

Teacher-centred intervention: The term teacher-centred literacy intervention refers to Non-Governmental Organisation(s) (NGO) providing literacy assistance to the schools through teaching resources, teacher development training, and class visits. This type of intervention is directed at supporting the teacher instead of working directly with the learners.

Baseline assessment: A baseline assessment for reading is an oral test administered to young learners to assess their reading levels according to age and grade. Each learner is assessed individually, and ratings are recorded to capture their reading skills using a specific tool (Funda Wande, 2019).

Multilingualism: It is a context, place or country with many languages. It is also recognised as a person who speaks more than two languages. South Africa displays features of a multilingual country, with eleven official languages.

Foundation Phase: The Foundation Phase is the first phase of formal schooling in South Africa. It involves teaching from the Reception Year, which is called Grade R (5-6 years of age) to Grade 3 ($\pm$ 9 years of age).

CHAPTER 1: SITUATING THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The present study investigates the practice and use of baseline assessments for Foundation Phase reading as one of the South African national curriculum imperatives. Whilst focusing on isiXhosa, the study examines how baseline assessments (BA) are conducted, perceived and integrated in curriculum planning and pedagogical practices for teaching reading. The study also analyses the assessment tools used for baseline assessments for reading in isiXhosa in the Foundation Phase. Assessment is an integral part of a teacher's work at all levels of education (Dunphy, 1999; Black et al, 2002; Chappuis, 2005; Gibbs, 1999). It reveals learners' knowledge levels and gaps that further teaching may need to address (Gibbs, 1999). Teachers need to know their learners' knowledge and conceptualisation levels to inform their teaching practice.

This chapter outlines the background of the study. It contextualises the study by presenting the education and literacy issues in South Africa with a focus on the Eastern Cape (EC) Province. It also offers a brief and general discussion of baseline assessments, followed by some highlights of some literacy interventions deployed to address the literacy challenges in the province. Furthermore, a brief overview of the tools that are generally used for assessing reading in the Foundation Phase (FP) with a focus on Nguni languages is presented. Thereafter, the rationale of the research, research problem, research questions and objectives are outlined, before presenting the outline of the entire thesis.

1.2 Contextual background of the study

This chapter contextualises the study within the context of the South African educational system. It casts light on the development of literacy practices around isiXhosa language. This language is widely spoken in the Eastern Cape (EC) and Western Cape (WC) Provinces. However, what is significant about the educational crisis in the EC is the fact that for decades it has been one of the lowest performing provinces in the country in matriculation (matric) Home Language (HL) as illustrated in *Figure 1.1*. Similarly, EC has performed poorly when compared to other provinces in national and international assessments, which will be elaborated later in the chapter. This makes the Eastern Cape a fertile province to investigate literacy development practices such as baseline assessments.

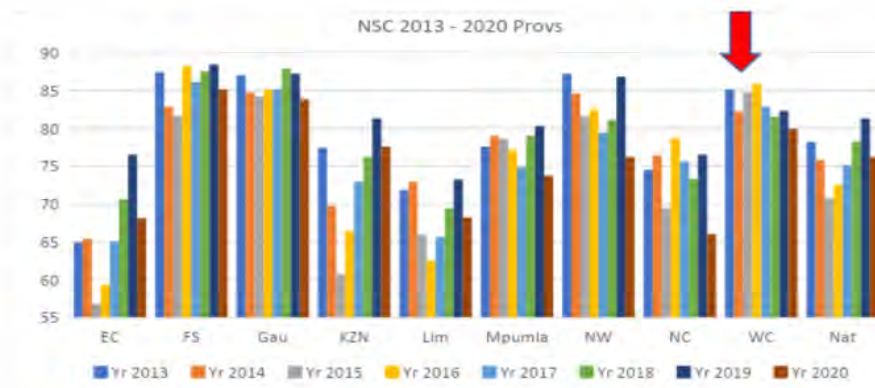


Figure 1.1: South Africa’s Matric results from 2013 – 2020 (Dugmore, 2021)

Scholars like Nic Spaull (2019) and Govender & Hugo (2020) have argued that the educational crisis reflected in the matric results starts as early as the Foundation Phase which is the early schooling life of the learners.

In the case of South African basic education, the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) gives guidelines for teachers on how to plan, implement, keep record and report on learners’ achievements in all learning areas (DBE, 2011a). The National Assessment Guidelines describe different types of assessments and illustrate that baseline assessments should be used at the beginning of a phase, grade or learning experience to establish learners’ existing knowledge, their current capabilities, or what they value (DBE, 2012). The guidelines provide teachers with essential data about the baseline literacy and numeracy capabilities of learners, thereby giving a clear picture of the level of each learner and inform their planning for the year (DBE, 2012). The guidelines for CAPS Foundation Phase define a baseline assessment as “assessment conducted by the teacher to determine whether learners have the minimum levels of knowledge, understanding and skills required BEFORE introducing new lessons/concepts” (DBE, 2020a, p. 7) (emphasis original). Further, the CAPS policy document explains that the baseline assessments are used at the beginning of a phase, grade or learning experience to establish learners’ existing knowledge and assists educators with the planning of learning programmes and learning activities (DBE, 2011a).

In addition, there appear to be some grey areas in the assessment of the eleven official languages in South Africa. South Africa has eleven official languages which are isiXhosa, isiZulu, isiNdebele, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, and English. These languages were decreed in terms of Section 6 of the country’s Constitution that was adopted in 1996.

Additionally, Sign Language (SASL) is recognised as an official language under the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 for the purposes of learning in a public school, although it is not an official South African language yet. SASL is an instructional language and examinable, also falling under the umbrella of ‘education and assessment’ (Reagan et al., 2006). However, for the purposes of this study, the focus will remain with the eleven official languages.

The main curriculum (CAPS) together with supporting curriculum documents, such as the National Assessment Guidelines, circulars etc., assessment guidelines specify what has been reiterated above about the baseline assessments, that they should be done at the beginning of a grade and phase. However, there seem to be no clear indication what components of reading should be assessed for each of the eleven official languages. Since the language structures are different, one would expect that assessment and pedagogical approaches are also conceived differently. On the contrary, it appears that there is no specificity of the components to be assessed in relation to each of the official languages in the main curriculum documents. The present study seeks to shed insights regarding reading baseline assessments in isiXhosa. While it is expected that the assessments would be similar across the related African languages, i.e., isiNguni and Sesotho languages, the expectation is that they would differ from languages such as English.

Uvavanyo Olusisiseko lwaPhakathi eNyakeni IsiXhosa uLwimi lwaseKhaya IBanga R - 3 (Midyear Baseline Assessment isiXhosa HL Grade R - 3) goes on to suggest that any additional assessment, for example Funda Wandu and Gadr Education, should be informal and may be incorporated in the daily practice of teaching-learning (DBE: 2020c, p. 2). There is also an additional document in the DBE (2021) that provides guidelines for implementing a baseline assessment for reading in isiXhosa. This document only assesses language reading for Grade 2 and 3 learners, even though reading does not only begin in Grade 2. The document comprises activities that are stated to be essential foundational reading components that are taught daily in the classroom. These components include listening and speaking, phonics, independent reading, group-guided reading handwriting, and writing. The document emphasises that these components should be assessed so that teachers can identify children’s levels in terms of reading skills, even as emergent readers, and be in a position to identify aspects of reading that need further development.

Furthermore, as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic that affected and disrupted the academic year in 2020, the DBE responded by giving some guidelines on how School Based Assessment (SBA) should be implemented in the schools. According to the document, the focus for FP should be more on the learning, described as formative assessments as opposed to the learning of teaching, which is

described as summative assessment (DBE, 2020b). The document states that the following principles should inform assessment in FP:

- a) Takes place over a period and is on-going.
- b) Supports growth and development.
- c) Provides feedback from learning and teaching.
- d) Allows for integrated assessment.
- e) Encourages assessing a number of related concepts/content knowledge/skills within a single activity.
- f) Combines a number of different forms of assessment.
- g) Uses strategies that cater for a variety of learner needs e.g., Learners with Special Education Needs (LSEN), language, etc.
- h) Allows competence to be demonstrated in a number of ways.
- i) Is an integral part of teaching and learning.
- j) Is based on selected concepts/content knowledge/skills.
- k) Recording is against these concepts/content knowledge/skills (DBE, 2020b, p. 2).

As stated above, the CAPS policies being the main curriculum documents underscores the importance of baseline assessments in the Foundation Phase. However, the CAPS policies do not give a detailed break-down of the components of reading that should be assessed with respect to the different eleven official languages. Neither do they provide sufficient and clear guidelines. It is not explicit on what components of reading should be assessed for each of the official languages. This is problematic in the South African context where multilingualism is a reality and valued (Heugh & Stroud, (2020); Mutekwe & Sedibe, (2015); Prah, (2010); Fleisch, (2008). Prah (2010, p. 181) reiterates the importance of multilingualism in education in African societies by stating the following:

Africans should be able to benefit from this growing multilingualism and use it to their advantage in education, science, and technological development. Without doubt, the ability for

people to relate to each other in their languages makes for good social intercourse and can only be profitable to the society as a whole.

The lack of clarity regarding the guidelines for baseline assessments may lead teachers to assume that the same assessment approaches and practices apply across all official languages in spite of linguistic and sociolinguistic differences, and the socio-economic differences of South African learners. Literacy as a social practice is affected by socio-economic differences which include, but are not limited to, the types of schooling, where some of the schools are not well-resourced to facilitate the holistic development of early foundational literacy. More, the family background is a critical factor, where some learners lack exposure to reading outside the school. This is reflected in the statistics reported by (Khuluve, 2021) when he pointed out that in 2019 illiteracy rates were the highest among black South Africans compared to other race groupings. These statistics show an improved literacy practice, among black Africans, where isiXhosa language home language speakers appear to be dominant. Furthermore, the matric results of the EC have been perennially low. Consequentially, du Plessis and Marais (2015) and van der Berg et al. (2011) argue that more attention should be delegated to the FP, so that appropriate interventions are undertaken when reading results and challenges are established early in schooling because a cracked foundation is a source of poor matric results. Aspects of these programmes that are related to baseline assessments are discussed in this study.

1.2.1 What is a Baseline Assessment for reading?

A baseline assessment for reading is an oral test administered to young learners to assess their reading levels according to age and grade. Each learner is assessed individually, and ratings are recorded to capture their reading skills using a specific tool (Funda Wande, 2019). The baseline assessment for reading is administered to learners at the beginning of the year to determine any reading difficulties if any (DBE, 2011a). By identifying the level of each learner and any existing reading difficulties, the baseline assessment seeks to inform future planning and teaching strategies. According to Pretorius & Klapwijk (2016) it is important to understand the reading development continuum as well as the indicators at each stage, phase, or grade. They continue that it is important to review the different components of reading such as phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, and what aspects to focus on at each grade level. These five components of reading were similarly reported by the US National Reading Panel in 2000 as the pillars of reading that should be prioritised in the teaching and learning of reading. This report has informed or influenced international reading assessment around the world in different languages (Dowd & Bartlett, 2019).

This includes supporting and advancing learners' reading skills by ensuring that the reading books are at the right level for the age or grade level (Wildschut et al., 2016; Funda Wande, 2019).

These subsets are generally used for baseline assessments on a global level and are used in intervention efforts globally. An elaborate discussion of EGRA is to follow in this study. Scholars assert that a baseline assessment should be carried out carefully with accurately recorded information of learners and with a clear understanding of the purpose for future planning (Lindsay & Desforges, 2013; Wildschut et al., 2016). This aligns with the notion of knowing where learners are placed regarding reading development and how to further develop the skill of reading at an appropriate level. In addition, the aim of baseline assessment includes profiling individual learners' attainment, providing curriculum differentiation, and ensuring progression for each learner. This coheres with the purposes of the South African White Paper on Inclusive Education, which sets out to recognise and accommodate the diverse range of learners' needs (DoE, 2001). Learners may be in the same grade, but individually obtain different results for reading. The outcome of the baseline assessment aids in identifying learning goals and teaching strategies based on the attainment of the results from the baseline assessment (Lindsay & Desforges, 2013).

1.2.2 Baseline Assessment tools for reading

In the 2000s, reading came at the forefront of enhancing quality education globally. In 2006, USAID contracted the Research Triangle Institute (RTI) to develop an instrument to assess early grade reading. RTI took the Dynamic Indicator of Basic Literacy Skills (DIBELS) subsets which are timed when administered to learners. They comprise of the following components:

- rapid letter naming,
- letter-sound naming,
- syllable reading,
- nonsense word reading,
- familiar word reading,
- reading a short passage aloud,
- and comprehension questions based on the segment of the passage the learner managed to read in a minute.

Apart from DILBELS, there is a vast collection of diagnostic tools for assessing reading, namely the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), Early Reading Diagnostic Assessment (ERDA), Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP), Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE), Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM), Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) to name a few (Rathvon, 2004; Kaminski et al., 2002refe). For this thesis, it suffices to note but not discuss all these tools as most of them have not been used to assess reading in African languages. The prominent tool used for baseline assessment for reading in Nguni languages is EGRA. It is a diagnostic reading assessment tool that was developed in 2006 for more than one hundred languages in countries all over the world. In South Africa, the DBE piloted the EGRA tool in over 1000 schools nationally as a diagnostic reading test (2018). It was implemented in all nine provinces and all official languages from Grade 1 to 3 learners. Monitoring of EGRA implementation is through classroom visits from Departmental officials and desktop analysis of results obtained from the reading assessment (DBE, 2018). Its primary aim is to monitor children's reading progress whilst tracking if they meet the national and global literacy standards (Ardington et al., 2021; Dubeck & Gove, 2015). Jiménez et al., (2014) reports on limitations of administering the EGRA stating that as an open-source tool, it can be used inappropriately by making it an impact evaluation tool for report purposes instead of focusing on improving reading. In line, Fleisch (2018) offers some insights in his analysis of underachievement of reading assessments such as PIRLS and EGRA results in intervention programmes such as the Reading Catch-up Programme in the South African context. He states that the response to these reading under-achievements should at policy level focus more on strategies of teaching of reading in the HL and teaching of reading in general. Secondly, he states that there is a general assumption that learners in poor communities such as townships, rural areas and informal settlements perform poorly in reading for meaning or lack comprehension skills assuming that learners are able to decode. However, there is a genuine crisis of illiteracy among a high population of FP learners who transition to the Intermediate Phase (IP) without gaining any basics of reading in an alphabetic system. He alludes that both decoding, and meaning-making skills are lacking (Fleisch, 2018). It is evident that through an analysis of the tools used for HL readings, scholars offer some insight on what could be learnt at a macro level (policy making level) and micro level (school-based level).

The baseline assessment test is administered orally to one learner at a time. Each sub-task is timed for one minute and takes 15 minutes to complete for each learner. The EGRA instrument tests learners on foundational literacy skills namely:

- I. letter-sound knowledge

- II. the ability to read familiar words
- III. the ability to read words in a connected passage correctly in a minute (cwpm), this latter subtask is also referred to as oral reading fluency (ORF)
- IV. and lastly answering comprehension questions in a passage in a minute.
- V. The learner only answers comprehension questions up to the point where they stopped reading; therefore, they cannot be asked by the administrator what they did not read.

There is a distinction in the reading development for learners as they progress along with the grades, in that a learner who is a skilled reader in grade 1 does not automatically become a proficient reader in grade 3 (Ardington et al., 2020). For Nguni languages, the components that are assessed for reading progression along the grades are in a hierarchy with phonemic awareness and letter-sound knowledge being at the bottom of the hierarchy of reading. The term ‘bottom’ refers to the beginning stages of learning to read where we find learners who are ‘non-readers’, as their ability to read words is minimal (Ardington et al., 2020). The concept of ‘non-readers’ by the latter authors may be problematic as emergent literacy studies argues that at this stage learners are still viewed as readers but at their level, therefore referred to as emergent readers (Pinto et al., 2017; Connor et al., 2006). The emergent readers have minimal letter sound knowledge, and the ability to manipulate units of oral language. Due to morphology and orthography of isiXhosa being an agglutinative language, words typically have many morphemes with prefixes, infixes and suffixes (e.g. in isiXhosa: *a-ndi-dlali* (I am not playing). The manipulation of morphological affixes such as tenses, opposites, noun classes is not developed for emergent readers (Schaefer et al., 2020; Sibanda, 2009). We expect to find emergent readers in the Reception (R) grade (Ardington et al., 2021).

After the non-reader stage, the following assessment stage or level of hierarchy in the development of the reading cline is syllable reading. Learners at this stage are referred to as emergent readers and should have developed the phonological awareness skill and also acquired some letter-sound knowledge, which will enable them to blend letter-sounds to form syllables and words (Ardington et al., 2020; 2021). These learners would be assessed at the beginning of Grade 1. Their reading is expected to be effortful; meaning the reading of words may not be with speed and accuracy to form meaningful phrases (Ardington et al., 2020). *Figure 1.2* below is an example of the letter-sound knowledge that learners are expected to read aloud correctly as the administrator of the test is pointing out each letter and records the results in one minute.

b	S	i	g	V	u	a	C
H	k	L	N	e	Z	m	y
o	J	p	R	D	t	f	Q

Figure 1.2: Letter-sound knowledge component (Funda Wande, 2019)

An administrator points to each letter-sound and the learner reads each of the letter-sounds correctly. This sub-task aims to measure a learner's working memory, which is known to be a predictor of learning to read (Arrington et al., 2014). The assessment administrator points to each letter-sound for the learner to read. Where a letter is not read correctly within three seconds, the administrator is not expected to make corrections but rather they point to the next letter-sound (Funda Wande, 2019). This skill is particularly important in the developmental reading progression from being a non-reader to a skilled reader at the end of the Foundation Phase based on the national reading strategy (Botha, 2008).

In administering a phonological awareness sub-task, learners at this stage are expected to have knowledge of the beginning and end sounds of unrelated words, as the administrator reads aloud each word. *Figure 1.3* below illustrates this example where learners need to identify the correct sounds read and asked by the administrator.

biza	nini	imoto	vala	wam
lala	idolo	iti	zoba	ileli
xoxa	ulele	vuka	isisu	izolo
thatha	chuba	hleka	ncuma	uyantywila

Figure 1.3: IsiXhosa Phonological awareness subtask in Grade 1 (Funda Wande, 2019)

According to the Benchmarking of early grade reading in Nguni languages report, it was established that isiXhosa learners' letter-sound knowledge at the beginning of Grade 1 started with a median of 0 and progressed to an average of 24 correct words per minute (cwpw) by the end of the grade (Ardington

et al., 2020; 2021). The authors acknowledged the following reading threshold for Grade 1 -3 Nguni language readers:

1. By the end of Grade 1, all learners should be sounding out at least 40 letter-sounds per minute
2. By the end of Grade 2, all learners should be able to read at least 20 words correct per minute in a passage.
3. By the end of Grade 3, all learners should be able to read 35 words correct in a minute when reading a passage (connected text).

The next phase in the development of reading proficiency in Nguni language learners is ‘word reading with increased speed, fluency, and accuracy. At this stage, learners are expected to ‘crack’ the alphabetic code. This enables learners to decode syllables and words and read words in passages or standalone words with accuracy and speed, and they may not necessarily articulate meaning from the words and/or passages. Ardington et al. (2020) suggest that the reasons for not articulating basic meaning even though words or passages are read accurately is that learners do not have enough working memory to construct meaning. Working memory refers to the ability to store information while simultaneously processing information and it is considered as one of the pre-indicators of reading comprehension for children (Nouwens et al., 2017). In the word reading phase, where over 95% of words are read or sounded out correctly, the more learners get exposed to reading, the more they progress to reading words with automaticity and make meaningful connections to the text read (Snow, 2017; Ardington et al., 2020; Ardington et al., 2021). Ardington et al. (2020) suggest this stage or level to be appropriate for learners in Grade 2.

The Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) also has a subtask of passage reading. Learners are tasked with reading the passage in a minute with teachers recording the correct words read per minute. It is against this background that this exploratory case study seeks to ascertain the tools used by teachers to assess reading in isiXhosa the components thereof as well as their alignment to the FP language curricular in two quintile 1 schools in Makhanda District in the, Eastern Cape Province. Since 1996, public schools in South Africa have been classified according to quintiles based on the socio-economic attributes of the community in which they are situated. Funding is allocated according to socioeconomic status (SES), with poorer schools receiving more financial support (Taylor & Yu, 2009). The South African Schools Act (SASA) (No. 84 of 1996) classifies schools that are under quintile 1, 2, and 3 as exempted from paying school fees, whereas quintile 4 and 5 schools are permitted

to generate their revenue through charging school fees because they receive less funding from the provincial education department. These two schools are convenient as research sites for

or this study, due to their location, the language of teaching, which is isiXhosa, the literacy intervention they receive, as well as being quintile 1 and/or non-fee paying schools.

1.3 Rationale of the study

Learning to read in the Foundation Phase is a precursor to reading to learn in the successive educational phases. Accordingly, this study makes a modest contribution towards addressing the education crisis in South Africa (see Chapter 2, section 2.4) by exploring the use of baseline assessment for reading in isiXhosa as a way of building a solid literacy foundation for future learning. However, the study is not only significant in terms of shedding light on baseline assessment as an integral procedure in Foundation Phase literacy development, specifically on the baseline assessment tools and their impact on pedagogical practices for learners and teachers. It also contributes towards scholarship on mother-tongue literacy and multilingualism in South African education. The rationale of this study is, therefore, derived from curriculum imperatives on literacy and baseline assessments, South Africa's educational and literacy crisis, particularly in the Eastern Cape, as well as literacy interventions in the province. An elaboration of each of these three contextual issues is illustrated below.

1.3.1 Educational and literacy issues in SA and Eastern Cape Province

South African literacy research has generally painted a grim picture of the literacy situation in the country. In particular, scholars (Fleisch, 2008; Spaull et al., 2020; Snow, 2017; Diemer *et al.*, 2015; Howie et al., 2012; Spaull, 2013) show that African language speaking learners from disadvantaged backgrounds fall below the age/grade norms in their early years of schooling regarding reading. Furthermore, South African learners cannot read for meaning by the end of Grade 3. Between 2011 and 2014, less than one third of all Grade 3s passed their numeracy and literacy Annual National Assessments (ANA) at the 50 per cent level for competency (Govender & Hugo, 2020). The Progress in International Reading Literacy Studies (PIRLS) (international study) in 2016 revealed that young South African learners show very low literacy levels compared to other countries, including the most basic levels of reading comprehension, even when tested in their home language (Howie et al., 2012;).

South Africa saw no progress between 2011 and 2016 in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) programme, which tests Grade 4 reading competencies with 78%.

In the same vein, Snow (2017) argues that children learning alphabetic systems need some explicit help to figure out which letters represent which sound to aid in reading and spelling words. Further, learners should get a lot of practice in reading a variety of texts to assist in reading with speed and accuracy, and aid in comprehension skills. Additionally, Spaul (2019) argues that to achieve this goal of reading success in African languages, there needs to be an understanding of what reading entails based on each language and how it is taught, developed, and measured. In measuring reading achievements, teachers and policymakers need to have a common understanding of the reading failures in African languages, by grasping where the problem lies, and when it occurs, and how best to correct this problem (De Vos et al., 2014; Spaul, 2019). One way would be an in-depth analysis of reading achievements by means of analysing the tools used to assess reading in African languages. This will be despite whether these tools are appropriate in measuring reading levels in each language. Again, there will be a need to identify, which components of reading learners struggle with, and how to apply appropriate teaching methodologies and resources in curbing these challenges for learners to read at appropriate grade level, and with meaning.

The reading culture among speakers of African languages, particularly in the mother tongue, is poor; with learners receiving scores lower than the fifty-percentile pass mark (Pretorius & Naude, 2010). Based on the PIRLS 2016 data, learners who wrote the test in English achieved the highest test language and the second-lowest performing language was isiXhosa.

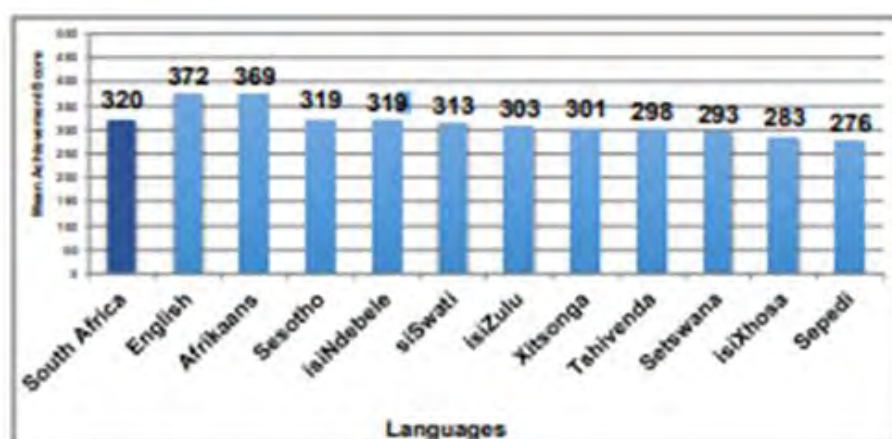


Figure 1.4: South Africa learner performance in PIRLS 2016 by Language of the test (Howie et al., 2017)

As illustrated in *Figure 1.2*, there is a significant difference between English and isiXhosa regarding performance, even though isiXhosa is the second most widely spoken language in the country (Census, 2011). This is problematic and leaves questions about the status of this African language in the South African schooling system. The English language receives prestige as the ‘global language’ since it is widely spoken in most parts of the world due to the history of the British colonial powers and the emergence of economic power of the United States (Crystal, 2003 cited in Khaled 2020, p. 73). The language is also described as a lingua franca, which is a language that is used for communication for speakers of other languages (Khaled, 2020). Therefore, it is not surprising that it receives the prestige that it does in South Africa to date and consequently leaves African Languages ‘sidelined’ by receiving less status and prestige as reflected on the performance results in *Figure 1.2*.

The consequences of such a state of literacy and reading culture are far-reaching. Learners who fail to develop certain mother-tongue competencies usually struggle to develop similar competencies in other languages, which affects their overall educational experience (Fleisch, 2008). In 2011, less than one-third of Grade 3s passed their numeracy and literacy Annual National Assessments (ANA) at the 50% level for competency, and similarly, in 2016 the Progress in International Reading Literacy Studies (PIRLS) revealed that 78% of Grade 4 Eastern Cape learners could not read for meaning (Howie et al., 2012). For this reason, Spaul (2016) argues that the educational crisis shown by low scores in the matric results in South Africa, where the Eastern Cape is one of the worst performing provinces, starts with low literacy levels prior to the language switch in Grade 4. It is in the light of South Africa’s educational crisis, particularly early reading literacy challenges and the paucity of effective interventions for disadvantaged speakers of African languages that this study focuses on the use of baselines assessments in the teaching of isiXhosa FP reading.

1.3.2 Under-researched baseline assessment tools for African languages

Various organisations in South Africa adopted the EGRA tool to perform baseline assessments at schools across South Africa. The Volkswagen Legacy Literacy Project in Uitenhage, the External Impact Evaluation of School Powered Schools (SPS), the Early Grade Reading Studies II (EGRAS II), Leadership Literacy Project, and Zenex Foundation Literacy Project are all examples where the EGRA tool was used to assess foundational literacy in isiXhosa (Harrison et al., 2016). However, like the DIBELS tool, the EGRA tool’s effectiveness depends on its successful adaptation to match the linguistic structural features of isiXhosa. For example, the isiXhosa phonic system has long multisyllabic words incorporating blends and di- and trigraphs (de Vos et al, 2014; Pretorius, 2019). On the contrary, isiXhosa has what is referred to as a transparent orthography, meaning that there are

no multiple ways of recognising a sound (de Vos et al., 2014). For instance, the ‘ph’ sound is recognized as in ‘phila’ (live) in isiXhosa, compared to ‘philosophy’ in English, which has an opaque orthography. Therefore, an assessment tool translated from English to isiXhosa needs to be examined carefully to ascertain whether it matches the features of the target language. Scholars such as Spaull, Pretorius and Mohohlwane (2020), Diemer (2016), de Vos et al., (2014) and Abadzi (2008) argue for language-specific ways in assessing reading in African languages to accommodate their language structures.

Furthermore, Trudell and Schroeder (2007) are equally concerned with the use of literacy teaching and assessment approaches that originate from European contexts and are designed for European languages. They assert that reading is a psycholinguistic and social process whose development is sensitive to specific linguistic, social, and cultural contexts, which is consistent with the tenets of sociocultural theories of education (Trudell & Schroeder, 2007). Sensitivity to these factors should be considered by policy makers, teachers, and relevant stakeholders in assisting isiXhosa learners who have in various international and national literacy assessments performed poorly.

According to Pretorius and Klapwijk (2016), foundational literacy expectations include that, ‘by the end of Grade 3, children must be able to read accurately, at a steady pace and with meaning and enjoyment’. To do this, children need to be able to decode words in their respective languages (Snow, 2017; Wilsenach, 2013). Unlike in English, tools for assessing literacy in African languages are under-researched (Spaull et al., 2020; Alcock & Ngorosho 2003, 2007; de Sousa, Greenop, & Fry, 2011; Diemer, 2016). In English, there are various Foundation Phase literacy assessment tools for reading and most of them are easily accessible on the internet. For instance, DIBELS is a set of procedures and measures for assessing the acquisition of early literacy skills. It is designed to regularly monitor the development of early literacy and early reading skills (Good & Kaminiski, 1998), stipulating that, by the end of Grade 1, a competent reader reads about 53 words per min (Hasbrouck & Tindal 2006). This prescription may not work well for African languages with an agglutinative morphology in which a complete and meaningful statement may be syntactically expressed in one word (Pretorius, 2019). The English sentence ‘I love you’, made up of three words is equivalent to one complex word in isiXhosa, ‘Ndiyakuthanda’. Thus, one cannot simply transfer reading benchmarks from English due to differences in the phonological, morphological, and orthographical features of African languages (Ardington et al., 2020, p. 17).

Along the same line, another popular tool is the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), developed in 2006, translated into more than 100 languages, and used in over 65 countries (RTI, 2009; 2011;

2013). In South Africa, the DBE piloted the EGRA tool in over 1000 schools nationally as a diagnostic reading test. One of the tool's functions is identifying and measuring basic literacy skills in typically achieving and struggling learners to serve as a baseline for early reading acquisition (Dubeck, 2015). It assesses four literacy skills namely, knowledge of letter sounds, the ability to read a list of familiar words, the ability to read words in a connected passage with accuracy and fluency (referred to as Oral Reading Fluency), and the ability to answer some oral comprehension questions in order to determine whether individual learners understood what they read. In the US, the National Reading Panel (2000) identified five pivotal components for reading, namely phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension which are integrated or adapted in the EGRA tool. Phonological/phonemic awareness refers to the ability of children to listen to each unit of a sound in a word (Schaefer et al., 2020). This can be taught through manipulating sounds orally either by ways of segmenting or blending, substitution or deletion of sounds, though it is not limited to these latter methods (de Vos et al., 2014). Phonics is defined as the symbolic representation of letter sounds in a written text in an alphabetic language. IsiXhosa has a one-to-one letter to sound correspondence, which is referred to as a transparent orthography in an alphabetic language system. In languages such as Spanish and Finnish with regular orthographies that are similar to those of African languages, children in grade 1 read faster and accurately. Due to these latter similarities, it is an assumed possibility to have similar reading success among African languages (Aro & Wimmer, 2003 cited in Spaull & Pretorius, 2019; Diaries & Probert, 2020). On the contrary, this is not the case with isiXhosa language speakers based on the ANAs, PIRLS, and SACMEQ assessments results.

1.4 Problem statement

The guidelines in the CAPS document provide teachers with essential data about the baseline literacy and numeracy capabilities of learners, thereby giving a clear picture of the level of each learner and informing their planning for the year (DBE, 2012). However, in terms of literacy, it does not explicitly explain the components of reading that should be assessed concerning the 11 official languages. The Language in Education Policy (LiEP) was developed and adopted to recognise the different home languages and create opportunities for learners to be taught in their home language from Grades 1 to 3. The policy was published to promote the use of home language as a language of learning and teaching (LoLT), guided by the South African Schools Act 1996(b) with legislation aimed at promoting multilingualism, the development of the official languages, and respect for all languages used in the country (DoE, 1997). The LiEP should be incorporated in the curriculum, with tools such as the baseline assessment for reading as language specific. It is because of clarity leads teachers to

assume that the same assessment approaches and practices apply across all official languages despite their linguistic and sociolinguistic differences. Guidelines for teachers should not be vague and left open to various interpretations regarding components assessing reading for learners. This study seeks to answer descriptive and exploratory questions around the literacy practices in the isiXhosa FP, mainly Grade 3 with a focus on the teachers' understanding of baseline assessments for reading and the use of the results obtained.

1.5 Research questions and objectives

This study seeks to answer the following research questions in order to understand critical issues around reading baseline assessment for Foundation Phase in isiXhosa:

1. Which tools are used to conduct baseline assessments for isiXhosa reading in FP?
2. What are the specific components and focus of the baseline assessments tools for reading in isiXhosa FP?
3. What are teachers' pedagogical responsiveness to baseline assessments data of learners with respect to isiXhosa reading in the FP?

In line with the above questions, the overarching aim of this thesis is to interrogate the use and role of baseline assessments and their effectiveness as an integral part of pedagogical practice for teaching isiXhosa reading in FP. Its specific objectives are:

1. To identify and assess tools that are used to conduct baseline assessments for isiXhosa reading in FP
2. To examine the specific components and focus of baseline assessments for reading in isiXhosa FP
3. To examine the teachers' responsiveness to baseline assessment data in informing their curriculum practices with respect to FP isiXhosa reading

1.6 Thesis outline

Chapter 1 provides the background and rationale for my research, listing the research questions that the study seeks to answer. The literacy performance in the South African education system, focusing on isiXhosa language is described and how it is burdened by the on-going underperformance in reading in international and national assessments.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of relevant literature in relation to reading acquisition focusing on isiXhosa language. It presents the literacy performance in South Africa and specifically in the Eastern Cape Province regarding the isiXhosa language. Furthermore, within assessments, it focuses on the baseline assessments used for reading in FP, and the different tools to assess reading proficiency in FP.

Chapter 3 is a discussion of the conceptual and theoretical framework of the study.

Chapter 4 describes the research design and methodology employed and justifies the research choices made. The study used a mixed method approach to fashion a narrative case study research design. The sources of data in this study are questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and participatory observation. The chapter concludes with a discussion of key methodological issues pertaining to ethics and the validity and reliability of data.

Chapter 5 discusses the qualitative and quantitative findings emerging from the data that were collected through survey questionnaires, semi-structured interviews with Grade 2 and 3 teachers and language subject advisor. It also presents descriptive and statistical analyses of the Grade 2 and 3 learners' early reading skills in term 1 and term 3. The data presented and discussed in this chapter addresses the three research questions in this study.

Chapter 6 concludes the thesis, providing an overview of the study before highlighting the key findings of the research, its contribution and its limitations. Recommendations are made and suggestions offered for further research in home language education in FP focusing on explicitly articulating language policy for reading purposes at a micro-level (classroom level).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the relevant literature on reading acquisition and baseline assessment, with a focus on isiXhosa language in the Foundation Phase. Central to this research is an understanding of the literacy in the South African context and the baseline assessment tools and their compatibility with African languages, specifically isiXhosa. The chapter will also look at how scholars such as Ardington et al. (2020; 2021), Govender and Hugo (2020) and de Vos (2019) define reading and its implications on isiXhosa language focusing on its linguistic features. The discussion will be presented in light of the educational and literacy issues in the Eastern Cape Province, by looking at how the EC has performed in various International and National literacy assessments. The chapter will also present and discuss previous research on literacy issues and literacy interventions in the EC.

In addition, it shed light on how different scholars such as (Hoffman, 2012; Schaefer et al., 2020; Probert, 2019; Rees, 2016) view African languages reading assessment tools, and an analysis of the reading achievements. These scholars explore the linguistic and social aspects of a language which impacts on reading pedagogies. For this study, the focus will be in relation to African languages, with special emphasis on the linguistic structure of isiXhosa language. Lastly, it discusses the impact of external interventions such as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in an attempt to improve reading literacy practices for teachers and learners in schools.

2.2 What is reading?

Reading as a concept is broad (Alexander & Fox, 2004). There are similar and divergent views from scholars regarding how children learn to read. There has been considerable international debate about the meaning of 'reading' and 'literacy'. Some of the definitions of reading include:

Reading involves the full set of linguistic skills, such as parsing, bridging, and discourse building; decoding in the absence of these skills is not reading (Hoover et al., 1990, p. 128).

Reading is a number of interactive processes between the reader and the text, in which readers use their knowledge to build, to create, and to construct meaning (Grabe, 2009, p. 21).

Reading is a multifaceted process involving word recognition, comprehension, fluency, and motivation (Leipzig, 2001).

Reading theories have argued about the definitions, and these definitions are constantly evolving from the 1950s to date (Alexander & Fox: 2004, p. 34). The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), the body that conducts the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) globally, defines reading literacy as:

The ability to understand and use those written language forms required by society and/or valued by the individual. Young readers can construct meaning from a variety of texts. They read to learn, to participate in communities of readers in school and everyday life, and for enjoyment (Mullis et al., 2015, p. 12).

This definition asserts the importance of basic literacy as a requisite for academic learning and for young learners in the future to contribute to economic development and for one's individual development (Govender & Hugo, 2020; Peregoy & Boyle 2000; Trudell et al. 2012; Wagner 2010). Literacy in this study is treated as the umbrella term under which reading falls. This means that reading is treated as a component of literacy or the skill of being literate.

Again, Govender and Hugo (2020) aver that the influence of advances in technology has led to a proliferation of literacies, which are referred to as multiliteracies. The multiliteracy theory suggests that the definition of reading should include linguistic and cultural contexts, and also extend to include the diverse mediums of communication available in which people choose and make meaning of the text (Govender & Hugo, 2020). This theory aligns with features of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory which views reading as a social practice. The premise for this study is that it would be problematic to apply similar reading assessment approaches and use the same tools for all official South African languages. This is problematic because; the linguistic features of languages the oral traditions which undergird literacy in African contexts, and learners' lived experiences are different. Consequently, this may have an impact on the process of learning to read and how they are assessed.

While children acquire oral language naturally, children are taught the skill of reading (Spaull, 2019). It is important to understand the language in the context or environment of the child, the cognitive processes, essentially the worldview of the child that is being taught the reading skill. Furthermore, it is important to understand that there are stages of reading development towards reading for comprehension (Snow, 2017). Similarly, Ardington et al. (2020) assert that reading is hierarchical. In other words, the lower-level components and representation are necessary for the higher-order components. An example of a lower component of reading is letter-sound knowledge, and a higher-order reading component is reading fluently and with comprehension (Ardington et al., 2020). These

stages of reading development occur differently, based on the language features, contextual factors such as the cognitive level at each stage of the reading development. Focusing on the language features of isiXhosa at each developmental stage of reading, this essentially means the assessment of reading proficiency will need to take into account these language features, at each developmental level of reading. The level of reading assessment should be appropriate at grade level and take into account the features of the language. The National Framework for the Teaching of Reading in African Languages in the FP (DBE, 2020d) provides guidelines on how to assess reading focusing on identifying letter sound relations, building of words using the letter sounds learnt and learners being able to recognise consonant clusters such as digraphs and trigraphs in isiXhosa.

To read and write, learners must develop skills ranging from the basic lower-level processes involved in decoding the print to higher-level skills incorporating word recognition with automaticity (reading words with accuracy, speed accuracy, and tone of voice), having a rich vocabulary, reading words with meaning and comprehension. And even skills of text representation and integration of ideas with the learners' holistic knowledge. The knowledge that a reader brings to the reading process affects reading comprehension, which contextualizes reading development for individuals (Govender & Hugo, 2020; Snow, 2017; Spaul, 2013).

Further, The President of the Republic of South Africa reiterated that 'Every child in South Africa must learn to read for meaning by the end of Grade 3' as one of the goals in the national address in 2019 (RESEP, 2019). Reading for meaning is essential and aligns with the comprehension reading pillar set by National Frameworks for Teaching of Reading in African Languages in the FP (DBE, 2020d), South African National Development vision for 2030 (2012), and 2022 Background report for the National reading panel for 2030 (Spaul, 2022), the South African Human Rights Commission (2021) and other South African educational policy documents. In the same vein, Snow (2017) describes reading comprehension as the ability to connect text in print form efficiently with meaning. This means comprehension is linked to the speed at which a reader reads. Furthermore, Ardington et al. (2021) describe the relationship between fluency and comprehension within the passage of reading in isiXhosa FP. The authors suggest teachers should focus on teaching decoding skills for learners who are able to read around 20 correct words per minute (cwpm). For learners who are able to read above 35 cwpm, the focus should be developing comprehension skills. These latter reading thresholds are suggested to be set in the appropriate context of Nguni languages, so that they are not too low or too high for the language and appropriate for the curriculum demands.

2.3 Assessment of reading in South Africa

The most prominent international comparative assessment study that South Africa participates in is the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). The PIRLS assesses reading to Grade 4 and 5 learners every five years in all the official South African languages. The grade 4 learners are tested at a significant stage, as they would be transitioning from Foundation Phase to Intermediate Phase. Scholars such as Govender & Hugo, 2020; Mullis et al., 2015 argue that FP learners are ‘taught to read’, whilst IP learners are expected to ‘read to learn’. However, the binary between learning to read in FP and reading to learn in the proceeding grades may be flawed, as learners do both learning to read and reading to learn in FP. When FP learners are read stories, either fiction or non-fiction, they are reading to learn about concepts about the body, families, plants, colours, animals etc. For FP Lifeskills, the content and concept of beginning knowledge draws from history, geography, natural sciences and technology, learners are reading texts that require them to learn about the environment and basic science skills (DBE, 2011b).

One of the aims of the PIRLS international comparative study is to check how well South African grade 4 learners read in comparison to their international peers. At a national level, the comparison is through the eleven official languages in South Africa. Learners are tested in their language of learning and teaching (LoLT) in the Foundation Phase, which would have been the home language of their school. In South Africa, PIRLS consistently reports the poor performance of literacy of learners, with the Eastern Cape being among the worst performing provinces. The last report in 2016 reported that 78% of grade 4 learners could not read for meaning even in their home language (Govender & Hugo, 2020; Spaul & Pretorius, 2019; Mullins et al., 2019). Performing poorly in reading in the ‘transition’ stage (Grade 4) highlights how fundamental basics of reading were not achieved. The grade 4 learners are tested at a significant stage, as they would be transitioning from Foundation Phase to Intermediate Phase. Learners will struggle to engage with complex academic content in the grades ahead if they are unable to read in FP (Govender & Hugo, 2020).

The poor literacy results reported in the 2016 PIRLS (see *Figure 2.1*) inform us that isiXhosa learners are not developed readers, reflecting it as one of the lowest-performing languages in South Africa.

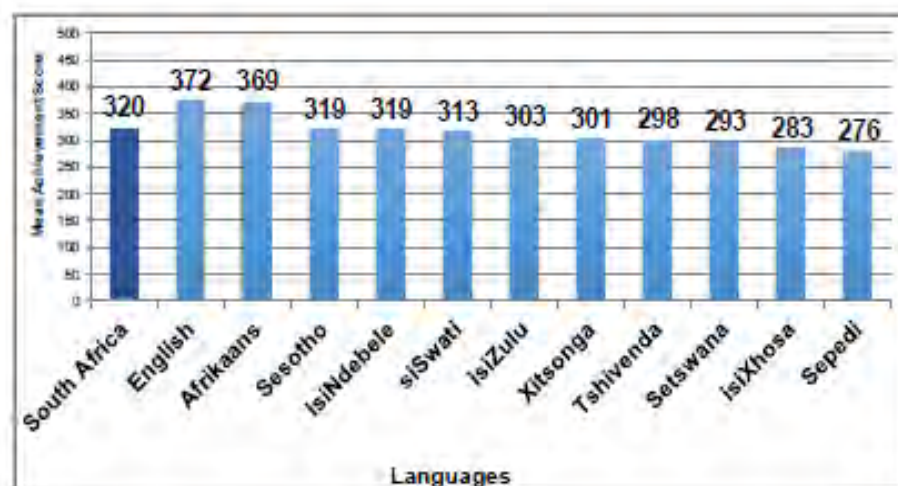


Figure 2.1: Grade 4 PIRLS Literacy achievement by the language of the test (Howie et al. 2017)

The process of the PIRLS assessment is that learners are tested in the LoLT used in FP in their schools. Furthermore, they are each given an answering booklet with two passages, a fictional and non-fictional passage. Each passage has 13 - 15 questions (Howie et al., 2017). The purpose of these two genres of passages is:

- to obtain and use information (non-fictional passage).
- to test learners' comprehension processes which would require learners to retrieve information in the text and answer literal questions, make inferences, and evaluate the content (fictional passage).

In 2021, the PIRLS Assessment framework intended on transitioning to a digital format even though the traditional pen and paper were offered. Despite the digital format, South Africa is also reported to have participated in the assessment, even though the report of the results is set to be published in 2022. This report will be significant in ascertaining how isiXhosa home language learners performed in the EC with reference to this study, taking into account the socio-economic and contextual factors of quintile 1 schools. It should be noted that quintiles 1 to 3 schools are no-fee paying schools and are allocated a higher percentage in the budget. Quintile one is the 'poorest' quintile. The EC province has the highest percentage of schools in quintile 1 to 3 in the country; hence it is referred to as a poor province (Ncanywa, 2015). The online informational reading was introduced in 2016 despite being an optional component in 2021. These computer-based assessments will assess how well learners read, interpret and critique online information in a setting that looks and feels like the internet (Mullis et al., 2019).

The 2021 assessment was postponed to August 2021 due to the restrictions of the COVID 19 pandemic and the report of the results is set to be released in December 2022 (Meinck et al., 2022). The PIRLS Assessment framework intended on transitioning to a digital format even though the traditional pen and paper will be offered. These computer-based assessments are reported to assess how well learners read, interpret and critique online information in a setting that looks and feels like the internet (Mullins et al., 2019).

Moreover, South Africa participated in the Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) which assesses learners' achievement levels in literacy and numeracy, and it is administered only to Grade 6 learners every 7 years, for example, 2000, 2007, and 2013 (Govender & Hugo, 2020; DBE, 2010). South Africa had poor reading results, with learners being unable to read in Grade 6. The table below shows the number of learners unable to read in percentage per province.

Provinces	% Non-readers
Eastern Cape	38.6
Free State	22.3
Gauteng	11.6
KwaZulu-Natal	28.4
Limpopo	49
Mpumalanga	28.4
Northern Cape	21.4
North West	21.9
Western Cape	5.1
South Africa	27.2

Figure 2.2: Percentage of learners who are emergent readers per province (DBE, 2010)

At a national level from 2008 to 2009, the Department of Basic Education introduced a systemic evaluation called the Annual National Assessment (ANA) to monitor numeracy and literacy in Grades 1, 2, 3, 6, and 9 as a trial run, to expose teachers to better assessment practices (DBE, 2011a; Govender & Hugo, 2020). The content that was assessed was based on the first three terms of the CAPS

curriculum. The purpose was to highlight the lagging areas in numeracy, literacy, knowledge, and skills (DBE, 2011a). The results reflected that learners participating were inadequately equipped (DBE, 2015). The key weakness areas were summarised into the following categories:

1. The majority of learners cannot read with comprehension.
2. Many learners are not able to produce meaningful written outputs.
3. Learners cannot make correct inferences from the given information in a text.
4. Learners' knowledge of grammar is very limited.
5. Learners struggle to spell frequently used words correctly (DBE, 2013).

Some scholars expressed some concerns about the administration of the assessments at the schools. Firstly, concerns were based on the content and the level of the assessment. For example, Spaul (2015) wrote that the ANAs showed no real progressions between the different grades, but were rather focused on content covered already, and complexity. Secondly, the assessment encouraged teachers to teach the content that was expected on the assessment, therefore ignoring the socio-cultural aspect of teaching learners' literacy, and reading skills. For example, van der Berg (2015) noted that the ANAs was used as a diagnostic measure for reading whereas there was no real evidence of tracking individual learners in the respective grades or years ahead. Thirdly, the assessment encouraged memorisation and rote learning, a similar concept of 'barking at a text' in reading. Fourthly, there was lack of variety in the range of questions. Lastly, the amount of administration required from teachers (Govender & Hugo, 2020; Spaul, 2016; 2015; van der Berg, 2015) was overwhelming.

It was reported by scholars such as Govender and Hugo (2020) and Spaul (2016) that educators would give the assessment script to learners as homework. Some teachers who invigilated their classes in Grade 1 and 2 would write the answers on the board. This not only showed the lack of adequacy of the assessment but the insecurity of teachers around assessments. Unions for teachers opposed ANA assessment practice and pushed for it to be discontinued, which eventually happened in 2015 (Govender & Hugo, 2020; Spaul, 2016; van der Berg, 2015).

The issues of teaching for assessment that were reported in ANAs were also highlighted in the administration of the EGRA assessment in Liberia. Teachers were giving learners practice materials to prepare for the baseline assessment (Hoffman, 2012). This defeats the purpose of baseline assessment. If learners are trained for the baseline assessment, it will be difficult for teachers to genuinely know each learner's reading developmental milestone so that learners can be skilled readers.

The purpose of the baseline assessment should not be a comparison of high scores attained in these subtests but to attain a genuine goal of assisting learners to become skilled readers.

In a benchmarking early grade reading skills in Nguni languages report, five studies used the EGRA tool in assessing foundational literacy skills. The five studies were the Story Powered Schools Evaluation (SPS), Early Grade Reading Study II (EGRA II), Funda Wande Evaluation (FW), Leadership for Literacy Project, and Zenex Foundation Literacy Project. The data to establish these benchmarks were generated from learners from over 16 400 non-fee-paying schools (quintile 1 - 3). The reading assessment focussed on 3 Nguni languages, namely, isiXhosa, isiZulu, and siSwati. *Figure 2.3* shows the Nguni language(s) and grade each study focused on.

Study	Grade	Language	No. schools	No. of learners*
SPS	Grades 2-5	isiZulu isiXhosa	188 170	5371 5002
EGRS II	Grade 1-3	isiZulu siSwati	49 131	969 2358
FW	Grade 1 and 2	isiXhosa	59	1187
LFL	Grade 3 and 6	isiZulu	42	510
Zenlit	Grades 1-3 Grades 1-3	isiZulu isiXhosa	12 10	538 450

Figure 2.3: Five studies used to establish Nguni languages reading thresholds

The report (Ardington et al., 2020) presents the following findings and comments:

1. Most learners enter Grade 1 with no knowledge of letter sound even though they have attended the Reception grade. If learners are unable to acquire this foundational literacy component in Grade 1 and 2, it is unlikely they will move beyond the reading development continuum.
2. Learners experience difficulty in reading complex consonant sequences such as digraphs and trigraphs (eg. hl, ngw) which are sounds or linguistic features in isiXhosa and the other Nguni languages in the report. The curriculum does not include the teaching of complex consonant sequences in Grade 1, which occur in texts read in Grade 1.
3. For the Oral Reading Fluency component, learners can read 19 to 25 correct words per minute.

4. For the Oral reading comprehension component, they observed that learners could not comprehend text even if they performed at a high level of fluency (Ardington et al., 2020, p. vii).

Many tools used to assess reading have their own limitations. The major limitation of the EGRA tool is that it is a clone of DIBELS (Hoffman, 2012). It has striking similarities with the DIBELS tool used to assess English language reading to young learners. It also has similar subsets, and it tests learners' per task for a minute. Scholars like Trudel and Schroener (2012) have criticised material developers of the EGRA tool for not having the confidence in their ability to develop methods that suit sociocultural and linguistic contexts in African languages. The developers of the tool merely translate the tools from English to an African language. Not only, even methodologies used to teach English may not apply to African language contexts.

It is against this background that, Dowd and Bartlett (2019) question this idea that correct words per minute can measure comprehension. Learners are only asked comprehension questions based on the passage they managed to read in that one minute. The authors agree to some level that comprehension does require speed. Furthermore, Nguni languages require more attention to syllables and practice of remembering long strings of syllables (Schaefer et al., 2020; Diemer et al., 2016; DBE, 2020d). A learner may be a slower reader but can comprehend well if they are not timed as per the prescript of conducting an EGRA. The authors argue that there is an over-reliance on the concept of correct words per minute (cwpm).

2.4 The influence of language structure on reading acquisition

De Vos et al. (2014) argue that in the South Africa context, the focus on African literacy is at a macro level with a focus on classroom practice and language policy instead of focusing on the micro-linguistics aspects of reading. Accordingly, de Vos et al. (2014) focus on the micro-linguistic aspect or component of reading, namely phonological awareness in isiXhosa is vitally important. Phonological awareness is one component of literacy or reading process development. The authors suggest this aspect of micro-literacy and should be addressed by focusing on the most suitable method of introducing consonants / vowels. A suitably simple approach of introducing consonant blends and complex consonant clusters is also needed. In addition, efforts should be made to teach age appropriate and culturally relevant vocabulary, to introduce letters and sounds, grade-appropriate word lists and age-appropriate themes for the Foundation Phase.

Reading development encompasses several factors and processes. In addition, Ardington et al. (2020) assert that reading is hierarchical, interactive, and also dynamic. This means the development of lower-level components and representation of the reading development process is important for the higher-order and representations. For this study, the focus of the lower and higher-order components of reading development will be namely, phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000).

From the eleven South African official languages, nine belong to the Southern Bantu African languages family. In South African political history during apartheid, the term ‘Southern Bantu Africans’ referred to blacks in which languages were divided into four categories, namely, Nguni, Sotho, Venda and Tsonga languages (Web et al., 2010). Within this larger grouping is a sub-group of the Nguni language family, consisting of isiXhosa, isiZulu, isiNdebele, and siSwati with transparent orthographies (Spaull & Pretorius, 2019; van Rooy & Pretorius, 2013). Further, Snow (2017) argues that orthographies are different according to differences in the sounds and structure of languages. IsiXhosa has a transparent orthography, meaning that there are no multiple ways of recognising a sound in print (De Vos et al., 2014; Snow, 2017). Hence, the ‘ph’ sound is recognized as in ‘phila’ (live) in isiXhosa, as opposed to ‘philosophy’ in English, which has an opaque orthography. Orthographies with an opaque writing system such as English change depending on their function in the sentence or the phrase. They can have silent letters or have letters representing different sounds (Francisco et al., 2006). For example, the letter sound /c/ in cat remains represented as /c/ and ‘ceiling’ represents the sound /s/. The letter /c/ represents the same sound in isiXhosa regardless of the word or phrase it is used in. There is emphasis by various scholars for language-specific methodologies in teaching and assessing reading (Spaull et al., 2020; Mtsatse, 2018; Diemer et al., 2015; Trudell and Schroedner, 2007). One cannot transfer reading methodologies, and assessment methods from English to African languages, due to the phonological, morphological, and syntactic features of African languages (Ardington et al., 2020).

Bantu languages are agglutinative in nature which means that a whole sentence can be expressed in a single word (Louwrens & Poulos 2006, Prinsloo 2009, Van Wyk 1995). The agglutinative nature of the isiXhosa language means suffixes and/or prefixes are joined together to a stem of a word. For example, *umalumekazi* means aunt in English. The ‘u’ represents the prefix, ‘malume’ represents the stem, and ‘kazi’ represents the suffix and also explains the pronoun. Similarly, another example is the word, *umntwana* (a child). The ‘um’ represents the prefix, ‘mntwana’ represents the stem or root, and

‘**abantwana**’ is the plural of the word, with ‘**aba**’ representing the prefix and change to the meaning of the word.

Furthermore, isiXhosa language structure is also referred to as conjunctive, meaning morphemes (smallest unit or part of a word that has meaning) are joined together to form one single written word (Ardington, 2020; Snow, 2017; Probert & de Vos, 2016, Probert, 2019). For example, *ndiyabaleka*, ‘*ndi*’ represents the prefix, ‘*ya*’ represents the tense (present) of the word, and ‘*baleka*’ is the suffix. The example shows the conjunctive structure of isiXhosa, with morphemes, joined together to form one word. In English, which is regarded as a disjunctive language, the word ‘*ndiyabaleka*’ is expressed or written as three words, ‘I am running’. In disjunctive languages, such as Sesotho and SeTswana, morphemes are expressed as single words, as the latter example demonstrates (Ardington et al., 2020).

The isiXhosa language has a phonic system that has long multisyllabic words incorporating blends and di- and trigraphs (Probert & de Vos, 2016; Pretorius, 2019), for example, *ihlwempu*, *inkcenkce*, *indlulamithi*, *ingxolo*, *khwela*, *krwempa*, *krwitsha* in contrast to the simple graphemes and short words for English (e.g. -at, -et, -it, -ot, -ut, h-en, pen, tin, hot, hop, etc (Bikitsha and Katz, 2013; de Vos, 2014). More, Bigozzi et al. (2016) assert that in a language such as isiXhosa with words with complex graphemes as demonstrated in the former example, with multiple letters corresponding to one sound may have an influence on learners’ decoding as well as reading development. The differences in language structures of isiXhosa and English for example will influence how children are taught to read and are assessed at grade-appropriate levels. This resonates with Trudell & Schroeder's (2007: 165) argument for reading methodologies in African languages, to match its linguistic and orthographic features instead of being influenced by European and traditional Western reading methods.

Reading is a process of oral speech in written form or text (Ziegler and Gaswami, 2005). As well, Spaul & Pretorius (2019) asserts that while oral speech is acquired naturally, reading is taught. Again, Ardington et al. (2020, p.5) assert that four factors are necessary for understanding a written text. Firstly, linguistic factors relate to the sound (phonological and morphological), word, sentence (morphology and syntax), grammar, vocabulary, and context level of the text. Secondly, code-based factors, which are defined as knowledge of written code and its conventions and they are called decoding skills. According to Ardington et al. (2020), decoding a text is the most foundational component of reading, which is the knowledge of letter-sound relations. Besides letter-sound relations decoding also involves knowledge of syllables and word reading. The next level of decoding is that of reading words in context, also referred to as oral reading fluency (ORF). Thirdly, are text factors and their conventions. This involves the purposes of a text, and its different genres and forms. In addition,

it is how the different genres of text are presented or structured within and across paragraphs, and the role of headings and visual representations of text. Adding on, Ardington et al. (2020) affirm that the familiarity of the topic within the text and the word frequency levels, such as the vocabulary used within the text, can affect comprehension. The last factor these authors assert as crucial in understanding a text are cognitive factors. Cognitive factors refer to a range of lower to higher-level cognitive processes. This means being able to understand the literal meaning of a text, being able to reason by making inferences and evaluations on one's perspective and that of the text being read. Additional factors that play a role in reading comprehension are: metacognition which is defined as the monitoring of comprehension and reading strategically (Block & Pressley, 2002; Oakhill, Cain & Elbro, 2015) In the same vein, reading comprehension is affected by cognitive resources and constraints such as working memory; processing agility as measured by rapid automatised naming (RAN); attentional control and inhibitory functions (Oakhill, Hartt & Samols 2005; Currie & Cain 2015 Cited in Ardington (2020, p. 6). In reading comprehension, the text is pivotal to how content is understood and how meaning is constructed.

Phonological awareness can be defined as the ability to break down, identify and manipulate the phonological structures of words (Diemer et al., 2015, p. 326). Phonological structures of words have been conceptualized as hierarchical, where speakers become increasingly aware of smaller phonological structures of words. The number of letters used to represent language-specific phonemes (language code) differs across languages (Ardington et al., 2020). Furthermore, the larger the number of symbols representing oral speech sounds, the longer it takes to learn them or decode them (Nag, 2017). IsiXhosa has over 60 phonemes which are presented by 26 letters in the alphabetic language, with complex consonant phonemes as represented in the above example (eg, ngx, gqw) (Ardington, 2020; Pretorius et al., 2017).

These complex consonant phonemes in African languages represent one single phoneme unlike the English language, they cannot be defined as consonant clusters. Double (CCV- consonant-consonant-vowel) and triple consonant clusters (CCV- consonant-consonant-consonant-vowel) in English do not occur in African languages (Spaull & Pretorius, 2019; Pretorius et al., 2017; Diemer, 2016). For example, the English word stick CCV and the isiXhosa word *kwi-ntla-nga-ni-so* with a complex consonant structure of CV-CV-CV-CV-CV. Eye-tracking research reveals that the visual complexity of agglutinating languages may affect reading instruction and also the assessment of reading in the language. This visual pattern of complex consonant phonemes requires attention to detail and accuracy,

therefore more cognitive work unlike the English language (Pretorius, 2017; Probert & De Vos, 2016; Ardington, 2020; Land, 2015).

As learners gain proficiency in reading, recognition of individual words becomes automatic, considerably speeding up the reading process. This allows deeper and more critical reading as well as the use of contextual and semantic cues as “automated word recognition frees mental resources for closer consideration of the meaning of a text and thereby allows readers to employ reading for the acquisition of new information and knowledge” (Verhoeven & Leeuwe, 2012, p. 1806).

Longer words impose larger loads on short-term and visual memory and character recognition buffers, and this could affect the decoding process. Short-term memory stores about seven pieces of data for about 12 seconds (Abadzi 2008, p. 584). This is significant when one considers how long a child might take to decode a long word and it may “have a knock-on effect in other areas of the reading process” (Urquhart and Weir 1998:189). Abadzi (2008) reinforces the importance of automaticity, pointing out that just 5% inaccuracy in reading translates to only 75% comprehension (Barr et al. 2002 cited in Abadzi 2008).

Similarly, de Vos et al. (2014) assert the importance of a text, and the familiarity of words and these individual words become automatic as the learners gain proficiency in reading, which means considerably increasing the speed of reading. There is a relationship from the literature that a one size fits all approach cannot occur in the assessment of reading in the foundational phases of literacy development. In conducting a baseline assessment, one needs to look at the linguistic features of the language, holistically. Guidelines provided by the main curriculum document (CAPS) should be clear and align with how language is acquired for a specific language, and therefore assess relevant components for that language. It is hoped this study will add a modest contribution to the educational crisis in South Africa, more specifically isiXhosa by exploring the use of baseline assessment as a way of building a solid literacy foundation for future learning.

2.5 Chapter summary

This chapter discussed relevant literature regarding the South African literacy performance focusing on isiXhosa language mainly in EC. The literature locates the relevance of the baseline assessment for reading as part of ascertaining foundational reading skills, in line with what is stated on the curriculum regarding the baseline assessment. This chapter offered some insights regarding reading acquisition of isiXhosa and the reading thresholds set for Nguni languages in FP. Furthermore, a discussion of the prominent baseline assessment tool known as EGRA is discussed in the context of South Africa and

isiXhosa language, as well its limitations. It ends with reflections of literature on literacy interventions in the South African context. In the next chapter, is a discussion of the conceptual and theoretical frameworks for this study.

CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the conceptual and theoretical framework for this study. The study applies Biggs (1999) concept of Constructive alignment (CA) and frames it within Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory (SCT) of learning (Kozulin, 2012). Biggs (1999; 2001) defines CA as an intended outcome approach to teaching, where the intended outcomes of learning are clearly defined before teaching takes place. The framework enables an investigation of how teachers mediate learning, as well as the processes involved in baseline assessment of reading in isiXhosa in FP. The chapter begins with defining CA and then discusses three elements of Biggs' concept of CA. The three elements in his concept will align with the objectives of this study, which is investigating how teachers respond to baseline assessment in their subsequent curriculum and pedagogical practices. The different types of assessments are outlined in this chapter, though the focus is on prominent assessments namely, summative, formative, and diagnostic assessments. Furthermore, a discussion of Vygotsky's SCT is discussed focusing on the zone of proximal development (ZPD), mediation of learning, and dynamic assessment (DA) which are derived from the theory as lenses for this study.

3.2 Formal and informal assessment

Formal assessment involves systematic observation of learners' oral performance in a kind of formal environment or setting (Brown, 2004). Harris and McCann (1994) use the term 'test' as a synonym for formal assessment. However, a test is limited to specific time and gathers limited pieces of information compared to assessment which is a broad concept of a systematic observation of learners' performance. Tests are administered in order to ascertain whether a learner is ready to progress to the next level and to identify problematic areas. Tests are also used as a measure to figure out what the learners have learnt for a particular concept or series of lessons. Furthermore, they tend to compare the learners' attainment levels of understanding (Ketabi & Ketabi, 2014).

According to Brown (2004) informal assessment, includes occasional and unplanned comments and feedback. The teacher does not pre-plan informal assessment before the class or lesson. Results of this kind of assessment are not recorded and no judgment is made based on them. Informal assessment consists of various types of feedback; from simply saying 'Well done!' to giving some detailed comments about learners' performance (Brown, 2004). Informal assessment is merged with every second of the teaching process as teachers are always giving feedback to learners. Therefore, informal

assessment, according to Brown's, is more about giving feedback rather than deciding upon learners' performance.

For purposes of this study, the focus will be formative, and summative diagnostic assessments in order to ascertain how baseline assessments for reading fit in these two prominent forms of assessments. Many scholars have written on the latter types of assessments in education from the 1960s (Dolin et al., 2018). The most prominent assessments are formative and summative assessments. As stated in the *Uvavanyo Olusisiseko lwaPhakathi eNyakeni IsiXhosa uLwimi lwaseKhaya IBanga* curriculum document (2020d), a baseline assessment for reading should be treated as a formative assessment, but it is important to make the distinction between summative and formative. Furthermore, to establish whether in practice, the baseline assessment for reading is treated the way the curriculum sets it to be, a discussion of this connection will be provided in Chapter 5 (section 5.5.1).

3.3 Formative assessment

The simplified definitions for formative assessment are 'assessment for learning' and summative assessment is 'assessment of learning' (Dolin et al., 2018; Bennett, 2011; Black & Williams, 1999). Formative assessment is described as a form of assessment that occurs during learning and teaching for appropriate feedback purposes. The objective of this assessment is to select appropriate teaching and learning methods in order to improve 'weak' aspects during teaching and learning, therefore the feedback is immediate (Ketabi & Ketabi, 2014). The underpinning of this method is embedded in the SCT of learning which views learning as making sense of new experiences based on what learners already know. The focus of formative assessment is on the process of learning as a lesson or group of lessons are taking place, and for the teacher to make informed decisions on the progression of these lessons (Dolin et al., 2018). According to Black and William (1999) teachers need to understand what learners understand about the content that is being taught. Consequently, teachers use formative assessment to make decisions on whether to reteach a particular concept or move forward to more complex concepts. In the same vein, Bennett (2011) and Black and Williams (1999) regard formative assessment as a means of assessing what has been learned. Scholars such Choi et al. (2022) view formative assessment as an 'instructional decision making' process on the concept to be taught going forward, or concepts that need to be retaught.

The main objective is to use this method continuously in a subject or course, by integrating it within a lesson(s) by continuously evaluating the content being taught to learners at that time the lesson is

taking place. It is used to diagnose and influence learning as it takes place (Dolin et al., 2018). In other words, it assesses continuous learning.

Formative assessment is not for the sole purpose of assigning a particular mark but rather what a learner can do at that time of the lesson or series of lessons and assist with further learning. Ketabi & Ketabi (2014) argue that it would be impractical to assess a learner daily. Teachers should precisely define the abilities to be assessed, for it is impossible to assess learners' performance every session. In addition, rough impressions are not enough to reach a trustworthy decision, and learners should be assessed based on a given criteria.

There are different forms of formative assessments such as the following:

- a) A teacher asking relevant questions to learners.
- b) Observing learners as they work rather than keeping a score of what they attain in the content taught.
- c) Analysing the outcome of learners' tasks.
- d) Giving learners tests or quizzes that are designed by the teacher or retrieved externally eg, internet, textbooks, etc.

3.4 Summative assessment

Summative assessment as the name suggests is a summary of what a learner has achieved after the end of a course. In South African Primary schools this is after a term or year. Summative assessments have been described as a concept of making judgments about what learners understand after the teaching and learning process rather than help with further learning. The key term of summative assessment is 'after' because the assessment is meant to evaluate what learners have been taught by the teacher. It is linked with ultimate grading and certification (Black et al., 2018).

It is important to note that formative assessment allows for reflexivity in teaching/learning whereby the teacher may repackage content or adjust pedagogical approaches and bring more resources to improve teaching. However, with summative assessment what is done is done especially for unsuccessful learners, unless they repeat a grade. Improvements may only be made for successive groups (Black et al., 2018).

3.5 Diagnostic/baseline assessment

A diagnostic assessment is used to determine learners' level of knowledge, skills, and understandings at the beginning of a course, grade level, unit and/or lesson (Chio et al. 2021). Learners are tested on what they already know. These tests allow the administrator or the teacher to make instructional decisions about the curriculum to meet the needs of the learners. At all levels of education, learners are not all at the same level. Teachers should not assume all learners are at the same level even if they belong to the same class or grade. The diagnostic assessment helps identify the gaps among learners, and this is intended to guide the future instruction, similarly for the purposes of formative assessment. A diagnostic assessment is not to be administered often to learners, unlike formative assessment. It is to be administered at the beginning of a new year or new course. The assessment is not meant to be for grading purposes or allocating a mark to learners. Similarly, to the way a formative assessment is done, it is for the teacher's reference. Additionally, Chio et al. (2021) extols that it is for instructional decision purposes. As seen in the description of the diagnostic and formative assessments, there is a resemblance between the two types of assessments. However, the only difference is that diagnostic assessment is only administered at the beginning of a course or grade level, whereas the formative can be applied at the beginning of a course too but continues throughout interaction between the learning and teaching process.

3.6 Theoretical framework

Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory asserts that learning occurs in two levels. Firstly, through the actual development of the child in achieving a task independently. Secondly, through social interactions, Vygotsky believed that children gradually acquired knowledge, new ways of thinking and behaving through interacting and cooperating with more knowledgeable people around them, for instance, teachers or parents (Daneshfar & Moharami, 2018). Within Vygotsky's SCT, the focus is on the zone of proximal development (ZPD), mediation of learning, and dynamic assessment (DA) which are derived from the theory as lenses for this study. ZPD refers to the level of problem-solving a child/learner can perform with the assistance of a competent instructor. The following factors play a role in the ZPD:

1. The individual's potential.
2. Mediation, which offers an opportunity for growth.

Figure 3.1: below is a diagrammatic representation of the ZPD.

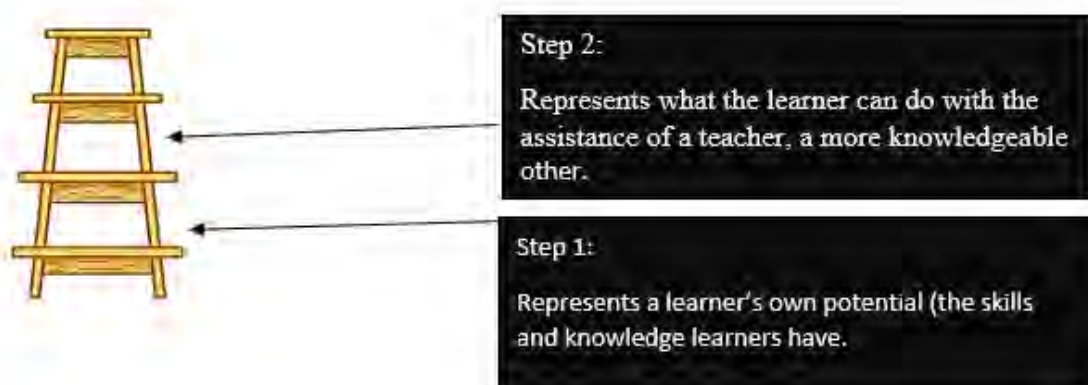


Figure 3.1: Diagrammatic representation of the ZPD

An instructor in this study will be limited to or defined as the teacher even though a competent instructor refers to the ‘more knowledgeable other’ (Vygotsky, 1978). An extension or subcategory of the ZPD is what is termed the method of dynamic assessment. Daneshfar & Moharami (2018) define dynamic assessment as a method of conducting language testing to investigate and highlight the individual learner’s obtained skills and potential development. The concept of DA (see Section, 3.4.1) originated for purposes of identifying a child’s behavioural abnormalities which are applied, even to this day in the fields of language impairment as well as learning difficulties. Scholars agree that the concept of DA has widened to include language assessment practices and pedagogy (Swain et al., 2015; Poehner, 2005; Mardani & Tavakoli, 2011) which is relevant as a lens in this study.

The premise for this study is that it is problematic to apply similar assessment approaches and use the same tools for all official South African languages. The socio-cultural approach emphasises the importance of language learning and learning generally according to the context within which language occurs (Kozulin, 2012). Halliday (1978) cited in Allahyah and Nazarifin (2012, p. 68) asserts that “context plays a part in determining what we say, and what we say plays a part in the context”. The baseline assessment for reading in isiXhosa must be aligned with the linguistic features of the language. The latter relates to the appropriate type of mediation (see Section, 3.4 below) i.e., the tool used for baseline assessment of reading in isiXhosa. Furthermore, the response of the teachers in helping the learners reach their ‘zone of proximal development’ is detrimental according to the SCT. This would derive from the curricular imperative, strategies used for teaching and learning, as well the resources for assessing and teaching reading in achieving the ‘zone’. Also, ascertaining whether mediated tools

such as the baseline assessments and the intervention thereafter do facilitate the learning of reading in isiXhosa.

3.6.1 Mediation of learning

Mediation encompasses the use of cultural tools such as language and materials to achieve the learning goal (Vygotsky, 1978). Further, Vygotsky explains mediation as a link between teachers and learners that directly affects learners' understanding of knowledge and skills such as reading. Again, Vygotsky proposes that a learner's development is not linear and that there are various developmental levels. He referred to 'higher mental functions' which are language-based tools such as speech, writing, reading, and memory. He believed that learners gradually acquire higher mental functions through guided instruction from and interaction with other more competent people in their environment i.e., the teacher. Within mediation, there are two distinctions:

1. Mediation through applying tools, such as the EGRA toolkit, big books, flashcards, interactive whiteboards, read-aloud books, etc.
2. Mediation involving human interaction, such as the teacher responding to the baseline assessment for reading in isiXhosa results of learners by teaching strategies that align with the learner/s results (Kozulin, 2003; Swain et al., 2015). *Figure 3.2* is a diagrammatic illustration of the Vygotskian mediation triad link.

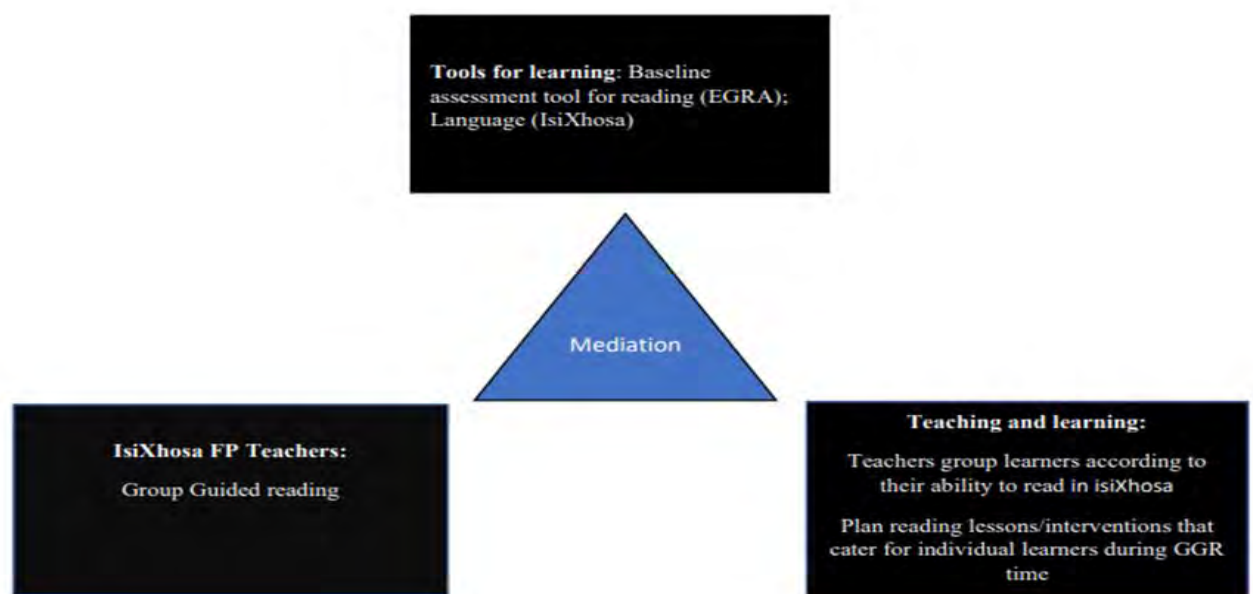


Figure 3.2: Mediation triad linking adopted from Vygotsky (1978, p. 54)

For purposes of this study, the teachers were referred to as the ‘more knowledgeable others’ (MKO). Vygotsky’s concept of MKO was used in determining how they guided instruction concerning how teachers responded to the results obtained in the baseline assessment for reading by learners in isiXhosa to maintain or progress the level of reading skills, according to the SCT. In this study, the concept of mediation came into play when the researcher analysed the results of the baseline assessment for reading from the two schools in this study.

3.6.2 Dynamic assessment

From the perspective of the SCT, effective instruction requires assessment, it must factor in the individual’s capabilities of achieving the task independently, and also it should require some instruction from a ‘knowledgeable other’ (Pohner, 2008) in order to achieve effective instruction. Furthermore, the focus of the DA method is on the individual and their capabilities to gain from instruction. According to Lantolf and Poehner (2011), mediation is collaborative and occurs when the teacher responds to the learner’s needs while changing the mediation continually to achieve the outcome. Within the DA method, there are two main types of mediation, the interactionist type, and the interventionist type. The DA method allows for the teacher and learner interaction so that learners can benefit from mediation that is implicit and explicit, which is in line with their ability.

The interactionist type of mediation with DA is rooted in Vygotsky’s ZPD. There are no limitations as to how the teacher mediates an assessment. The teacher applies what they consider the most efficient pedagogical practice to lead the learners beyond their present level of development. This means there is no pre-planning for the questions and interprets what each learner does at the time of the assessment. Teachers give hints and clues (Poehner, 2005; Lantolf & Poehner, 2011; Swain et al., 2015). In the interactionist DA method, the teacher gives hints and clues during the assessment, prompting a learner by eliciting leading questions to get to answer correctly (Poehner, 2008; Swain et al., 2015). This latter method would go against the ‘standards’ of the EGRA toolkit since the subtasks questions are timed and pre-determined for the grade and language in question. However, this method is not inapplicable to baseline assessments in general, based on the definition of baseline assessment as explained in Chapter 1, section 1.4.

Contrary to the interactionist type of mediation, the Interventionist DA method is standardised. This means all learners do not receive hints, and the assessments are based on the learners’ requirements. Similar to the EGRA, the method is interactionist where all learners receive the same baseline

assessment for reading. The Interactionist procedure of DA has three stages. These are namely the pre-test, mediation (instruction) and post-test stages.

In stage 1, the pre-test is administered to all learners. The results from the pre-test were used to guide the next phase. If baseline assessment were to be seen as a pre-test within the scope of the DA, baseline assessment results would then be used to inform what isiXhosa teachers do in order to maintain or further develop learner's reading competences.

The instruction phase and/or mediated learning (stage 2) relates to the learner being assisted through instruction that is based on the outcome of the pre-test. The strategies adopted by isiXhosa teachers to maintain or develop individual learners' reading based on the outcome of baseline assessment fall within the instruction phase. The teaching of reading in this phase should be mediated by the teacher. Because this mediated learning is administered to individuals or groups of learners as informed by pre-test results in order to solve learning problems, Poehner (2008) refers to this method as a sandwich format.

In stage 3, the post-test is applied to compare the learner's performance with the results of the pre-test to ascertain whether the mediation helped in the process. Further, it is done to investigate how learners have progressed through the process. In the context of this study, this method applied to assessments that are done to assess the progress made by the learners after the instruction phase in which isiXhosa teachers administer mediated learning to maintain or further develop learners' reading competences after the initial baseline assessment. That way, baseline assessment is integrated into the overall programme of teaching reading in isiXhosa to FP learners. For this study, the integration of baseline assessment and responsiveness of FP teachers to baseline assessment results in the teaching of reading in the isiXhosa is discussed in Chapter 5.

3.7 Constructive alignment

Biggs (1999, p. 100) describes CA as a concept "where learners construct their own learning through learning activities". He asserts that teachers should create a learning environment that supports the learning activities which are appropriate for achieving the desired learning outcomes. More, he argues that when a curriculum, course or lesson is created, teachers need to think carefully of the content to achieve the intended outcome of the programme. They (teachers) need to think of what they need learners to do or know by the end of the course, lesson, grade or phase. More so, they need to establish how they will know if the learners have achieved what was set on the curriculum, course, grade, phase

and/or lesson. Likewise, he argues the interlinking between these three latter statements is key for a thoughtfully designed learner-centred experience.

Correspondingly, CA proposes teaching that engages the learner with appropriate content and a clear progression path for achievement. Although the proposition was intended for higher education, it also fits well in other educational levels, including this study regarding baseline assessment for reading in isiXhosa in FP. Constructive alignment for isiXhosa language FP learners would require that clarity on the level of the learners' expected reading skill by the end of each grade.

Furthermore, Biggs (1999, p. 191) argues that there needs to be alignment between the three elements below:

- The intended learning outcomes of a particular subject or curriculum
- The teaching and learning activities should support the intended outcomes of the subject
- The appropriate assessments should correspond with the intended outcomes and teaching and learning activities

By the same token, Biggs (1999) CA is appropriate as a conceptual lens for this study as it argues for alignment of different elements to achieve intended outcomes. On assessment, Biggs (1999, p. 258) postulate that there needs to be clarity about “why we assess, and what is being assessed and how to assess it and being explicit on who would be involved in the assessment process”. Although this study primarily deals with one aspect, namely assessment and specifically baseline assessment for reading, the other two elements of Constructive Alignment align with the main objectives of the study. This study aimed to investigate whether the baseline assessment tools are in alignment with the CAPS curriculum and linguistic features of the isiXhosa language. Moreover, it examines how educators respond to baseline assessment results in their teaching of reading, thereby making the second element of Constructive Alignment relevant.

As well, Biggs' concept on alignment is embedded in constructivism, meaning that a learner does not come to the learning environment as an ‘empty slate’ they come with their own experiences and knowledge. The aspect of knowledge that learners come with that is relevant for this study is their language, specifically isiXhosa language. This aspect is also key in Vygotsky's theory as he refers to language as a tool to mediate learning.

The relevance of the CA concept is found in the CAPS curriculum for FP. The following are stipulated regarding baseline assessment for reading:

1. Why baseline assessment? To diagnose the foundational literacy or reading skills and levels of learners
2. What is being assessed? Four main reading components (letter-sound recognition, word recognition, reading a passage, answering comprehension questions)
3. How is it assessed? It is administered orally to one learner at a time in a grade.
4. Who is involved? The teacher/administrator and the learner during the assessment process.

3.8 Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the conceptual and theoretical framework of study, namely Biggs' constructive alignment (CA) concept and Vygotsky's SCT. Within the CA an overview of the three elements were presented, though the focus was on assessment. On assessment, a discussion of the different types of assessment was given, and the focus was mainly on formative, summative, and diagnostic assessment. These types of assessment were explained in conjunction with the baseline assessment for reading, which is the focus of this study. Furthermore, a discussion of the Vygotsky's SCT was presented focusing on the ZPD, and mediation and DA which forms a premise of the study, for the purposes of this study, Vygotsky's term of MKO was the teacher. The conceptual and theoretical frameworks were discussed to serve as lenses describing the concepts in this stage.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methods and processes followed in this study. The study adopted a case study design in order to answer descriptive and exploratory questions around assessment literacy practices in the isiXhosa language in FP, focusing on Grade 2 and 3. This chapter will begin by describing the research paradigm for this study, then describe the research site in section 4.3, sampling of participants in section 4.4, instruments and procedures of data generation in section 4.5, data analysis in section 4.6. Furthermore, it will deal with the ethical procedures and consideration in section 4.7 and end the chapter with a summary in section 4.7.

4.2 Research paradigm

This study made use of a mixed-method approach in which qualitative and quantitative methods were integrated to describe, interpret, and analyse the data findings. According to Kington et al. (2011), the mixed-method approach provides a holistic picture by giving greater mapping, analysis, interpretation, and comprehension of the research area and facilitates data investigation and triangulation. This approach was chosen for this study as it allows for opportunities of looking at both the breadth and depth of the data generated qualitatively and quantitatively. Additionally, the mixed methods approach uses a combination of assessments, surveys/questionnaires (numerical data), together with interviews and/or observations to generate data (Zohrabi, 2013). In this study, the methods to generate data were the following:

- Surveys/questionnaires
- Semi-structured interviews
- Participant observation
- Content analysis (Baseline assessment tools)

To analyse the integration of quantitative and qualitative components of data, Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) state that each matrix should not be treated independently of others. This means qualitative data should be ‘quantified’ and qualitatively ‘qualitized’ where necessary, as each provides a unique lens.

Integrating these two methods consolidated the research and explore key strands of the use of baseline assessment tools in isiXhosa.

There were three phases of data generation in this study. Phase 1 was conducted through a questionnaire survey administered to all the isiXhosa FP teachers in the two schools. Phase 2 was complementing phase 1 by conducting semi-structured interviews with 4 teachers and 1 subject advisor. A sequential approach was utilised in the data analysis process. The sequential approach refers to the researcher using the quantitative data (surveys) as the first method of data generation, followed up with qualitative data (interviews) for further clarification, which was the case in this study (Cameron, 2009). Figure 4.1 is a diagrammatic illustration of the techniques used in the study.

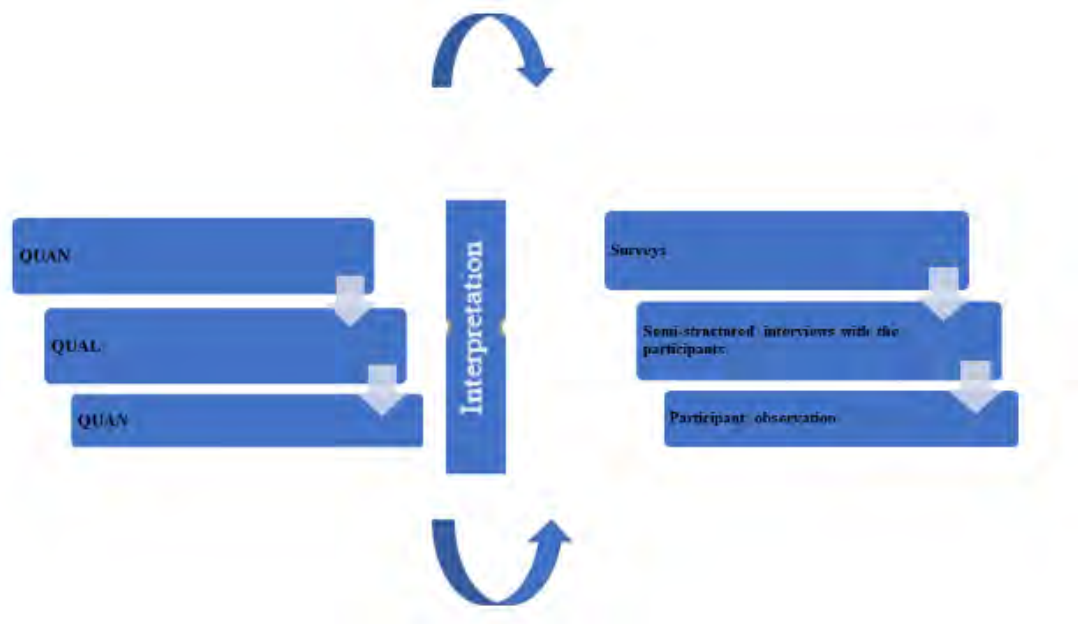


Figure 4.1: Data techniques

4.3 Research site

Given (2008) describes a research site as the physical, social, and cultural site in which the researcher conducts the study. In this study, two quintile 1 schools in a township in Makhanda District in the Eastern Cape Province were used as the main research sites.

In spite of their socio-economic status, both schools selected for this study are functional, they have teachers and diverse learners and therefore were appropriate for this study. However, they also receive external intervention from NGOs to improve literacy levels in the FP. As noted in Chapter 1, the

Eastern Cape is generally characterised by low literacy levels and poor academic performance results in the country. Literacy challenges in South Africa are not only experienced with English, the main language of teaching and learning, but also with African languages, the languages spoken by the majority of the learners as their mother tongue. Part of the intervention in these two schools includes the administering of a baseline assessment for isiXhosa reading from NGOs.

For this study, the two schools were referred to as School A and School B in order to protect their identities (see section 3.5). The approaches of the literacy intervention used in the two schools differ. In School A, the external intervention supports the teacher by issuing literacy resources and teacher training development. Literacy coaches visit schools to assess and support the progress of teachers and of learners, even though the intervention does not work directly with the learners. In School B, the teachers also receive literacy resources and teacher training development from an NGO.

Table 4.1: The schools' profiles for grades 2 and 3

School		Area	District	Quintile	Township	Government School	Literacy External Intervention	LoLT	FAL	No. of Grade 2 classes	No. of Grade 3 classes
A		Makhanda	Sarah Baartman	1	Suburban	Yes	Yes	IsiXhosa	English	1	1
B		Makhanda	Sarah Baartman	1	Suburban	Yes	Yes	IsiXhosa	English	3	3

4.4 Sampling of participants

The sampling of the participants is described below in stages:

Stage 1: All isiXhosa FP teachers were requested to complete the survey from the two schools. There were 12 isiXhosa FP teachers who completed the survey. Depending on the general demographics of a South African government school, there are normally 3-4 classes per grade. Therefore 12 FP teachers participated in the survey for the study. The fact that they were isiXhosa FP teachers, their experiences regarding baseline assessment were required during this stage. The purpose was to get their thinking, attitudes, and experiences even though not all of them were part of the semi-structured interviews. The next stage was influenced by the analysis of the survey results.

Stage 2: Semi-structured interviews were conducted on a subset basis of the teachers identified in the survey. In this stage, teachers were chosen from the survey sample based on their responses and their consent. Only Grade 2 and 3 teachers were identified in this stage, with a number of 4 teachers in total from both schools. These teachers were interviewed and were requested to show the researcher the tool(s) used for assessing reading. Furthermore, the recorded results of learners' performances obtained in Term 1 of the baseline assessment for reading, administered by teachers were requested. The teachers were requested by the researcher to identify the 5 top performing and 5 least performing learners in the grade they taught, for purposes of this study.

Along with the identified teachers from the survey questionnaire, the District Language subject advisor was interviewed in the study. The objective was to get the official perspective of the District Department on baseline assessment and to ascertain the manner in which the baseline assessment were used in the teaching of isiXhosa reading in the FP. Furthermore, to ascertain whether the baseline assessment tool for reading was embraced by the district. The type of support that was given to teachers in the administration of this tool was to assess whether it improved practice for the teachers and assist with improving foundational literacy levels.

Stage 3: Grade 2 and 3 have been purposely sampled in this study, because the cohorts would have likely gone through the baseline assessment. Specifically grade 2 and 3 were receiving external intervention from NGOs. Although grade 1 is part of FP, this cohort was not involved in this study due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, restricting the researcher access to the schools and consequently learners. Additionally, the grade 2 and 3 cohort were purposely sampled as they would have likely gone through the BA in grade 1 and therefore the building on the development of assessment practices would be subsequent which is appropriate for extracting richer data. Grade 1

learners would be progressing from the reception grade (Grade R), and according to CAPS (DBE, 2011a), the assessment practices for reading are not formal, and would not align with the objectives of this study.

For learners in each of the two schools, 10 learners of the interviewed teachers were assessed by the researcher. In School A, 10 learners from grade 2 were assessed, grade 3 learners were not assessed as there was no teacher allocated to the class, more details will be provided in the limitations section in Chapter 7. In School B, 10 grade 2 learners and 10 grade 3 classrooms were participants in this study. This was done to ensure there is consistency in terms of the numbers. The number of learners in each classroom varied, therefore there was a target of the number of learners for this study for consistency purposes. Five top-performing and five least performing learners were the targets. These targeted learners were identified based on the baseline assessment results done by the teacher before this study as well as the recommendation of the teacher. The baseline assessment for reading was done by the teachers at the beginning of the year. Therefore, the recorded results from the baseline assessment done at the beginning of the year were requested from the teachers. This request of the obtained results of learners was done to facilitate the next phase of this study. The purpose of this sample of learners was to ensure the numbers are manageable and analysable in a manner that will provide rich data concerning the research questions. The number of participants was enough for its purpose.

Stage 4: The researcher assessed 30 learners in total that were identified by the teachers. There were 10 learners per grade, in School A, 10 learners (Grade 2) and School B, 20 learners (Grade 2 and 3). The learners were assessed using the baseline assessment tool (EGRA) obtained from the District subject advisor, which is the same tool used by the teachers at the beginning of the year. This was for comparative purposes and for answering the research question on the impact and the progression level of learners regarding reading in isiXhosa.

4.5 Instruments and procedures

Following the ethical procedure, participants were given letters together with consent forms explaining the nature of the study and that I had permission from the university (**see Appendix 1**), Department of Basic Education (**see Appendix 2**), and the District Department. To conduct the study twelve isiXhosa Home Language FP teachers from the two schools participated in the survey phase of the study, four teachers participated in the semi-structured interviews and one District language subject advisor, also 30 learners were assessed using the EGRA toolkit by the researcher from both schools. Permission

was also granted by the two school principals (see **Appendix 3 and 4**). Details of the data generation process are to follow.

4.5.1 Survey/questionnaire

The process of generating data began by requesting FP teachers of the two schools to complete a survey questionnaire. Adams and Cox (2008) describe questionnaires as a set of questions as participants in the study. The scholars assert that the questions should be well planned, and goal oriented, in that they probe questions a researcher wants answers for. Other important aspects of questionnaires are knowing who the questions are intended for, why the questions are asked, the order of the questions in the survey and how the researcher will analyse the responses (Jones et al., 2013). The purpose of this method was to ascertain the teacher's experiences and attitudes on baseline assessments for reading. The limitation with this method is that one cannot ask probing questions to the respondent(s) (Aksu, 2009), that is why the next phase of this study made use of semi structured interviews as described in section 4.3.2. An appointment was set with the teachers at the school. The purpose of the survey was explained and then teachers were requested to complete the survey in my presence. This completion of the survey was organised at a convenient time with the teachers, which was after the school day. I waited till the survey was completed in my presence in the event there were questions or queries. The survey was completed in 20 - 30 minutes. The teachers' information was kept confidential.

The survey had 3 sections (see **Appendix 5**). In the first section, the survey contained questions related to the teacher's biographical data, such as the name, language, grade taught, etc. The type of biodata that also included educational background, in order to establish the experience in FP teaching. This information was requested for following up purposes to facilitate the next stage of data generation i.e., semi-structured interviews. The second section contained questions related to the teachers' background, and to investigate whether they did administer a baseline assessment for reading in isiXhosa in their respective grades. The importance of having these latter questions in the survey was to facilitate the objectives of this study and answer the research questions. The last section contained questions related to the baseline assessment for reading. The questions were based on the tool(s) used, why they did it, whether it was useful or not. Complemented by semi-structured interviews (see 4.3.2 below) with teachers and subject advisors, this method assisted in pursuing research objectives 1 and 2, i.e., the tools used as BA for isiXhosa reading in FP and the components assessed. Rowley (2012) explains that interviews allow a researcher to have more nuanced conversations with respondents, whereas questionnaires do not permit in-depth probing, which is why it was important to complement the questionnaires with the semi-structured interviews.

4.5.2 Semi-structured interviews

Interviews are commonly used to capture qualitative data and provide more comprehensive information on the phenomenon that is under investigation (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). The purpose of this method is to allow for open-ended questions, where there is a need for a follow-up question or rephrasing or question or a teacher suggesting showing the researcher some evidence where it is appropriate for the question asked or for the study. During this phase of data generation for the present research, individual interviews were conducted with each of the four FP isiXhosa teachers and one district subject advisor. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The researcher was ethically cleared to record the interviews, and the participants consented to being recorded prior to the interview. Additionally, the teachers were given a choice of preference for the interview, in either isiXhosa or English language. From the three teachers, two were interviewed in isiXhosa, even though there was code switching in the interviews where certain words or sentences were making use of both languages interchangeably. The interviews were translated from isiXhosa to English language. The interview was estimated to be 20-30 minutes, but it took longer and lasted for 45 minutes. The aspect of expressing themselves in their home language may have been a contributing factor to this interview being longer, as teachers appeared comfortable expressing themselves in their HL.

4.5.2.1 Language subject advisor interview

The interview with the District language subject advisor was semi-structured and took place before the interview with the teachers. The researcher made use of an interview schedule (**see Appendix 6**) that is different to the teacher's one because it served different purposes as explained in section 4.2 in this Chapter. The sets of questions comprised 2 sections. Section A was based on the background of the LSA. Section B was based on the District's view and support of the baseline assessment for reading. The interview took approximately 30 minutes to complete with the subject advisor offering the documents for the baseline assessment (EGRA) to the researcher. These documents facilitated the next phase of the study.

4.5.2.2 Teacher interviews

For the semi-structured interviews for teachers, the sequential approach was applied. The researcher made use of an interview schedule that was different to the language advisor's interview schedule. The objectives of interviewing the teachers was different to that of the subject advisor, hence the schedule was different (**see Appendix 7**). Gillham (2001) refers to an interview schedule as a set of questions for the participants to be interviewed. The series of questions were a guide, following up on the

teachers' responses in the survey/questionnaires. These sets of questions comprised 5 sections. Section A was based on the teacher's background and confirmed the information obtained from the survey. Section B was based on the procedure of administering a baseline assessment for reading. Section C was based on the feedback given to learners on their performance. Section D was based on the remedial work given to struggling learners, and ensuring learners maintained or improved reading skills. Section E was based on the challenges and support the teachers received.

4.5.3 Participant observation: Assessment instrument

Observation allows the researcher to experience the study first-hand by carefully watching the events or phenomena as it unfolds (Bertram & Christiansen, 2015). Maxwell (2012) asserts that for one to have a better understanding of their study, one should be a participant in their study. This method is advantageous in collecting data in that a researcher can make 'sense' directly from the participants' real-life experiences (Thomas, 2017).

As a participant-observer in the study, this involved the researcher assessing the learners' reading competencies using the same tools used by the teacher and comparing with previous assessment results obtained from the teachers interviewed. This technique was used with the hope to provide some insights on whether previous assessments have informed subsequent teaching practices as described by the teachers in the semi-structured interviews. Also, the technique was adopted as a measure to assess progression, maintenance, or regression from term 1 to term 3 in the year of the study.

The researcher used the EGRA toolkit in this phase. The toolkit comprises several subtasks (see section 4.3.3.1). For each of the subtasks, a laminated chart is held by the researcher which is exactly the same as the one being read by the learner. As learners read through the letters or words, the researcher marks the amount/number of letters the learners get correct and incorrect. The chart held by the researcher is marked so that learners are unable to see their results for ethical purposes and to avoid distraction. The font in the chart below in *Figure 4*. is a font that is commonly used in Grade R - 3, named ABC Junior font. The importance of using this font was for learners to read orthographic symbols they are used to and prescribed in the CAPS curriculum. Moreover, so that the font or letter representation did not influence the outcome of the assessment. Chapter 5, *Figure 5.1A* illustrates the letter-sound component in Assessment 1 set that was administered to learners.

The EGRA toolkit for isiXhosa HL comprises 3 sets of assessments that must be administered in a year, in different terms namely, Assessment 1 (**see Appendix 8**), 2(**see Appendix 9**), and 3(**see Appendix 10**) for the full documents of the toolkit. The details of the students were captured from both schools. In Section A, the demographic information (e.g., name, grade, school). In Section B, four foundational literacy skills such as letter-sound knowledge, word recognition, oral reading fluency/ passage reading, and oral comprehension skills.

Furthermore, first term obtained from the teacher, were documented, and compared with the results that were administered by the researcher. These details were added in the study to elicit information to compare each learner's score from what they had obtained at the beginning of the year. The comparison of the results obtained in term 1 and the results by the researcher in term 3 were done to ascertain if there was any progression, regression, or maintenance of the reading level competency. Further, there was a description and comparison of the results obtained in School A and B in grade 2. The two schools were not compared in grade 3, as the assessment in grade 3 was only conducted in School B with the ten learners.

For Grade 2 and 3, the EGRA toolkit states the assessments should be administered to learners 3 times a year. In both grades, the Assessment 1 (**see Appendix 8**) set should be done in term 1. This set comprises 40 letter-sounds as illustrated in Chapter 5, *Figure 5.1A*, 80 words for assessing word recognition is illustrated in Chapter 5, *Figure 5.2A*.

In addition, the EGRA toolkit contains a passage (ORF) with 53 words as illustrated in Chapter 5 *Figure 5.3A*, and a comprehension task with 4 literal questions and 1 inferential question as illustrated in *Figure 5.4A*. Furthermore, in term 3, Assessment 2 should be administered to learners. This set comprises 60 letter-sounds as illustrated in Chapter 5, *Figure 5.1B*. The toolkit in the mid-year assessment, also contains 80 words for assessing word recognition as illustrated in Chapter 5, *Figure 5.2B*. It also contains a passage (ORF) with 68 words illustrated in Chapter 5, *Figure 5.3A*, and a comprehension task with 4 literal questions and 1 inferential question illustrated in *Figure 5.4B*.

In term 4, Assessment 3 (**see Appendix 10**) should be administered to Grade 2 learners. This set comprises 100 letter-sounds, 80 words for assessing word recognition, a passage (ORF) with 61 words, and a comprehension task with 4 literal questions and 1 inferential question. This set was not administered to the learners, since it was only term 3.

4.5.3.1 The structure and procedure of Baseline Assessment for reading in isiXhosa

The reading assessment was administered by the researcher in the third term of the school year (August 2021). The EGRA toolkit suggests the Assessment 2 set should be administered in the third term, and therefore the researcher used the set suggested. The Assessment set 1 was administered in term 1 by the teachers and again by the researcher in term 3. The first term Assessment 1 set was administered in term 3 for comparative purposes, whereas the Assessment 2 set was done for comparing learner's progression level within the Grade from the first term to the third, as suggested in the toolkit.

Learners were tested in a classroom, and they all sat opposite me. All Coronavirus COVID-19 protocols were observed. Learners' hands were sanitised upon arrival, so did the researcher. The time spent with each learner varied between 5 minutes and 10 minutes. This was dependent on their ability to carry on reading the different subtasks on the EGRA toolkit. If a learner was struggling with reading, for example reading 5-6 letter-sounds incorrectly, as an ethical consideration to the learner, I would stop the administration of the subtask. I would move to the following sub-task of word-recognition. If consecutive words from the chart were read incorrectly, the researcher would stop the administration of the assessment, so that a learner does not feel embarrassed. Some of the learners felt nervous before the assessment. The researcher would put them at ease by establishing a good rapport with the learners, and also explaining what the process would be during the assessment. To give them agency, the learners were informed that at any time they felt they did not want to proceed with the assessment, they could inform the researcher, and the assessment process would stop with no consequences.

Procedure for letter-sound recognition (LSR): Assessment 1 and 2 (refer to Appendix 8 & 9) was presented to the learners. Prior to reading for the 40 and/or 60 letter-sounds subtasks, a learner was given two letter-sounds to practice from. The learner was tasked to read the letter-sounds from left to right across each row. A timer was set for a minute so that the learner could begin sounding the letters. Learners were informed they would be stopped after a minute. In the process of the learner reading, incorrect items were noted. The total number of correct and incorrect letter sounds attempted was recorded. The number of errors was subtracted from the total letter sounds read correctly within the minute. One mark was allocated for each letter-sound read correctly.

Procedure for word recognition subtask: Assessment set 1 and 2 contained 80 words as illustrated in *Figure 5.2A* and *Figure 5.2B* in Chapter 5 (section 5.3.2): There were 8 words in each row. Before reading the word-recognition subtask, a learner was given two words to practice from. Following that, was the same administering process and scoring procedure.

Procedure for reading a passage (ORF): The learners were given the passage to read aloud in one minute. In the event a learner was able to read words correctly consecutively with no struggle, they could finish the entire passage even though the one minute ran out. It would be noted where the minute ended even though the learner was allowed to complete the passage. In the event a learner was reading 3-4 consecutive words incorrectly, the administration of the assessment would not continue. I would also not continue to the next subtask of oral comprehension questions.

Procedure for comprehension questions: After learners had read the passage, they were asked to respond to orally presented questions aligned to their reading end point. This subtask was timed for a minute for note purposes. However, learners were allowed to read beyond the minute only when they were able to read consecutive words correctly from the passage without struggling. The score awarded for the reading comprehension was the number of the correct answer given per item.

4.6 Data analysis

Data in the study were analysed using a mixed-method approach in which qualitative and quantitative methods were integrated to describe, interpret and analyse the data findings. According to Kington et al. (2011), the mixed-method approach provides a holistic picture by giving greater mapping, analysis, interpretation, and comprehension of the research area and allows data investigation and triangulation. In this study, the data is presented and analysed in Chapter 5. Chapter 5 is organised according to the research questions as well as the themes that emerged in responding to the research questions. The data was analysed using a sequential approach; subthemes and themes that emerged were formed from initial codes; descriptive statistics from the data of learners' reading competency levels. Braun & Clarke's (2006) framework is used as a thematic lens to analyse the data. Following this, is a discussion of the data analysis concerning the literature as well as the conceptual theories, namely constructive alignment, and sociocultural theory.

This was followed by an interpretive analysis of the main thematic trends emerging from both interview and questionnaire data.

The qualitative method is analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework for thematic analysis. Its framework consists of 6 phases or steps, and they are highlighted below:

Phase 1: Familiarizing oneself with the data

The first phase in the study involved analysing the questionnaires using thematic analysis. The survey aimed to ascertain teachers' experiences of baseline assessments for reading in isiXhosa. The survey

was transcribed and then transferred to an excel sheet to determine the four teachers that would be potential participants in the next phase of the study or data which was semi-structured interviews.

For the semi-structured interviews of the teachers and subject advisor, the researcher listened to audio-recordings several times. Through this process, the researcher was able to immerse and familiarise themselves with the data. The transcribing of the interviews took the researcher a few days, as some transcriptions were translated from isiXhosa to English. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and supplemented by the notes. Although the whole process of transcribing was time-consuming, it was worth enacting the task. Through listening to the recordings several times, it sparked the thought process of themes emerging.

Phase 2: Coding the data

The second phase was complemented by the first phase for more insight and clarification. The transcript segments from the audio-recorded interviews were analysed using thematic analysis.

The task of coding and sorting data was done manually first. This was done by printing out the transcripts. Thereafter identifying and colour coding words and phrases within the data that were similar in response. Moreover, a different colour coding was done with exceptional responses to a particular question. Responses that were similar were grouped together. After this manual process, the information was transferred to an excel sheet, so that it was stored in an organised manner.

Phase 3: The development of sub-themes and themes

The researcher looked at the list of codes, and how they were associated. Thereafter, the codes were collated or merged into broader colour themes. The development of themes and subthemes was an iterative process. It involved grouping the phrases that were similar and/or different as highlighted in the second phase of this process. For each theme, it was highlighted in a colour. Some codes became subthemes to others while other sub-themes became redundant.

Phase 4: Review and organisation of themes according to research questions

The researcher read through all the extracts related to the codes. This was done to explore if they supported the themes, or if there were any exceptions, or overlapping of themes.

Phase 5: Labelling the themes

All the themes identified emerged explicitly from the data. They were labelled by the researcher to align with the study and research questions the study aimed to address.

Phase 6: Writing up

This phase focused on reporting the findings of the analyses. A detailed account is given in Chapter 5.

4.6.1 Validity, trustworthiness, and reliability

Validity is the extent to which a particular instrument is used to measure its purpose and doing so accurately (Thatcher, 2010). The triangulation method of using multiple data generation techniques in the study was aimed at strengthening the validity of the data (Cohen & Cabtree, 2006; Maree, 2016). To ensure that the data generated in the study was valid and trustworthy, the survey questionnaires were transcribed as they were and inserted in an excel sheet to look out for similarities and differences in the teacher responses. The semi-structured interviews were audiotaped, replayed, transcribed, and translated by the researcher. Data generated through assessing learners were recorded systematically, through notetaking concurrently with audio recording, entered in an excel spreadsheet, and analysed through descriptive analysis. Audio recordings are good as data generating techniques when it comes to trustworthiness and reliability. Using an audio recording device, this allowed the researcher to return to the recordings during data analysis and other stages for validation purposes.

4.7 Ethical consideration

Cacciattolo (2015) states that important aspects of all research are the ethical considerations. Therefore, it is important for research to abide by ethical considerations so that no one is harmed, hurt, unfairly treated, or misrepresented and data is not distorted or fabricated. This involves ensuring that participants understand all the processes and procedures involved in the study. Participants have the agency to withdraw their participation anytime. In this study, the researcher ensured that consent was obtained from the relevant stakeholders (the provincial education department, principals of schools, teachers, curriculum advisors, learners and parents of the learners). All participants had the opportunity to sign consent forms before participating in the study. Parents also signed consent forms on behalf of their children to indicate that they allowed them to take part in the study. Learners were also given a choice to withdraw from participating in the study even though their parents signed on their behalf. Administrative procedures of EGRA were consistent and child-centred to increase the validity of the results.

The identities of the participants were treated with a high degree of anonymity and confidentiality by making use of pseudonyms and codes instead of their real names. Lastly, participants were assured that the data (data) generated in the study would not be shared with a third party without their permission. They were further assured that the data generated from the study would be safely stored on an external hard drive in the researcher's office as well as the university's established storage system.

4.8 Chapter summary

In this chapter, the research design and methodological orientations used in this study was described. The research site which is Makhanda District in the Eastern Cape Province was elaborated upon. In addition, it presented the participants in this study, namely the District language subject advisor, two quintile 1 schools receiving external intervention. The sampling was discussed, focusing on FP isiXhosa HL teachers and positionality issues were also discussed. It was also explained how and why the data were generated using each of the techniques. Survey questionnaires assisted to get teachers' perspectives on baseline assessments for reading isiXhosa in the FP. Semi-structured interviews helped provide opportunities to probe for details from the responses of the participants and participant observation assisted in analysing learners' reading competencies in isiXhosa HL were explained in detail. Lastly, the issues of validity and trustworthiness were explained, and ethical issues were considered and then discussed

CHAPTER 5: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyses the data collected in this study in relation to the research questions presented in Chapter 1. The themes that emerge from the data analysis will serve as a guide on how each research question is addressed. Before presenting the data, biographic information of all the participants in the study will be presented. Thereafter, the main findings from the themes and data analysis will be highlighted and discussed, which will lead to the conclusions made in the next chapter.

5.2 Biographical information of participants

This section presents biographical data of the research participants. The participants include teachers who completed the questionnaire survey, those who were further interviewed, the subject advisor and the selected learners who were assessed by the researcher. The biographical data of the different categories of the participants are presented in the respective subsections below. In addition, the use of the letters A and B represents the two schools, LSA represents the language subject advisor, and T1 to T4 represents the four interviewed teachers used in this study to make the participants' data anonymous.

5.2.1 Teachers who completed survey questionnaires

As noted in Chapter 4 (section 4.5.1), twelve FP teachers participated in the questionnaire survey. Both schools conducted baseline assessments for reading in isiXhosa in line with the formal curriculum imperatives of the Department of Education. However, the schools also received external intervention from NGOs. Of the twelve teachers, eleven were female and one was male. All the female teachers indicated that they were isiXhosa HL speakers. The male teacher indicated that he was a Sesotho HL speaker. However, he had studied isiXhosa for his bachelor's degree and for his Post-Graduate Certificate in Education. All teachers are experienced FP teachers, with a minimum of three years of teaching experience, with isiXhosa HL being one of the subjects they teach. This made them appropriate participants for this study. Summary information of the teachers who participated in the survey is provided in *Table 5.1* below.

Table 5.1: Background of FP Teachers

Participants	Qualifications	Teaching experience	Gender	Grade taught	Home language	Other languages (s)
T1	B. Ed Honours	3 Years	Male	1 & 2	SeSotho	English, IsiXhosa
T2	B. Ed	15 Years	Female	2	IsiXhosa	English
T3	Diploma in Education	4 Years	Female	2	IsiXhosa	English
T4	Diploma in Education	13 Years	Female	3	IsiXhosa	English
T5	Advanced Certificate (ACT)	4 years	Female	3	IsiXhosa	English
T6	Diploma in Grade R	23 years	Females	R	IsiXhosa	English
T7	-	24 years	Female	1	IsiXhosa	English
T8	B.Ed	-	Female	3	IsiXhosa	English
T9	B.Ed Honours	13 Years	Female	1	IsiXhosa	English
T10	NPDE	20 Years	Female	R	IsiXhosa	English
T11	NPDE	18 years	Female	R	IsiXhosa	English
T12	Diploma in Education	6 Years	Female	2	IsiXhosa	English

The responses of the teachers in the other grades were significant in ascertaining or confirming whether a baseline assessment for reading in isiXhosa was done. Secondly, the type(s) of tools they used were to be investigated. Their responses were significant in choosing the appropriate teachers for semi-structured interviews and therefore answering the research questions. The responses are presented in Table 5.3 and used in the thematic sections of the chapter according to their relevance.

5.2.2 Interviewed teachers

From the twelve teachers who participated in the survey as presented in Table 5.1 above, T1 – T4 were purposefully selected for the next phase of the study, which were interviews (see Chapter 4, Section 4.4). All the teachers selected in the second phase of the data generation indicated that they administered a baseline assessment for reading. The teachers had also answered the survey questions in detail, specifying the components that were assessed for reading. Their responses required further probing and offered great promise in answering the research questions for this study. Indeed, the interviews elaborated on the questionnaire survey regarding the teachers' perspectives and experiences regarding baseline assessments, their purposes, administration, and how baseline assessments influenced their pedagogy of isiXhosa reading in the Foundation Phase. The data generated from the interviews is presented and analysed from Section 5.3 onwards.

5.2.3 Subject advisor

One (female) LSA in the provincial education department from the district of Sarah Baartman in the Eastern Cape Province was interviewed. She is an isiXhosa HL speaker, holds a B.Ed. Honours degree. She has 18 years of FP experience as a teacher and 12 years as an LSA. The interview with the LSA provided information on the official perspective of the District Department of Education and the support that the department provides to schools. This information is located in Chapter 4 (section 4.4) and helped the researcher address research question 1.

5.2.4 Learners

As explained in Chapter 4 (section 4.5.3), thirty, grade 2 and 3 learners participated in this study, these learners were identified as the grade 2 and 3 learners as the 5 lowest and 5 highest performing learners in each class of the interviewed teachers in this study. There were 3 grade repeaters. One in grade 3 in School B, and 2 learners in grade 2 in both School A and B. The biographic information of learners is presented in *Table 5.2*. The 30 learners in *Table 5.2* had undergone a baseline assessment in isiXhosa reading in term 1 as indicated in Chapter 4 (section 4.5.3). The researcher received the learners' first term baseline assessment results from the teachers, of which two components of EGRA were assessed, namely letter sound knowledge and word recognition. The results of these two reading components or learners' scores are discussed in section 5.5.1. As noted in Chapter 4 (section 4.5.3), the purpose of including these learners in the later part of the study was to see how their reading levels progressed or regressed after previous baseline assessments and subsequent mediation by teachers.

Table 5.2: Biographic Information of learners in School A and B

School	Boys	Girls	Total	Grade
A	5	5	$n = 10$	2
B	5	5	$n = 10$	2
B	4	6	$n = 10$	3

5.3 Thematic presentation and analysis of data

The qualitative and quantitative data from the study were collated according to specific questions and were colour-coded based on similarity. This is where themes and sub-themes were generated and discussed in relation to the relevant research questions. This section is presented to address the first research question. A summary of the teacher responses from the survey is presented in Table 5.3 below to offer a general sense of baseline assessments in the two schools.

Table 5.3: Summary FP Teachers questionnaire survey

Participants	Do you conduct a BA for reading?	BA tool used to assess reading	Aspects assessed on the BA
T1	Yes	EGRA/ GADRA tool	Phonological awareness, syllables, blending segments, reading accuracy, fluency and speed.
T2	Yes	EGRA	Letter-sounds, words and passage
T3	Yes	EGRA and Funda Wande Tool	Letter-sounds, words and passage
T4	Yes	EGRA and Funda Wande tool	Letter-sounds, words and passage
T5	Yes	EGRA and Funda Wande tool	Letter-sounds, words and passage
T6	Yes	Flash cards, big books, stories, rhymes	You assess learners' understanding, and their levels.
T7	Yes	EGRA	-

T8	Yes	EGRA	Letter-sounds, words and passage
T9	Yes	-	Letter-sounds, words and passage
T10	Yes	Flash cards, big books, stories, rhymes	Match correct alphabets with pictures.
T11	Yes	Flash cards, big books, stories, rhymes	Match correct alphabets with pictures.
T12	Yes	EGRA and Funda Wande tool	Letter-sounds, words and passage

In answering Research question 1, the sub-themes and main themes that emerged are teachers' perspectives on the importance of conducting a baseline assessment for reading and the baseline assessment tool for reading in isiXhosa. These two aspects will be discussed in this section.

5.3.1 Teachers' general perspectives on the importance of BA

The data generated from the questionnaire survey and interviews indicated that the main purpose of conducting a baseline assessment for reading was to establish the learners reading levels so that learners who received similar scores in the assessment are grouped together in small groups of 6 - 8. After the assessment is conducted, learners' reading levels are established for the purposes of group guided reading. There was unanimity among the teachers that it is easier to teach the learners in their small reading groups according to their reading levels (scores obtained on baseline assessment). Furthermore, CAPS stipulates that one of the methods in which reading should be taught daily is group guided reading. In the interviews, it was unanimously agreed that the group guided reading levels are established at the beginning of the year. When teachers were probed about this method of group guided reading, they stated that because learners are at different levels, choosing the appropriate text for teaching reading in each group is important. Further, for the learners who are unable to read, they teach intensive letter sound knowledge in those small groups, hence it was important to know the learners reading levels. However, all four teachers reiterated that the reading groups and levels change as the year progresses, as some learners regress and some learners progress moderately, and other learners progress faster than others within those small groups.

As previously discussed in Chapter 4 (section 4.3), the two schools in this study use isiXhosa as the LoLT and teach English as FAL. The nature of the literacy intervention in the two schools is learner-

centred and teacher-centred. The term learner-centred literacy intervention refers to NGOs or organisations' external from the school providing literacy assistance to the schools, in the form of teaching resources, teaching the learners directly, and administering assessments to the learners. The term teacher-centred literacy intervention refers to NGOs or organisations' external to the school which provide literacy assistance to the schools by providing teaching resources, teacher development training, and class visits etc. This type of intervention is directed to supporting the teacher instead of working directly with the learners. The difference between the two interventions is that in School A, there is a teacher deployed by the NGO/ external organisation to work directly with the learners, by teaching isiXhosa reading and writing in groups of 5 - 8 learners in FP. Whereas, in School B, the teachers receive professional development through training workshops and classroom visits, there is no direct interaction or teaching with the learners. The nature of the intervention is explained to give some contextual background of the two schools in the study.

5.3.2 Baseline assessment tools for reading in isiXhosa FP

It was discovered that two BA tools are used by each of the schools in the study, the EGRA tool which is endorsed by the DBE and another BA tool from the external organisations (Funda Wandé and Gadra Education). Funda Wandé's BA tool is a modified version of EGRA. Gadra Education's BA tool is a modified version of DIBELS and EGRA.

In School B, the teachers stated that they used both the EGRA and the external organisation's BA tool, which is the modified version of EGRA. Both teachers indicated that the second tool was not much different from that of EGRA. The main difference they could identify was the passage reading component, noting that the stories learners read were different. When the teachers were probed to explicitly state the components of the second BA tool, the grade 2 teacher indicated, that the tool assesses letter-sound knowledge, double consonants, and word recognition. In grade 3, the teacher indicated that the modified EGRA tool assesses letter-sound knowledge, double consonants, word recognition, passage reading and comprehension questions.

Furthermore, the findings in the survey questionnaire and interviews with the teachers and LSA revealed that the most prominent BA tool for reading in isiXhosa is EGRA as illustrated in *Table 5.2* in the summary of questionnaire responses. For the interviews, the LSA indicated that the DBE endorsed EGRA as a BA tool for reading. Her response was as follows:

This baseline assessment tool thina ke (we) as a department we call it Early Grade Reading Assessment and shortened as EGRA. It is a very powerful tool because it is assisting us to know

where the learner's levels are in terms of reading. It is done in four ways, whereby the learners... that's when we are going to assess them on the sounds... of sounding of the letters. From there, they are supposed to go to words... word recognition, from there, they are supposed to go to passage reading, and then from there, they will be assessed on understanding you know... they are given a passage to read and then they will be asked questions, that is EGRA.

Furthermore, the prominence of the EGRA tool was confirmed during interviews when the researcher obtained the term 1 BA results for reading. The records from T2, T3 and T4 were that of EGRA. The EGRA assesses the following components of reading according to the records of results and EGRA toolkit which was received in the interviews: letter-sound knowledge, word recognition, passage reading and five comprehension questions. These components are assessed beginning, mid-year and end of the year with three different assessment sets depending on the grade and when the assessment is administered. The letter sound component of EGRA illustrated in *Figure 5.1A* is administered to grade 2 and 3 learners at the beginning of the year (term 1) and it comprises of 40 letter sounds. The mid-year (term 3) EGRA letter sound component which is illustrated in *Figure 5.1B* comprises of 60 letter sounds.

Assessment 1

Umzekelo: b s

Itshathi //

V	l	h	g	S	y	z	W	e	n
l	k	T	d	K	t	q	d	z	A
h	w	z	m	U	r	j	A	x	U
g	r	b	Q	L	f	l	Z	s	r

Figure 5.1A: Assessment 1 EGRA Letter-sound component in Assessment 1 set

Assessment 2

Iphapha Lokuhlola 2

Ukubizwa kwezandi zoonobumba. (LS)

Itshathi 1.2

s	n	c	b	p	y	F	c	a	e
y	S	q	p	M	v	O	t	n	P
z	A	E	x	F	f	h	u	a	t
w	S	H	B	S	l	g	m	i	l
c	n	g	D	o	K	M	w	p	r
f	t	v	a	U	T	y	B	Q	i

Figure 5.1B: Assessment 2 EGRA Letter-sound component in Assessment 2 set

In addition, the beginning and mid-year (term 3) EGRA word recognition component used by the T2, T3 and T4 comprises of 80 words to be read in a minute as illustrated in *Figure 5.3A* and *Figure 5.3B*.

Assessment 1

Ukufundwa kwamagama aqhelekileyo. (WR)

Umzekelo: utata icici

Itshathi yamagama 2.1

umama	utata	usisi	usana	kuba	isikolo	wa ka	kudala
ikati	vuka	wabona	funa	lala	suka	wema	mna
bona	cula	iti	Imali	luma	Emva	cela	udade
imoto	sela	ubisi	yena	usuku	waya	Ihagu	intombi
wona	ifama	icawa	Ewe	jika	vasa	umfo	zathi
hayi	zisa	nomama	lilela	ibali	ukuba	njani	phambili
wabona	ubisi	Imini	isele	wafika	lila	phambi	imini
ubisi	imali	kuqala	ihagu	isofa	ibali	umhlobo	wabo
umalume	ikofu	wabeleka	qoqa	vela	vota	kusasa	umsebenzi
buza	xoxa	zola	bona	funda	esikhulu	amehlo	maziye

Figure 5.2A: Assessment 1 EGRA Word recognition component

Assessment 2

Ukufundwa kwamagama aqhelekileyo. (WR)

Umzekelo: utata icici

Itshathi yamagama 2.2

lala	lila	vuka	umama	usana	Wabona	kuqala	kudala
jika	ukuba	wavuka	wabo	nomama	wema	wabeleka	bona
umhlobo	kusasa	wona	utata	luma	emva	qoqa	Udade
imoto	phambi	ifama	usuku	xoxa	waya	ihagu	intombi
iti	amehlo	icawa	ewe	ikofu	hayi	cela	Suka
waza	zisa	funda	phambili	ibali	maziye	imali	lilela
ihagu	sela	kakhulu	isityebi	ukuba	funa	usisi	Phila
ubisi	ibhokhwe	ukuya	isikolo	isofa	buza	imali	Kuba
ikati	imini	umfo	vela	vota	cula	umsebenzi	zola
ibali	yena	njani	imini	zathi	esikhulu	bona	ubisi

Figure 5.2B: Assessment 2 EGRA Word recognition component

The following subtask of EGRA is the passage reading component. The first passage comprises of 53 words to be read accurately in a minute. The second passage reading subtask comprises of 68 words. This task was not administered by the grade 2 and 3 teachers in term 1. Teachers informed the researcher that learners are unable to read beyond the word recognition component at the beginning of the year and hence it was not assessed. The passage reading subtask is illustrated below in *Figure 5.3A* and *Figure 5.3B*.

Assessment 1

Passage reading (PR)

Itshathi 3/

ULolo wayeza kuqala ukuya kwisikolo	5
esikhulu. Lwalungathi alufiki olu suku	5
yimivuyo.	1
Ngomhla wokuvulwa kwezikolo wavuka	4
ekuseni. Wahamba waza watya isidlo	5
sakusasa. Emva koko uLolo wabeleka	5
ubhaka wakhe waya esikolweni nomama	5
wakhe.	1
Esikolweni waboniswa utitshalakazi wakhe.	4
Utishalakazi wabalisa ibali likaSidumo.	4
USidumo libali elidlala kumabonakude.	4
ULolo wahleka izinto ezenziwa nguSidumo	5
Wabona ukuba kumnandi esikolweni	5
esikhulu.	

Figure 5.3A: Assessment 1 EGRA Passage reading (ORF) component

Assessment 2

Iphepha lokuhlola (ekupheleni kwekota yokuqala)

Isicatshulwa: Itshathi 3.2

Kwakukho utata owayefuna umsebenzi.	4
Wavuka ekuseni wayakufuna umsebenzi	4
emzini wesityebi. Wahamba, wahamba	4
wada wafika emzini wesityebi.	4
Esi sityebi sasinomzi omkhulu. Wafika lo	6
tata wema phambi kwendlu waza	5
wathi ucela umsebenzi.	3
Isityebi sambuza utata ukuba ingaba	5
ufuna msebenzi mni na. Wathi ke yena	7
ufuna nokuba ngonjani na, angazityisa	7
neehagu.	
Isityebi ke samxelela ukuba	4
umsebenzi esinawo ngowokwalusa	3
iibhokhwe ezininzi kakhulu. Kufuneka	4
azijonge zingayi endleleni.	3
Wavuma ngovuyo olukhulu lo mfo.	5

Figure 5.3B: Assessment 2 EGRA Passage reading (ORF) component

Furthermore, there are 5 comprehension questions in all the assessment sets. The learners are asked comprehension questions on the passage based on where they stopped reading when the stipulated minute ended. The comprehension questions are illustrated in Figure 5.4A and 5.4B.

Imibuzo yesicatshulwa

Itshathi 3/

Umbuzo	Ichanekele	Ayichanekele
1. Ngubani owayeza kuya esikolweni?		
2. Wavuka nini ngosuku lokuvulwa kwezikolo?		
3. Waya nabani esikolweni?		
4. Wenza ntoni utitshalakazi wabo?		
5. Ingaba wabona ngathi kumnandi na esikolweni uLolo?		

Figure 5.4A: Assessment 1 EGRA Comprehension questions component

Assessment 2

Imibuzo yesicatshulwa

Itshathi 3.2

Umbuzo	Ichanekele	Ayichanekele
1. Lingantoni eli bali?		
2. Ngoobani ekuthethwa ngabo kweli bali?		
3. Wathini utata akufika emzini wesityebi?		
4. Yaba ngumsebenzi wantoni?		
5. Kwenzeka ntoni akuba efumene umsebenzi utata?		

Figure 5.4B: Assessment 2 EGRA Comprehension questions component

The results of the EGRA were presented in a record sheet as the one illustrated in *Figure 5.5* from the three teachers. From the recording sheet, each reading component has 2 columns, for the first attempt and second attempt. This was reiterated by T2 who acknowledged that she administers EGRA twice in a year.

Uhlolo lwesakhono sokufunda kumabanga aphantsi Iphepha lokubhala inkqubo-phambili

Isikolo:																				
Utshala:																				
Ibanga:	1																			
Ixesha lokuhlola	Uhlolo loku-1 (Ekuqaleni konyaka)					Uhlolo Lwesi-2 (Phakathi konyaka)					Uhlolo Lwesi 3 (Ekupheleni konyaka)									
Umhla																				
Umsebenzi	Izandi zoonobumba		Ukufundwa kwamagama		Isicatshulwa	C	Izandi zoonobumba		Ukufundwa kwamagama		Isicatshulwa	C	Izandi zoonobumba		Ukufundwa kwamagama		Isicatshulwa	C	Izimvo	
	1.1		2.1		3.1		1.2		2.2		3.2		1.3		2.3		3.3			
Inani lamagama ngokobuninzi	40		80		53	5Q	60		80		68	5Q	100		80		61	5Q		
	Okoku-1	Okwe si-2	Okoku-1	Okwe si-2	Okoku-1	Okwe si-2	Okoku-1	Okwe si-2	Okoku-1	Okwe si-2	Okoku-1	Okwe si-2	Okoku-1	Okwe si-2	Okoku-1	Okwe si-2	Okoku-1	Okwe si-2	Okoku-1	Okwe si-2
Inani lamagama ubuncinane	20	30	20	30	20	30	50	60	40	50	30	40	50	70	20	35	20	30		
Names																				
1.																				
2.																				
3.																				
4.																				
5.																				
6.																				
7.																				
8.																				
9.																				
10.																				
11.																				
12.																				
13.																				

EGRA Isixhosa TG

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Figure 5.5: EGRA recording sheet

The only exceptional response was from T1 who is deployed by the NGO. He offered the grade 2 baseline assessment results and the organisation's BA toolkit which were the modified version of EGRA and DIBELS. T1 reiterated that the BA tool was adapted and had the following features of

assessment for learners:

- Beginning of the year: letter naming fluency, nonsense words fluency and oral reading fluency
- Mid year: letter naming fluency, phonemic segmentation fluency, nonsense words fluency and oral reading fluency
- End of the year: letter naming fluency, nonsense words fluency and oral reading fluency.

Some of the subtasks mentioned by the teacher are not included in the EGRA toolkit, such as the feature of phonemic segmentation fluency and nonsense words fluency. Authors such as Schroeder and Trudell (2012) have argued for reading assessments and pedagogies that take into consideration the sociolinguistics of the language as a way of guarding against transferring assessment practices from one language to the next without consideration of sociolinguistic factors. The phonemic segmentation fluency feature mentioned by T1 was previously reiterated by authors such as Ardington et al. (2020) and Diemer et al. (2015) when referring to the decoding of a text in isiXhosa. The authors mentioned that the importance and/or knowledge of segmenting syllables is a foundational component when reading in isiXhosa, which is one component the EGRA toolkit does not have. However, the inclusion of the nonsense word component is a feature in DIBELS, aimed at assessing reading in the English language. According to Fuchs et al. (2004), nonsense words are pseudowords and their letter sound correspondence is represented as consonant-vowel- consonant. The authors state their purpose is to assess the ability to blend words, which was created by the authors of DIBELS (Kaminiski, Smith, & Laimon, 2002). It is not clear why this feature/subtask is included as a subtask, instead of focussing on word reading or ascertain word reading levels of learners. It does not align with the features of isiXhosa and the CAPS curriculum, CAPS makes it explicitly clear that learners should build words with letter-sounds taught in the grade. In the same vein, if we look at Biggs's CA concept, there needs to be an intention on why we assess a feature to the learner.

5.4 Specific components and focus of reading in the BA Tools

In addressing the second research question, the features or subtasks in the baseline assessment tools in this study will be discussed. The discussion will focus on the tools in relation to the linguistic features of the isiXhosa language, and their alignment with the CAPS FP curriculum as CAPS makes it explicitly clear. Presented are the themes that emerged from the findings.

5.4.1 Letter-sound knowledge

The first component of reading that is assessed through baseline assessment using both EGRA and the adapted BA tool from both external organisations is letter-sound knowledge. There was a sense of unanimity on the importance of the letter-sound knowledge component from the teachers and the LSA. This component has been regarded as one of the foundational literacy components by the US Reading Panel (2000), 2030 Reading panel (Spaull, 2022) and National Framework for the Teaching of Reading in African Languages in the FP (2020). The researcher investigated whether the letter sound component was in alignment with the linguistic features of the isiXhosa language, in relation to what literature describes as language acquisition in relation to the curriculum. Furthermore, in looking at these features or components, the researcher assessed whether the text in the BA tools was in accordance with the variety of texts found in the language. As presented in Chapter 2, isiXhosa language has a phonic system that has long multisyllabic words incorporating blends, di- tri-, and quadgraphs (Bikitsha & Katz, 2013; de Vos, 2014). The ability to read the letter-sound accurately and correctly has an impact on the learner's decoding as well as reading development. It is plausible to assess if learners are able to decode these linguistic features found in most isiXhosa texts, and also mediate appropriately where they are not proficient.

Perusing *Figure 5.1A* and *Figure 5.1B*, which are the letter-sound components in the EGRA that were assessed by the teachers and the researcher in this study, one can see that they only make use of single letter or phonemes in the charts administered to learners. There is no use of complex consonant clusters, which are a linguistic feature in isiXhosa. Even though there is significance in assessing the phoneme feature, it is also important to incorporate features that are prominent in isiXhosa texts, such as books, magazines, posters, newspapers, etc. which learners will come across in their reading development. The external organisations also made use of the letter-sound component, only assessing phonemes as illustrated in *Figure 5.6* below.

In the phonics section of the CAPS curriculum for isiXhosa, it is stipulated that learners should be able to build and read words with complex consonant clusters in term 4 of Grade 1 (DBE, 2011a, p. 75). This aspect is not presented in these charts administered to learners in Grade 2 and 3 as stipulated in CAPS. Biggs (1999) argue that the intended outcomes should be matched in the teaching and learning process, as well as assessments. To further this claim, Vygotsky's SCT stated the importance of appropriate mediation. The mediation Vygotsky referred to in this aspect of the BA component is when teachers know, and it is clear which aspect they need to foster mediation in. Omitting certain aspects in the baseline assessment although represented in the curriculum, such as the complex consonants

will not give a clear picture of whether learners are proficient in this aspect or not.

Letter Naming Fluency (LNF)										Grade 2 Baseline	
Ukubizwa kwezandi zoonobumba										CLS	
d	l	o	m	X	n	E	a	p	x	/10	
N	K	c	i	D	y	B	J	r	V	/10	
v	o	w	u	V	l	H	G	s	y	/10	
g	R	B	q	l	f	L	z	q	R	/10	
x	g	u	e	p	n	X	v	i	a	/10	
K	f	h	o	X	z	T	E	g	c	/10	
t	G	w	B	i	a	Z	b	d	j	/10	
w	c	b	a	H	k	B	e	y	u	/10	
Z	X	h	u	e	v	N	e	a	u	/10	
b	z	n	C	o	k	L	H	y	o	/10	

Figure 5.6: External organisation Letter-sound component in School A

What is presented in *Figure 5.6* is partially in line with the National Framework for the Teaching of Reading in African Languages in the FP (2020) which states the five foundational literacy skills in the development of the reading continuum are phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The teachers who participated in this study only assessed two of the aspects at the beginning of (Term 1) in Grade 2 and Grade 3. These are letter-sound knowledge and the word recognition components. The external organisations' baseline assessment tool assesses most of the aspects of what is considered the 'reading pillars' which are in line with the isiXhosa linguistic features when looking at the literature around the structure of the language.

5.4.2 Word recognition

The findings revealed that the word recognition component or subtask is assessed using the EGRA toolkit and the two baseline assessment tools from the external organisations in the two schools. It was assessed in Grade 2 and 3 learners at the beginning of the year. This subtask together with the letter-sound knowledge subtask, are the only two subtasks that teachers assessed in the Grade 2 and 3 classrooms at the beginning of the year in which this study was conducted. As revealed above, the teachers revealed that learners are unable to read a connected text or passage at the beginning of the year, whether in Grade 2 or 3. It is an assumption that learners may not be able to be proficient in passage of reading or oral reading fluency (ORF) at the beginning of the year in Grade 2 based on the benchmarks. The guidelines from the benchmarks suggest that learners should be able to read at least

40 letter-sounds per minute at the end of Grade 1. These guidelines from the Nguni benchmarks must be viewed in alignment with the CAPS curriculum on what the intended outcome is for Grade 2 and Grade 3. Biggs (1999) has argued that the content assessed must be aligned with the curriculum, and therefore this means, assessing learners on what they have been taught regarding reading. For the word recognition component in the baseline assessment tools either from EGRA or the external organisations, this means looking at the words assessed in the tools. One needs to investigate if this subtask is aligned with the linguistic features of the isiXhosa language as well as the CAPS FP curriculum. *Table 5.5* is a summary of the guidelines CAPs provides for the intended outcome for each FP grade in isiXhosa when it comes to the word recognition component:

Table 5.5: Intended learning outcome for learners for word recognition component

Grade 1	The ability to build words with letter-sounds taught in Grade 1. Build words with tri and quad-graphs, for example, <i>ingcwaba</i>, <i>inkwaleko</i>, <i>indlwane</i>, etc.
Grade 2	The ability to read familiar and unfamiliar words consisting of complex consonant clusters consisting of 4 or 5 graphemes, (<i>oonone noonontlamu</i>)
Grade 3	Beginning of the year, continue with reading and building words with complex consonant clusters taught in Grade 2. The ability to read and write a wide variety of sentences using phonic sounds taught in Grade 3.

For Grade 1 and 2, CAPS describes the words that need to be assessed for this component, but in Grade 3, it is only at the beginning of the year where word recognition should be assessed. The intended outcome in Grade 3 is for learners to be able to read and write connected texts or sentences. This makes sense for the Nguni language benchmark to suggest that learners should be able to read 35 cwpm by the end of the Grade (Ardington et al., 2021). However, the authors did stipulate that the threshold set should not be the main goal but provide a guide where learners are in terms of reading development. More, the South African White Paper on Inclusive Education (DoE, 2001) takes cognisance of the diverse levels of learners within the same Grade.

To answer the question of whether the subtask named word recognition is in alignment with the curriculum and the linguistic features of the isiXhosa language, an analysis of the subtask presented in *Figure 5.2A* from EGRA is assessed. In *Figure 5.2A*, the word recognition component comprises of familiar words found in most of the FP texts in the isiXhosa language. The words highlighted in yellow consist of di-graphs also known as *oonombinini* in isiXhosa. As highlighted in the CAPS curriculum,

learners should be able to read and build a wide variety of words that are not presented in the EGRA. One of Biggs' (1999) arguments when it comes to aligning the curriculum and assessment is that one cannot assess what has not been taught. , What has been taught should be assessed. Again, the inclusion of consonant clusters earlier in the Grade 1 CAPS curriculum was a recommendation by Ardington et al. (2020) since it appears in most texts in isiXhosa. The EGRA tool is assessing the type of simple words as recommended in the curriculum for learners in grade 2 at the beginning of the year. However, for grade 3, learners should have been exposed to a variety of texts with words containing complex consonant clusters. The question one asks is why these consonant clusters are not incorporated within the EGRA word recognition component. Part of mediating learning and developing the skills needed for learners, in this case, isiXhosa reading, is having clarity where learners are having difficulty so that progressive development of reading skills is intentional and explicit.

Figure 5.2B is the second subtask for assessing word recognition that was administered in this study in Term 3. This task is prescribed to be assessed in Term 3 in the EGRA toolkit and was administered by the researcher. Similarly, Assessment set 1 in *Figure 5.2A*, on word recognition component administered in Grade 2 and 3 in Term 3, has no complex consonant clusters which are a linguistic feature in isiXhosa and is illustrated to be the intended outcome for learners in the two grades in the CAPS curriculum. Learners may not be reading at grade level as discussed in section 5.6.5. However, teaching and assessing all these components will build on to other reading components, to facilitate the development of reading actual connecting texts that consist of these complex consonant clusters.

The two external organisations also assess the word recognition components as illustrated in *Figure 5.6A* and *Figure 5.4B* to Grade 2 and 3 learners. The word recognition component in *Figure 5.4A* makes use of long multisyllabic words incorporating blends in the two last blocks of the chart, as highlighted by the arrow. Bigozzi et al., (2016) pointed out one of the linguistic features of isiXhosa language as that which has multiple letters corresponding to one sound. Consequently, this influences learner decoding and language development because it requires working memory. It is commended that this feature is incorporated in the BA tool, in ascertaining the reading progress levels of learners as the CAPS curriculum intends for the learners in the two grades.

Word Reading Fluency (WRF)					Grade 2 Mid-Year
Ukufundwa kwamagama					WRC
iti	apha	inja	uxam	bomvu	/5
ubisi	ubuso	ifama	iliso	ihoko	/5
ivasi	ijezi	umoya	imela	ihagu	/5
icephe	ixesha	iwele	ipere	idolo	/5
igyeza	isifo	umlilo	igusha	umama	/5
utata	icici	iqaqqa	ixoxo	ikati	/5
udonga	ufudo	igama	unesi	ipapa	/5
idolophu	igolide	ikawusi	unopopi	itafile	/5
ilulwane	imisebe	ilekese	ipensile	ifestile	/5
iqabaka	umalume	imifuno	inaliti	izivakalisi	/5
isithuthuthu	idayimani	izilwanyana	ibhabhathane	isinambuzane	/5
imisundululu	imifanekiso	amazinyo	ukugcakamela	isikhukukazi	/5

Figure 5.6A: Word recognition component in adapted BA tool in School A

biza	nini	imoto	vala	wam
lala	idolo	iti	zoba	ileli
xoxa	ulele	vuka	isisu	izolo
thatha	chuba	hleka	ncuma	uyantywila

Figure 5.6B: Word recognition component in adapted BA tool in School B

As illustrated in *Figure 5.6B*, the word recognition component to be administered by teachers in School B in Grade 2 and 3, are simple familiar words. They consist of one consonant cluster in words such as *uyantywila* with **ntyw** (trigraph). This is in alignment with the linguistic features of isiXhosa and the curriculum. It is important to assess the competency of reading using these types of words with long multisyllabic strings, which are prominent within the language. They expose learners to not only simple words, but assessment practice that fits its purpose in language terms.

5.4.3 Nonsense word subtask

As discussed in chapter 4 (section 4.3), in School A the literacy intervention is learner-centred, the external organisation teacher administers the BA from their NGO organisation to the Grade 2 learners.

In their adapted BA tool, they have a component or subtask on nonsense words as illustrated in *Figure 5.7*. This subtask is a component that is assessed in DIBELS for the English language (Kaminiski et al., 2002). Goswami et al. (1998) state that nonsense word fluency is designed to assess the learner's ability to identify letter sounds and blend letters into words in the form of a consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC). It is not clear why this aspect is added to the external organisation's adapted tool. This component is not featured in the curriculum and does nothing to advance the vocabulary of isiXhosa learners. At this stage, learners need to learn and focus on real words and their correct usage. Blending of a word, as the principle of a nonsense word, can be done with a real word in isiXhosa, which will assist learners with letter-sound knowledge, word recognition, vocabulary development and writing. It is important to teach the appropriate usage of words in isiXhosa, as it performs relatively low in international assessments such as PIRLS. Authors like Trudel & Schroedner (2012) and others have argued that teachers, organisations, and other stakeholders should guard against translating pedagogical practices in European languages to African languages where they do not apply. Along similar lines Hoffman (2012) critiqued the EGRA toolkit, referring to it as being a 'clone' of DIBELS. There is nothing wrong with adapting certain subtasks or aspects that are appropriate to the language and when the aspect fits the purpose, in this case ascertain levels for certain subtasks eg, letter-sound knowledge, word recognition, etc. Adding the nonsense words feature or subtask in the BA reiterates Hoffman's criticism.

Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF)					Grade 2 Baseline	
Ukufunda kwamagama angenangqondo					CLS	WRC
iva	ane	uma	ilo	uto	/15	/15
jeti	goha	heye	kemu	soda	/20	/15
caca	wuli	xade	medu	qali	/20	/15
rita	nugi	saze	piyu	redi	/20	/15
ifu	ipo	uge	ixa	ico	/15	/15
zane	befa	dale	xuwa	side	/20	/15
uda	nagi	qage	ceda	xita	/19	/15
dola	gofu	axa	omi	ida	/17	/15
zefa	sija	gidi	jane	bada	/20	/15
miba	uta	imi	izi	losi	/17	/15
xizi	pipo	tija	liva	tosi	/20	/15
alo	tuto	sume	bafe	pedu	/19	/15
qoq	fija	pemu	taxu	xuti	/19	/15
pugi	xomi	quli	zixi	xico	/20	/15

Figure 5.7: Nonsense word component in Adapted BA tool in School A

5.4.4 Blends and syllables subtask

Scholars have argued that the visual pattern of complex consonant phonemes in the isiXhosa language requires attention to detail and accuracy, and therefore requires more cognitive work from learners unlike the English language (Probert & De Vos, 2016; Ardington, 2020; Land, 2015). Findings in the interviews revealed that teachers teach these blends and syllables, as they appear in the subtask from the adapted BA tools, but not on EGRA. This shows the importance of incorporating these in their teaching of isiXhosa reading. EGRA could consider adding the syllable and blend components as part of the assessment. In addition, these components should not be limited to just EGRA but also extend to curriculum and actual teaching of reading in isiXhosa as Fleish (2018) reiterated.

These are some of the responses from the teachers to corroborate this argument above:

T3: *You start with vowels, and single consonants, then you combine these two. Then it's the sound, then you continue with double consonants. Then you go-to words, eg /bona/ /lona/ zona/. Then you go to short sentences. 'umama uyahlala---mba, izitya'. Those are short sentences. Then you go too long sentences, whereby you will use strip sentences, cut them, and mix the words so that a learner can rebuild the words.*

T4: *Its sounds, single sounds with consonants, and double consonants, which they combine with vowels. With the sounds, they build a word.eg, /ba/ /be/ /bi/ /bo/ /bu/. Then you say to the learner /ba/ and /bi/. You ask them to combine it, and they say /babi/. From the words, you go to the story/passage. Then you count per minute, how many words they read per minute.*

Figure 5.8A is a visual illustration of the subtask or component of the phonemic segmentation administered to learners in Grade 2 in School A in the adapted BA tool. While Figure 5.8B is a visual illustration showing the assessment of double consonants administered to learners in School B, these components are not assessed in EGRA.

Phonemic Segmentation Fluency (PSF)			Grade 2 Mid-Year
Ukuhlukanisa amagama			CLS
umama /u//ma//ma/	utata /u//ta//ta/	usisi /u//si//si/	/9
usana /u//sa//na/	kuba /ku//ba/	isikolo /i//si//ko//lo/	/9
kudala /ku//da//la/	ikati /i//ka//ti/	udade /u//da//de/	/9
vuka /vu//ka/	wabona /wa//bo//na/	lala /la//la/	/7
wema /we//ma/	mna /m//na/	bona /bo//na/	/6
cula /cu//la/	iti /i//ti/	imali /i//ma//li/	/7
luma /lu//ma/	emva /em//va/	cela /ce//la/	/6
funa /fu//na/	bona /bo//na/	suka /su//ka/	/6

Figure 5.8A: Phonemic segmentation component for Grade 2 in School A

bh	mb	nc	hl	jw	ch	mf	nd
dl	ty	dw	ts	nj	mv	ph	kh
mp	ng	gq	cw	qh	th	nw	ny

Figure 5.8B: Double consonants for Grade 2 in School B

It has been reported by Ardington et al. (2020) that learners experience difficulty in reading complex consonants in long multisyllabic string words in isiXhosa. The long multisyllabic strings consisting of complex consonant clusters are not prominent in the EGRA and the external baseline assessment tool, even though it is mentioned to be an important linguistic feature in the isiXhosa language. From the interviews with the teachers, it has been reiterated that the BA assessment is administered to ascertain the reading levels of learners for each of the components, and specifically to identify which aspect they struggle with for appropriate mediation of learning to occur. The BA is intended to give a clear picture of the different aspects of reading for the grade. If certain features are not included, it will not give a holistic picture of learners' reading development.

5.4.5 Passage reading (ORF) subtask

In the development of reading proficiency, passage reading is whereby learners read words or a connecting text with increased speed, fluency, and accuracy. Ardington et al. (2020) suggest this stage or level to be appropriate for learners in Grade 2. In Grade 2 and 3 in both schools, the ORF subtask was administered in Term 3 according to the results obtained from the teachers. Teachers revealed that they were unable to assess learners on this component when the baseline assessment was to be administered in the first term. They suggested that there are progressions within the subtask, from simple (letter-sound knowledge) to complex (passage reading). They stated that they cannot progress to assess a learner's more complex subtasks such as passage reading when a learner is struggling to perform in the letter-sound knowledge or word recognition. The ORF of passage reading component was assessed by the researcher in Term 3, and the results of this component are presented in the following Chapter.

The ORF passage in *Figure 5.9A* and *Figure 5.9B* is from EGRA and comprises some of the words that were assessed in the previous subtask of word recognition. Although it is a connecting passage, the words include recurring words from the previous assessments. The sentences are short and include long syllable string words that are characteristic of the agglutinative nature of the isiXhosa language, and appropriate for FP. Passage reading assessment builds on other components in the reading development continuum. In addition, Vygotsky theory emphasizes reading as a social practice, therefore one cannot utilize texts unfamiliar to learners, or so 'foreign' that they are new during the assessment phase. Biggs' CA is befitting in using texts that align with the curriculum, in that what is assessed cannot be what was not taught. The passages in EGRA are appropriate in that respect. They are about a learner experiencing school for the first time. The second text is about an old man seeking employment from a rich man and is allocated the position of feeding pigs. These two passages are appropriate as they merge reading as a social practice and the environment.

Assessment 1

Passage reading (PR)

Itshathi 3/

ULolo wayeza kuqala ukuya kwisikolo esikhulu. Lwalungathi alufiki olu suku yimivuyo.	5
Ngomhla wokuvulwa kwezikolo wavuka ekuseni. Wahlamba waza watya isidlo sakusasa. Emva koko uLolo wabeleka ubhaka wakhe waya esikolweni nomama wakhe.	5
Esikolweni waboniswa utitshalakazi wakhe. Utitshalakazi wabalisa ibali likaSidumo. USidumo libali elidlala kumabonakude. ULolo wahleka izinto ezenziwa nguSidumo. Wabona ukuba kumnandi esikolweni esikhulu.	1
	4
	4
	4
	5
	5
	5
	1
	4
	4
	4
	5
	5

Figure 5.9A: EGRA passage reading (ORF) subtask on Assessment 1 set

Assessment 2

Iphapha lokuhlala (ekupheleni kwekota yokuqala)

Isicatshulwa: Itshathi 3.2

Kwakukho utata owayefuna umsebenzi. Wavuka ekuseni wayakufuna umsebenzi emzini wesityebi. Wahamba, wahamba wada wafika emzini wesityebi. Esi sityebi sasinomzi omkhulu. Wafika lo tata wema phambi kwendlu waza wathi ucela umsebenzi. Isityebi sambuza utata ukuba ingaba ufuna msebenzi mni na. Wathi ke yena ufuna nokuba ngonjani na, angazityisa neehagu. Isityebi ke samxelela ukuba umsebenzi esinawo ngowokwalusa iibhokhwe ezininzi kakhulu. Kufuneka azijonge zingayi endleleni. Wavuma ngovuyo olukhulu lo mfo.	4
	4
	4
	4
	6
	5
	3
	5
	7
	7
	4
	3
	4
	3
	5

Figure 5.9B: EGRA passage reading (ORF) subtask on Assessment 2 set

Although there have been debates about the standardised language use of words in isiXhosa due to dialects (Mtsatse & Staden, 2021; Maseko, 2017). The focus is not on the standard word in isiXhosa but the appropriateness of the passage holistically for FP. Nkomo & Wababa (2013) argue that this issue of language could be addressed through making use of practical tools such as dictionaries, in addressing diverse communication and learning-oriented needs of the language. Apart from the standardised use of isiXhosa language, which is significant, the researcher looked at what CAPS states

on the use of sentences and phonic sounds that should be included in Grade 2 and 3 texts as illustrated in the summary *Table 5.5*. The passage includes short familiar words and words that include long multisyllabic strings. The sentences are short and appropriate for the grades assessed, and in alignment with the outcomes on the FP curriculum for grades 2 and 3. A part of language use is incorporating punctuations such as commas, question marks, and exclamation marks in text, in ascertaining whether learners not only read with speed and accuracy but determine their use and use them appropriately when reading. This feature is not prominent in the EGRA passage. The passage reading or ORF component from the two external organisations in School A and B are similar in structure with the EGRA. They both have the same issues addressed above (refer to *Figure 5.10A* and *Figure 5.10B*).

Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)	Grade 2 Baseline
Ukufundwa kwamabali	
Ibali lokuqala	
Inja kaTumi UTumi unenja emnyama. Igama lenja yakhe nguBhingo. UBhingo uyakuthanda ukudlala ngebhola. UTumi uphosela UBhingo ibhola ukuba ayichole abuye nayo. Ngenye imini uBhingo walahleka kuba wayelandela umhlobo wakhe. UTumi wamkhangela kuyo yonke indawo. Wehla enyuka isitalato emkhangela. Wakhwaza uTumi ukuba abuye. Wam fumana uBhingo epakeni. Wavuya ukubona uTumi.	7 13 19 25 32 38 45 47
Amagama afundiweyo: _____ Iimpazamo: _____ Amagama afundwe kakuhle: _____	
Ibali lesibini	
Umdlalo kaSipho NgoMgqibelo uSipho ebedlala isoka. Isikolo sakhe besidlala nesinye isikolo. Umama wakhe, ubhuti wakhe uThemba, kwakunye nodade wabo omncinane uNandi bebezile ukuza kumbukela. USipho waye onwabile kakhulu. Umdlalo wesoka uqale ngentsimbi yesi 9 entloko. USipho ufake amangaku amathathu, waza umhlobo wakhe uJabu wafaka lalinye. Iqela lakhe lawuphumelela umdlalo. USipho wanikwa imbasa ngenxa yokuzimisela kwakhe.	6 13 19 25 32 38 45 51 53
Amagama afundiweyo: _____ Iimpazamo: _____ Amagama afundwe kakuhle: _____	

Figure 5.10A: BA Tool in School A Passage reading (ORF) component

Ukufunda ngotyibiliko

UJabu wayenenja encinane.

Ngenye imini uJabu nenja yakhe bayakudlala kwibala elalisemva kwendlu.

Injana yabona umvundla yazama ukuwuleqa.

Yalahlekainja.

Wabangayibiza uJabu kodwa ayizange ibuye.

UJabu wabonakala eneenyembezi emehlweni akhe waza wagoduka.

Kodwa kwathi phambi kwangorhatya yabuya injana.

Yayidiniwe, ilambile.

Wavuya kakhulu uJabu akumbona umhlobo wakhe.

UJabu wa yinika ukutya namanziinja.

UJabu nenja yakhe baya kulala.

25

Figure 5.10B: BA Tool in School B Passage reading (ORF) component

T4 in School B stated the learners who can read the EGRA passage, do not take into account punctuations when reading a text. When the learners were able to decode and read words, they only read but without meaning, a concept known as ‘barking at the text’. The phrase barking at ‘print’, originated from Smith (1971/1994) meaning learners decode text without understanding the meaning. Apart from not reading for meaning, the learners were reported to read a word with an incorrect tone or pronunciation within a sentence. IsiXhosa is a tonal language, depending on the context of the sentence or text, a word needs to be read with a particular tone, either high-pitched or low-pitched (Maphalala et al., 2013). For example, the isiXhosa word *ubulele* could mean ‘were you sleeping?’, ‘you were sleeping’, ‘did you kill?’, ‘you killed!’, ‘did you give thanks?’, ‘do give thanks’ or ‘He/she have thanks’ depending on the tone one reads the word. Therefore, what T4 reiterates is significant in that a developed reader who reads with meaning will take into account the context of the word and read it with the appropriate tone, and also pay attention to punctuations.

5.5 Pedagogical responsiveness of teachers

This section will be addressing the third research question on teachers' responsiveness to the results of the baseline assessment for reading in isiXhosa FP. It will report on how the results of the baseline assessment for reading influence teachers' pedagogical practice. This will be discussed in relation to what was revealed about the reading strategies and remedial work employed after obtaining the baseline assessment results. In reporting these aspects, a report of the development of the foundational literacy components using the EGRA tool over the year 2021 in the two schools in Grade 2 and 3 will be discussed. In each of the Grades 2 and 3 classes in the study, the teachers together with the researcher identified 10 learners per class comprising 5 least performing and 5 most performing learners in the baseline assessment results in Term 1 of 2021. These 10 learners per class were assessed by the researcher mid-year to affirm whether there are progressions on the results of learners based on the pedagogical response to the baseline assessment reported by the teachers. The section will end by reporting on the challenges experienced by teachers as a result of the baseline assessment for reading.

5.5.1 The administration and pedagogical integration of baseline assessment

An important aspect of the assessment process revealed by the teachers was that the administering of EGRA was done three times per year in each of the grades. The baseline assessment is administered to individual learners during normal teaching time on the timetable set for group guided reading in each of the first three quarterly terms where learners are assessed. T2 indicated that in addition to the time set for group guided reading, she also uses time allocated for learners' lunch break in order to assess the learners who may have been absent during the assessment. The teachers maintained that they set a timer to a minute for each of the tasks, taking them approximately 1 - 2 weeks to assess most of the learners in their classrooms.

Below are some of the teachers' responses from the teachers revealed this below:

T2: Ekuqaleni konyaka. Apha phakathi ke ngoku enyakeni, as niqhuba, ujong a iprogress. Iyazihambela.

At the beginning of the year. Then in the middle of the year. As the year progresses you monitor the learners' progress.

T1: We do it at the beginning of the year, just just after they are all back at school? And then you will start with that. And then we do have another one in June. Okay, yes. And then the last one in December.

So, in grades one there is no reading the first term, because obviously, they can't read, they sound and name the alphabets. But in Grade Two, we do have reading in the first term, and in June, then at the end of the year. So yeah.

T3: *We do it per term for all learners.*

T4: *Siyenza qho ngeKota, hayi, siyenza kathathu.*

We do it per term. No, we do it three times in a year.

It can be deduced from the results that the diagnostic or baseline assessment (EGRA and other baseline assessment tools) inform formative assessment. Hardings et al., (2015) outlines the principles of a diagnostic assessment for reading. He argues that appropriate tools should be used to discover the learner's strengths and weaknesses. After the teacher has obtained this information, they should use their knowledge and experience to develop a solution to specific problems. In this case study, teachers indicated they only administered the letter-sound and word recognition components in term 1. The passage reading component was not assessed to learners as revealed in the interviews, because most learners were identified as not able to read a connecting passage. Then, it would be argued that the principle decision would be to teach learners to read a connecting passage. This is where Vygotsky's concept of mediation would apply. Teachers interviewed viewed the baseline assessment as a continuous assessment, formally referred to as a formative assessment. Formative assessment is a continuous assessment method during a lesson or series of lessons for a particular subject (Black, 1999). This was highlighted by T3 in the following response:

It is a continuous assessment. You do not rely only on formal tasks. Immediately after teaching, you check their understanding. They either write down or read aloud. You see from your interaction with the learners.

This shows that a diagnostic assessment informs the formative assessments. According to the teachers and LSA the focused teaching of reading occurs in group guided reading. This implied that mediation of reading is done in groups within the group guided reading sessions. Furthermore, in alignment with Vygotsky's Interactionist method of dynamic assessment, this method prescribes a pre-test, which is the baseline assessment done at the beginning of the year, to the learners in this study, followed by the next stage of mediating appropriately to get learners to the 'zone'. The 'zone' being reading at grade level. This method guides teachers in the mediation process of teaching reading in isiXhosa which is meant to be done in the group guided reading sessions for groups of learners.

In School A, the grade 2 learners are assessed twice for reading. T2 only administered EGRA within the scope of the imperatives set by the DoE, but T1 administered the adapted baseline assessment tool to the same grade 2 learners as part of the external intervention of his organisation. The results of the learners are not shared between the two parties administering the assessment. In School B, the grade 2 and 3 teachers stated in the survey and confirmed again in the interview that they administered two similar assessments to the learners, the EGRA and its modified version. They stated that this is done for submission or reporting purposes to the external and the DBE. When questioned on issues of redundancy, they indicated that the external and EGRA tool serve the same purpose and results of the learners are similar, but they had to do it. One of the concerns of the administration of ‘many’ assessments at schools was expressed by scholars such as Hugo and Govender (2020) in their analysis of Annual National Assessments (ANAs). Administering a baseline assessment that serves the same purpose is a potential administration ‘nightmare’ for teachers. The focus and time could be spent on mediation rather than assessing two similar tools.

Further, each of the subtasks in EGRA or external organisation toolkit was timed per minute. The EGRA toolkit is administered as it is to the learners, nothing is added or adapted by the teachers. One of the teachers stated that they administered the same assessment twice; she records the first attempt and the second attempt from the learners. The purpose of assessing the same assessment twice to the learners was stated to be based on the recording sheet they received from the LSA, who support the school as a representative of DBE. Below are some responses from the teachers:

T3: We do not change. The baseline needs you to understand the learner’s reading levels. I do not change anything. It does the same thing. The stories/passages in the story may be different from the EGRA and Funda Wande tool but it is the same thing. You have to allow the learner to read the story, and count the words read. There are learners who can only read the alphabets or letter-sounds. There are learners who can read alphabets and vowels. The learners are not the same, and so are their levels

T2: Ndiyishiya inje. Second read kengoku, uzophinda ke ngoku, umhlambi uzodlula kengoku azotsho apha (showing researcher the EGRA). Nje eyi-53, yena aphelele ku47. Xa siphinda sifunda okwesibini, umhlambi agqithe okanye kuyaxhomekeka.

I leave it as it is. On the second read/attempt, the learner will read more words than they did in the first attempt. In the passage are 53 words, the learner can read up to 47 words. On the second attempt, they often read more words, but it also depends.

It can be assumed that learners will perform moderately than before if the same assessment is administered twice within the same time frame. It makes no sense why this administration practice of repeating the same assessment twice is done when learners are given examples before proceeding with each of the subtasks. There is a possibility of not having the most accurate results and a time waster. Instead, this time on repeating could be utilised on focusing on aspects learners are struggling with in the assessment, by choosing the appropriate mediation for the learners' in improving reading competency.

5.5.2 Influence of baseline assessment data on teachers' pedagogy

The teachers revealed that the baseline assessment results influence their pedagogy and the kind of remediation they use for learners. T2 stated that they start teaching using grade 1 level stories at the beginning of grade 2. She stated that the DBE learner books have simple passages or stories to assist with the teaching of reading. She further explained the learners who receive the least scores on the letter-sound knowledge are often reversing letters that look similar, thereby making them score low scores. She further explained that learners often score relatively higher in the second attempt of EGRA for each of the components. Her response was as follows:

Uyakwazi ufunda aphelelela apha (pointing to the letter-sound subtask), xa siphinda sifunda okwesibini, umhlambi agqithe apha (pointing to the letter-sound subtask), okanye kuyaxhomekeka.

They can perhaps read up to this point (pointing to the letter-sound sub-task), but when reading for the second time, the learner might read up to here (pointing to the letter-sound subtask or it depends).

She stated that she analysed the type of errors learners make as a starting point to what is needed to be taught. According to her, this had a positive impact on her teaching learners according to what she observed during the baseline assessment for reading. The baseline assessment results received from T2 for the letter sound component in term 1 are illustrated on Figure 11A and comparatively the results in term 3 are presented in Figure 11B. In term 3, the researcher assessed the 10 learners identified by the teacher. In Term 3, the results reveal a regression on the letter-sound performance of 5 learners from the 10 learners assessed by the researcher (refer to *Figure 11B*) when comparing the results obtained in Term 1 administered by the teacher. In the semi-structured interview, the teacher stated that they assessed each subtask twice when assessing the learners in Term 1, whereas the researcher assessed the subtask once to each learner in Term 3. The regression in the results for some of the

learners may be due to this repetition of the same assessment.

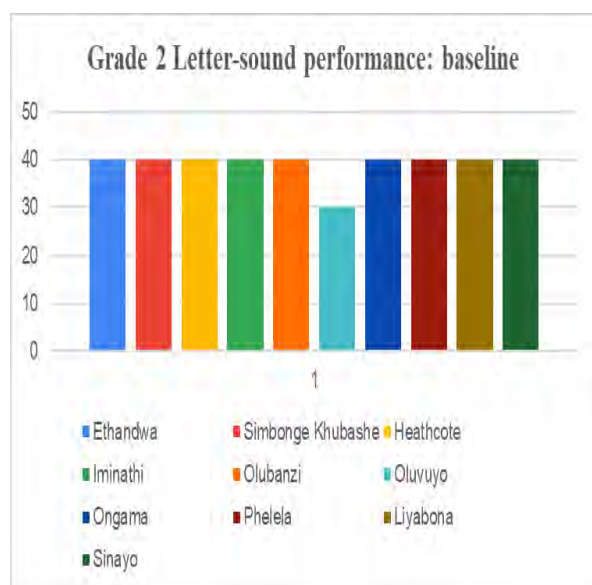


Figure 11A: Letter-sound performance

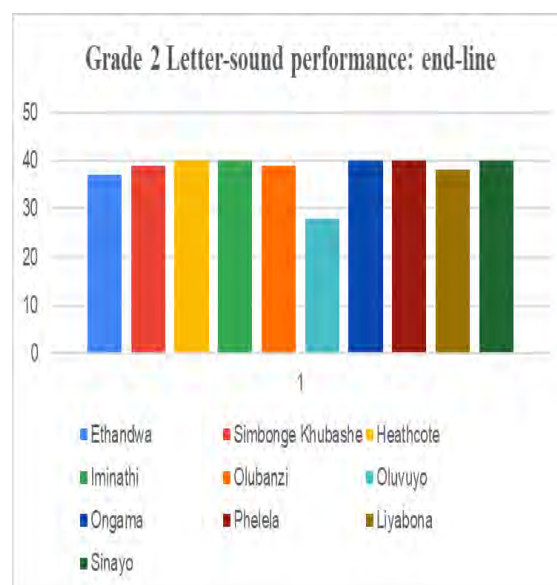


Figure 11B: Letter-sound performances

In School B, the grade 2 and 3 teachers explained the reading strategies they employ after they have attained the BA results. The strategy mentioned by the grade 2 teacher was the building and segmenting of word(s) with double consonants and/or blends. T3 further stated the importance of teaching words using syllables in isiXhosa, by demonstrating with the word /baleka/ as shown in the response below.

T3: *We start by doing blends with that group. If we read a story called 'Baleka', whereas with others, we will break down the word 'baleka', they will look for the word that has /ba/ /le/ /ka/. And then we build it. Before we blend, I encourage other teachers to have those letter-sounds broken down. If a child says /ba/ and /le/ and goes to /ka/, it means they can identify the words. You need to remind them and say, say /baleka/ kaloku.*

Say to the child listen. Who is the /ka/ with? You are teaching them to listen to what they are saying. So, you drill them until they get it. Some of them do get it.

T4: *Kwi double consonants, ababantu bakho, uzabanika ngokwala level yabo. If senza u /kr/ bona aba basokolayo mabanikwe u /k/ or /r/. Ade aba drill-e pha because ababantu bafuna irepetition*

T4 explained what she will do when she intends on teaching double consonants to learners and assess if they are still unable to read the double consonant, using the example of a /kr/ letter sound. She stated that she breaks the double consonant into single consonants /k/ and /r/ and teaches them separately,

repeats or ‘drills’ the letter sounds to the learners until they understand the single letters. When they do understand this aspect, she moves to the double sound components. She explained that this strategy is important for learners to understand that the double consonants can be broken down into single sounds and blended together to form the double consonants.

As explained in Chapter 1 (section 1.2.2) and reiterated by participants in section 5.4.1, one of the purposes of conducting baseline assessment is to ascertain the reading levels of learners. Vygotsky’s DA fits in the argument of having a pre-test in the form of a baseline assessment, as a means to ascertain the reading levels. This is done in order for the MKO to institute appropriate mediation to get learners in their ‘zone of proximal development’ which would be reading fluently, and with meaning or comprehension. What was established or revealed by the teachers was that baseline assessment was administered for grouping levels for group guided reading sessions. What was also important to establish as a researcher was what happens after baseline assessment is administered, and how teachers navigate their daily pedagogy through the influence of the baseline assessment results obtained by the learners. Vygotsky (1978) SCT reiterates the importance of mediation in getting learners to their ‘zone’ and the zone would amount to the appropriate reading level for the grade. The question of how teachers monitor reading levels was investigated.

The findings revealed that the monitoring of learners' progress is done through daily activities by the teachers through informal assessments during reading lessons in isiXhosa. They stated they do not rely only on the baseline assessment that is administered three times in a year in monitoring the reading levels. They often use a passage and assess learners' reading within the group guided reading sessions. The question of being able to sustain this method of monitoring was a question posed to the teachers as a follow-up to this response. They stated the monitoring of reading competencies was done through continuous assessments within those small groups they established at the beginning of the year. Some of the teachers’ responses below corroborate the above finding:

T3: *I constantly check the learners’ progress.*

T4: *I think, each and every week I want to see their level. I take about 3 learners and ask them to read for me. I found out today that the learner who was in the last group (last lower level) needs to be changed to the average group. They have moved from one level/group to the next.*

T2: *Uva kumnandi xa ubona ukuba abantwana bakho ba muvile. Uzibone ukuba noko ikhona into oyenzayo.*

*As a teacher, you feel good when you see the learners are progressing with regard to reading.
You can see that there is something you are doing*

The researcher also wanted to establish how the teachers deal with learners who are not reading at grade level after obtaining the results of the baseline assessment and through monitoring the progress of the learners' as the year progresses. Most teachers emphasized on the teaching strategies of the letter sound component and word reading component, the passage reading component or the reading of words in a connected text was not a strategy that was mentioned by the teachers. This component was not assessed in term 1 as the grade 2 and 3 teachers reiterated the learners are unable to read therefore are not assessed this aspect. When the question of how learners who were not reading at grade level was asked, the responses were centred around strategies of teaching the letter sound. The researcher did assess the passage reading and comprehension questions component in term 3, to identify the reading competencies of learners even though there were no term 1 results to compare from.

As shown in *Figure 5.12A* below, 5 of the 10 learners in School A were able to read more than 20 words in the connecting passage. According to the reading benchmarks by Ardington et al. (2020), these learners would be considered as reading at Grade level. In School B, from the 10 learners, only 3 would be classified as reading at Grade 2 level according to the authors (refer to *Figure 5.12B*). In School A, 1 learner was able to read the entire passage of 53 words in a minute (refer to *Figure 12A*), whereas in School B, none of the learners was able to complete the passage in the minute in both ORF.

In Grade 3, of the 10 learners, 4 were able to read above 35 words from the passage and therefore meet the Grade 3 reading threshold set by the Nguni languages reading benchmarks by Ardington et al. (2020). From the scores in *Figure 12.A*, 2 of the 10 learners were reading at Grade 2 level, with 4 learners scoring zero. The learners in Grade 3 were unable to read a word in the connecting passage and this was a concern. As highlighted by Hugo and Govender (2020) in the proceeding grades learners are meant to be reading to learn more complex academic content. This means learners should have acquired the basic foundational literacy skills of reading in FP before transitioning to the next phases, which is not the case despite receiving intervention from external organisations.

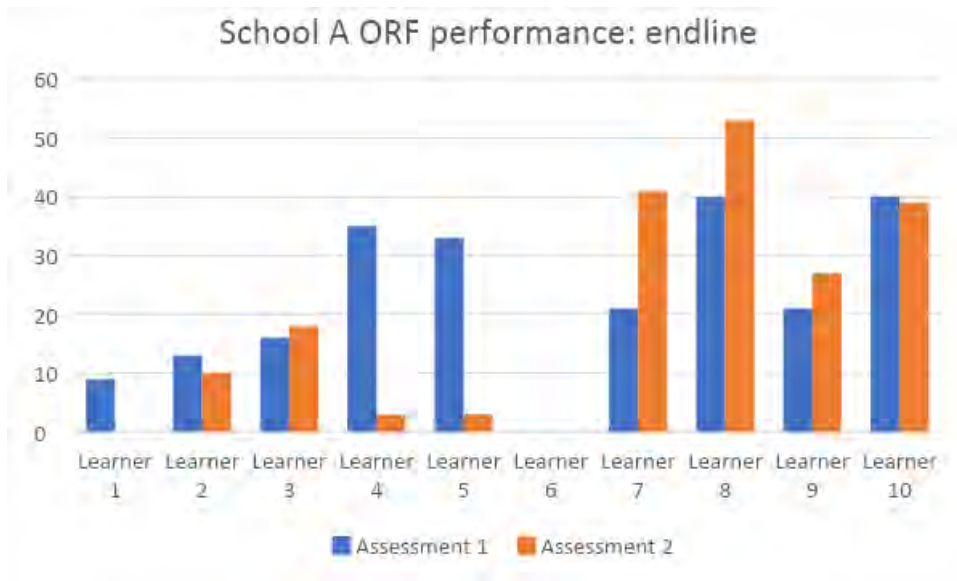


Figure 5.12A: ORF Performance Grade 2 School A

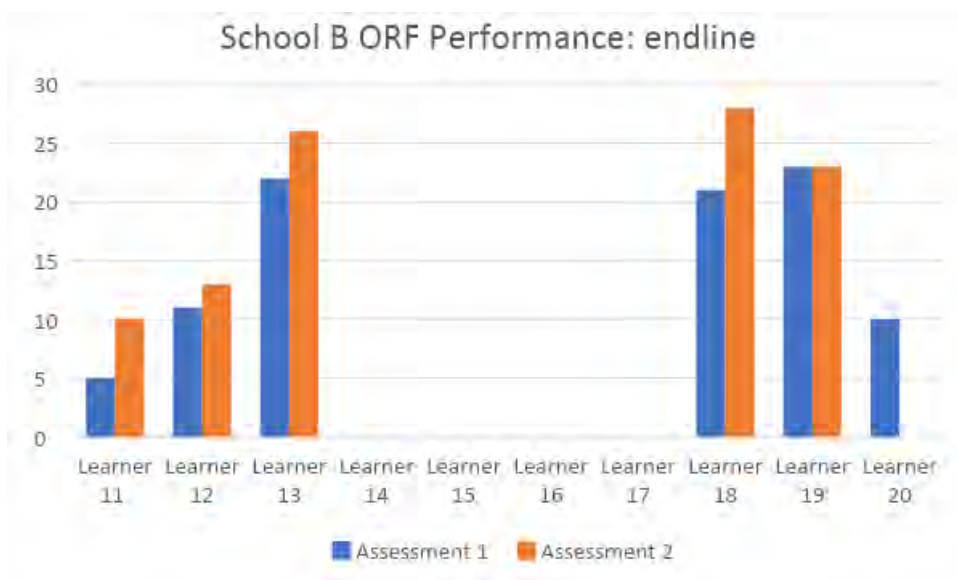


Figure 5.12B: ORF Performance in Grade 2 School B

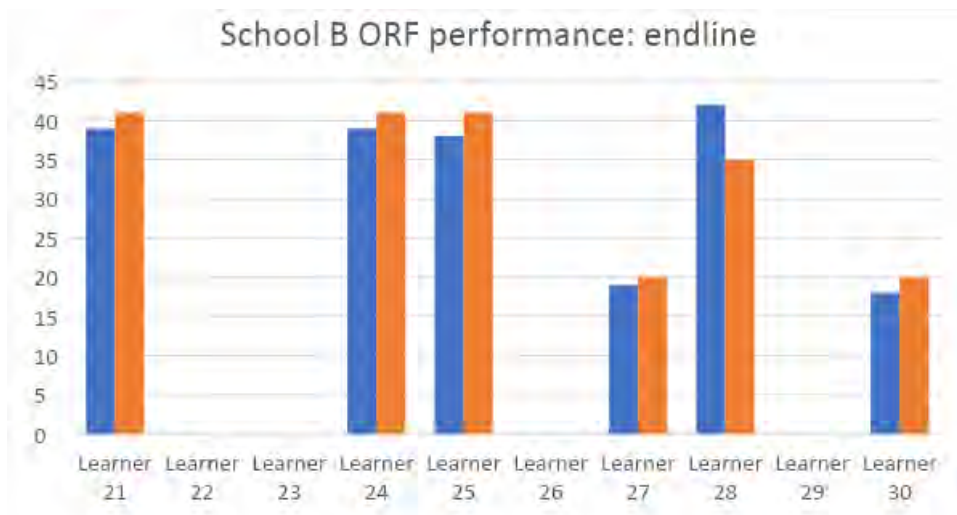


Figure 5.12C: ORF Performance in Grade 3 School B

Furthermore, there are five comprehension questions relating to the passage read by the learners. According to the EGRA toolkit guidelines, learners who were able to read in the previous subtask were allowed to complete reading the comprehension after the minute ran out, but it was marked where they stopped reading after 1 minute for record-keeping. In addition, an administrator may read for a struggling learner in order to ask the comprehension questions only. This latter instruction is set out on the EGRA toolkit. The researcher followed the former by allowing learners who were able to read to complete the passage and mark where they stopped in a minute. However, if the learner was struggling to read, by reading 4-5 words incorrectly consecutively, the subtask was stopped for ethical purposes, and to not subject learners to embarrassment. Learners with a low threshold (less than 20 cwpm) in the passage reading component were unlikely to answer the comprehension questions. Learners who were able to read above the 20 cwpm threshold, even though the minute had run out were able to answer all the 5 comprehension questions.

5.6 Challenges

In this study, teachers were finding the baseline assessment tools useful in determining the learners reading levels but highlighted a few concerns. The first concern reiterated by all teachers was that learners were not reading at the grade level. Most learners in both schools cannot be assessed beyond the word recognition subtask because they are unable to read at the beginning of the year. Some teachers attributed that to the COVID-19 pandemic where learners and teachers were instructed to stay at home when they have Covid 19 symptoms. This meant lost time for teaching and learning. The 2021

Department of Basic Education report on NSC Results (DBE, 2021) highlights the impact of COVID-19 on the education system and reports on the widening of pre-existing education inequality and gap, and the loss of any pre-pandemic learning developments. It is not surprising that teachers attribute the COVID-19 pandemic a challenge to the ‘reading for meaning’ challenge.

They also attributed the challenge of administering reading assessment and the teaching of reading to absenteeism. The teachers directed their frustration towards the parents from keeping the children away from school over arbitrary reasons such as the weather on rainy days, neglect, and lack of interest from the parents, when they had already lost ‘teaching time’ to the pandemic. The other challenge teachers reiterated was not getting support from the District and the parents. Roberts and Spencer-Smith (2017) have argued that some parents lack an understanding of the important role they can play in stimulating their child’s early learnings. Parental involvement has a long-term improvement in a child’s educational outcomes, such as the development in language and literacy, particularly the ability to ‘read for meaning’. Further, Topping and Wolfendale (2017) expand this argument by stating that learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as the learners in this study, are often recipients of ‘compensatory’ intervention approaches characterised by extra language programmes and resources etc. These authors believe this is a negative approach as articulating the objectives of the curriculum such as the ‘reading for meaning’ objective means incorporating disadvantaged parents in these intervention programmes. On the contrary, the LSA believed that teachers did not utilise the time allocated to group guided reading on their timetables. She stated some teachers, especially old teachers do not teach group guided reading as per the prescripts of CAPS. She stated that they use ‘traditional methods’ of reading rather than adapting to the new ways of teaching or reading pedagogies. It was not established what the ‘traditional methods’ are from the LSA.

In establishing the reading levels of learners, some learners can be diagnosed with learning difficulties reiterated T3 and T4. When referring learners with barriers to the District for further assessments from the psychologist, the response takes time. Teachers have to rely on external organisations for supporting the learners.

Furthermore, from the responses of the teacher, the challenge is that teachers assess and teach reading at lower than expected levels, with more focus on letter-sound knowledge in grade 2 and 3. It must be noted that learners are intended to read at least 40 letter-sounds by the end of grade 1. At the end of grade 2, they are expected to be able to progress to word reading, and also able to read at least 20 words in a connected passage. These aspects of reading were not coming out as important aspects from the responses, but more focused on the letter-sound knowledge, which is at the bottom of the reading

hierarchy according to Ardington et al. (2020; 2021). This is illustrated by the below responses:

T2: *Simane sisenza, uzalungisa mos. Uyibonile ingxaki ukuba iphi apha, kwizandi nakwi capital letters, the simane sipractice(a) ukuba sibhale unobumba omkhulu ka/A/ nonobumba omncinci ka/a/, because yonke into ilele pha kwizandi. If they master izandi, unobumba omninci ka/a/, unobumba omncinci. Bana umaster-rishile ke ngoku pha, nezanto bathanda uzibhidanisa la/b/ nala /d/ silungise kengoku pha. Kanti ke nalo /z/ bayakwazi ke, umntu ayijike ichart le, ukujonga lo/z/, but apha kwezi, abanangxaki bazibiza nje kakuhle. Omnye bekhe wathi ngu/n/ lo kanti ngu /u/.*

Where you have observed the problem, you fix that aspect. For instance, if you see the learner is struggling with letter-sounds and capital letters, we will do more activities like that. You show them the capital letter /A/ and small letter /a/. If they mastered their letters...for instance they confuse the /d/ and /b/ we fix that. Even with the /z/ sound they get confused and turn the assessment chart upside-down. They often confuse the /n/ and /u/ sound.

Teachers explained the challenge of regression of reading levels and how this occurs. They reported that this occurs when learners have been absent from school for long periods such as holidays/vacations. T1 explains learners tend to read fewer words than they did before schools closed. This has a possible explanation for the regression in the reading results of learners in Chapter 6. Due to Covid, learners were home for extended periods. Noting the socio-economic factors of the learners in this study is that the learners are from a quintile 1 school, meaning educational resources may be limited or non-existent in their homes. This may have influenced the results in Term 1 and Term 3. Response from T1 is as follows:

T1: *When we come back from the June holidays. They don't get to be exposed to reading and all that at home during the holidays. But when they come back, now you see the problem. When you look at the kids that you know that he was reading over 20 words, and now you see that, you know, he can move back like with 10 words.*

The findings and challenges of this study will be presented in summary in the next section, to highlight the overall synthesis of the data presented and analysed in the present chapter.

5.7 Chapter summary

In this chapter, presentation of the qualitative findings from the surveys, and semi-structured interviews from the teachers and language subject advisor, and baseline assessment results in term 1

and 3 with a thematic analysis approach. The findings revealed that there are two baseline assessment tools administered in the two schools in this study, with EGRA being the most prominent tool. It also presented the challenges related to the administration of the baseline assessment. In addition, this chapter presented the features or reading components of the two baseline assessment tools in this study and discussed their alignment to the linguistic features of isiXhosa language and the CAPS FP curriculum. Lastly, the chapter presented the responsiveness of teachers to the baseline assessment results regarding their own pedagogical practices and the challenges experiences and revealed through teachers' responses.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

IsiXhosa language learners have been among the least performing learners in international reading assessments such as PIRLS. In addition, the Eastern Cape Province where isiXhosa is widely spoken have been performing the lowest in matric for decades, and scholars such as Nic Spaul (2019) and Govender & Hugo (2020) argue that this is a reflection of poor foundations in literacy and numeracy. Thus, a starting point to this study was to identify the tools used to assess reading in isiXhosa and the specific components of the reading assessed. Furthermore, this study investigated how teachers responded to the baseline assessment data in informing their pedagogical practice and whether these practices contribute to meaningful development of reading to learners. The literature reflected on the under-researched tools developed for African languages. Furthermore, it reviewed the literacy interventions in the Eastern Cape Province and the literacy issues which are addressed on the macro level through policy document. At a micro level, scholars highlighted that there was a sense of importance of aligning the linguistic features of isiXhosa and also the social aspect of reading and assessment. Thus, this chapter presents a summary of the thesis, reflecting on the topic, the rationale of the study, research questions, research objectives, research methodology, theoretical framework as well as the findings and recommendations for the study. It also discusses the limitations of the study and presents the researchers' reflection thereof. The chapter ends with the overall conclusion of the study and suggests areas for future research.

6.2 Overview of study

The overarching aim of this study was to interrogate the use and role of baseline assessments and their effectiveness as an integral part of pedagogical practice for teaching isiXhosa reading in FP. To achieve the goal of this study, the following research questions were addressed:

- a) Which tools are used to conduct baseline assessments for isiXhosa reading in FP?
- b) What are the specific components and focus of the baseline assessments tools for reading in isiXhosa FP?
- c) What are teachers' pedagogical responsiveness to baseline assessments data of learners' with respect to isiXhosa reading in the FP?

To generate data, four data generation techniques were employed namely: survey questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and participatory observation. The data generated was analysed and triangulated in Chapters 5. For Chapter 5, it was analysed inductively where sub-themes were allowed to emerge from the data and the common subthemes were grouped to form themes which the discussions were in relation to the literature. The analysis in Chapter 5 incorporates a descriptive analysis of the Grade 2 and 3 learners' early reading skills in the two schools in the study. These are discussed in relation to the teachers' perspectives on the baseline assessment for reading in isiXhosa. Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory and Biggs' (1999) constructive alignment were employed as theoretical and conceptual framework lenses.

6.3 Summary of findings

Presented below is the summary of the findings concerning the research questions.

6.3.1 Research question one

Which tools are used to conduct baseline assessments for isiXhosa reading in FP?

It was discovered that two baseline assessment tools are used by each of the schools in the study, the EGRA tool which is endorsed by the DBE and another baseline assessment tool from the external organisations (Funda Wandé and Gadra Education). Funda Wandé's baseline assessment tool is a modified version of EGRA. Gadra Education's baseline assessment tool is a modified version of DIBELS and EGRA. The data from the surveys and teachers' and language subject advisor's semi-structured interview responses revealed two baseline assessment tools were used concurrently to ascertain reading levels in the two schools, as both schools received external intervention from NGOs. However, the findings revealed that EGRA is the most prominent baseline assessment tool used in the schools. Ascertaining the baseline assessment tools used by teachers and their experiences, pedagogical insights, and challenges they face when conducting the assessment were deemed critical to evaluate the impact or effectiveness of the assessment for learners' foundation reading skills as isiXhosa readers. The development of reading in isiXhosa was investigated from the perspective of the grade 2 and 3 teachers and the language subject advisor. The mixed-methods approach (using quantitative and qualitative methods) provided different and insightful lenses with which to view the baseline assessment tools to determine early reading trajectories of isiXhosa Grade 2 and 3 learners within contexts of schools receiving external literacy intervention. In addition, it assisted in identifying which aspects of reading the learner/s are lacking in or performing successfully in from the perspectives of the teacher. The EGRA tool for isiXhosa has sub-tasks ranging from letter-sound

knowledge, word recognition, passage reading (ORF) and comprehension questions. Each subtask is administered for a minute to each learner at a time. In School A, where the intervention is learner-centred, the grade 2 teacher employed by the DBE administered the baseline assessment using the EGRA tool. The teacher that was deployed by the external organisation in the same school used their baseline assessment adapted tool. The difference of the tools will be elaborated further in research question two. In School B, where the intervention is teacher-centred, the grade 2 and 3 teacher administered both tools, the EGRA, and the external organisation baseline assessment tool. It was revealed from the interviews that there was no difference in the tools besides the passage reading stories which is a component that is assessed in both baseline assessment tools.

Another finding is that the teacher(s) being the 'MKO', which is Vygotsky's (1978) concept, attains the results of the individual learner's level of reading and would use the interaction as an opportunity to teach the learner/s, either the correct way of pronouncing letter-sound, punctuating, etc. Proceeding with the baseline assessment between MKO and learner would guide teachers on planning the appropriate lessons or interventions for the learners or group of learners attaining similar results regarding errors made when performing the baseline assessment for reading. These lessons or interventions are carried out in the group guided reading sessions, therefore, intended to inform teaching practice or pedagogical insight. This latter revelation from the teacher interviews was corroborated by the LSA. The interaction between the teacher and learner is isiXhosa, as both are home language speakers and are 'competent' in the language. Language is an important tool because without language it would be impossible to socialise and interact. It is regarded as a vital cultural tool through which learning, and thinking are shaped (Mika, 2018). Therefore, the limitation of a language barrier does not affect the conduct of the BA. The assessment allowed for mediation to occur immediately or later in the classroom during the group guided reading sessions.

From the interviews with the LSA and teachers, some challenges and issues emerged on the administering of baseline assessment and its impact on teaching and learning. They are as follows:

- Absenteeism from learners due to unfavourable weather conditions and arbitrary reasons.
- Lack of parental involvement.
- Learners absconding school.
- The LSA was unable to support the schools by doing class/school visits due to the lack of transport or vehicles from the DBE.

- The LSA also stated that teachers, especially old teachers do not teach group guided reading as per the prescripts of CAPS FP (DBE, 2011a). She stated that they use ‘traditional methods’ of reading rather than adapting to the new ways of teaching.

All participants agreed that the baseline tool for assessing reading served the purpose of establishing reading levels of learners. The results informed how they grouped learners for the group guided reading session. Group guided reading sessions are a reading method included in the CAPS document for FP (DBE, 2011a). However, learners in this study were still falling short in meeting the suggested Nguni languages reading benchmarks by Ardington et al. (2020). This will be elaborated further in the next section 6.3.2.

6.3.2 Research question two

What are the specific components and focus of the baseline assessments tools for reading in isiXhosa FP?

As discussed in section 6.3.1, there are two baseline assessment tools administered for isiXhosa reading in the two schools. What this research question ought to answer as well, was whether these components assessed are in alignment with the linguistic features of the isiXhosa language and the curriculum. The EGRA and adapted baseline assessment tools all have the following subtasks:

- letter-sound knowledge
- Word recognition
- Passage reading (ORF) and
- Comprehension Questions from the passage

For the letter-sound component, the letters assessed in EGRA consisted of single letters. The curriculum does encourage teachers to teach complex consonant clusters or words with consonant clusters incorporating blends such as digraphs and trigraphs. This element was not evident in the EGRA. The learners assessed are in grades 2 and 3, meaning they progressed from grade 1 and would be building from what was taught in the previous grade. Bearing in mind, term 4 of Grade 1 in the CAPS curriculum, (DBE, 2011a, p. 75) phonics section for isiXhosa, stipulates that learners should be able to build and read words with complex consonant clusters. This aspect is not presented in the EGRA letter-sound administered to learners in Grade 2 and 3 as stipulated in CAPS. Biggs (1999)

states the intended outcomes should be matched in the teaching and learning process, as well as assessments. This was not the case according to the findings.

The adapted baseline assessment tool in School A included components such as syllables, nonsense words, phonemic segmentation fluency. Findings in the interviews revealed that teachers teach these blends and syllables, as they appear in the subtask from the adapted baseline assessment tools, but not on EGRA. This shows the importance of incorporating these in their teaching of isiXhosa reading. EGRA could consider adding the syllable and blend components as part of the assessment. In addition, these components should not be limited to just EGRA but also extend to curriculum and actual teaching of reading in isiXhosa as Fleish (2018) reiterated. This subtask is a component that is assessed in DIBELS for the English language (Kaminiski et al., 2002). Osland et al. (2012) state that nonsense word fluency is designed to assess the learner's ability to identify letter sounds and blend letters into words in the form of a consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC). It is not clear why this aspect is added to the external organisation's adapted tool. Trudel & Schroedner (2012) and others have argued that teachers, organisations, and other stakeholders should guard against translating pedagogical practices in European languages to African languages where they do not apply.

In School B, the adapted baseline assessment tool has a double consonant component assessed to grade learners. It has been reported by Ardington et al. (2020) that learners experience difficulty in reading complex consonants in long multisyllabic string words in isiXhosa. The long multisyllabic strings consisting of complex consonant clusters are not prominent in the EGRA and the adapted baseline assessment tool, even though it is mentioned to be an important linguistic feature in the isiXhosa language.

The word recognition subtask is in all the baseline assessment tools, the EGRA, and both adapted baseline assessment tools. As discussed in Chapter 5 (section 5.4.4), the words in the subtasks were varying, making use of long multisyllabic words incorporating blends, digraphs, trigraphs, and simple single letter-sound combination words. This was in line with the CAPS document and the literature around the linguistic features of the isiXhosa language as discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.4).

For the comprehension subtask, teachers revealed that learners were unable to be assessed in this component in the first term in both grades 2 and 3. Learners were unable to be assessed beyond the word recognition component in term 1 because they were unable to read a connected passage. Although it is a connecting passage, the words include recurring words from the previous assessments making it grade appropriate. The sentences are short and include long syllable string words as the agglutinative

nature of the isiXhosa language and the passage in the baseline assessment tools aligns with Vygotsky's SCT emphasizes on reading as being a social practice in that the text was familiar to isiXhosa HL speaking learners.

6.3.3 Research question three

What are teachers' pedagogical responsiveness to baseline assessments data of learners with respect to isiXhosa reading in the FP?

Overall, the findings revealed the administration and integration of baseline assessment in curriculum and pedagogy. The administering of EGRA was done three times per year in each of the grades. The baseline assessment is administered to individual learners during normal teaching time on the timetable set for group guided reading in each of the first three quarterly terms where learners are assessed. The teachers maintained that they set a timer to a minute for each of the tasks, taking them approximately 1 - 2 weeks to assess most of the learners in their classrooms.

In School A, grade 2 learners are assessed twice for reading. T2 only administered EGRA within the scope of the imperatives set by the DoE, but T1 administered the adapted baseline assessment tool to the same grade 2 learners as part of the external intervention of his organisation. The results of the learners are not shared between the two parties administering the assessment. In School B, the grade 2 and 3 teachers stated in the survey and confirmed again in the interview that they administered two similar assessments to the learners, the EGRA and its modified version. They stated that this is done for submission or reporting purposes to the external and the DBE, which means there is redundancy. Administering a baseline assessment that serves the same purpose is a potential administration 'nightmare' for teachers as reiterated by scholars such as Hugo and Govender (2020). In addition, it can be deduced from the results that the diagnostic or baseline assessment (EGRA and other baseline assessment tools) inform formative assessment. Vygotsky's concept of mediation would then follow.

After the teacher has obtained this information, they should use their knowledge and experience to develop a solution to specific problems. In this case study, teachers indicated they only administered the letter-sound and word recognition components in term 1. The passage reading component was not assessed to learners as revealed in the interviews, because most learners were identified as emergent readers who could not read connecting passage. The results obtained for term 1 and those administered by the researcher revealed that most learners in the study were unable to read at grade level, not meeting the suggested thresholds by Ardington et al. (2020). The threshold states that by the end of grade 2 learners should be able to read 22 words and 35 words in grade 3 from a connecting passage in a

minute. This was not the case even though the schools in the study receive external literacy intervention.

The strategies employed by teachers after receiving the baseline assessment results can be summarised as follows:

- There is emphasis on teaching decoding skills such as single letter-sounds and double consonants
- The teaching of words using syllables in isiXhosa language.
- Term 1 is utilized as a revision term of texts from the previous grade.
- DBE workbooks are used as a meditation tool, as it comprises simple and short passages.

From the strategies mentioned in the study, it can be deduced that teachers are teaching and assessing below grade level by putting more emphasis on decoding skills. The component of passage reading and comprehension question which aligns with the national curriculum objectives of getting learners to ‘read with meaning’ was one aspect that was lacking in the responses to baseline assessment data for reading in isiXhosa.

6.4 Limitations

Three limiting factors hindered the amount and quality of data in this study. The study only involved four teachers, a language subject advisor, and thirty learners – given the small sample size, one needs to caution against generalisations of the findings. This is taking into consideration the amount of isiXhosa FP teachers in South Africa and EC Province as a whole. However, the data generated from the sample remains insightful on grades 2 and 3 teachers’ experiences of the baseline assessment and how they mediate the teaching of reading. Further, the influence of the interventions in the learner performances.

The data generation process was conducted after school hours, with a time limit set. The researcher would often be turned back because of the various programmes the schools were involved in and constrained the amount of data that could be generated.

Finally, the outbreak of COVID-19 restricted the type of data one would generate such as the class observation technique. If there was an opportunity to do this research again, the researcher would include observing the teachers mediate the teaching and learning of isiXhosa reading.

6.5 Conclusion and recommendations

The tools used to assess isiXhosa reading are important in the development of reading. They are part of the interventions in curbing the poor literacy skills by informing pedagogical decisions. Teachers need to respond to them appropriately for them to make meaningful contributions to reading. This study confirmed that it was also equally important to align the assessment tool and their specific components with the linguistic features of isiXhosa, such as letter sound, syllables blending and segmenting, consonant clusters, word recognition and passage reading and different types of comprehension questions. Emphasis has been placed on the letter-sound knowledge component to be an indicator or identifier of learners who may be at risk of falling behind in reading development, but not much on how to develop from letter-sound and word reading level. What is not emphasised is how to develop the reading skills further when learners are able to attain the reading thresholds of letter-sound knowledge per minute.

The essence of reading is for learners to read with accuracy, speed, and meaning. The emphasis on decoding skills runs the risk of learners being able to read a text without comprehension. More emphasis should be placed on the teaching of reading connecting passages using a variety of texts such as newspapers, posters, and comprehension questions that test the critical thinking skills of learners instead of focusing more on the literal questions within stories or passages.

Furthermore, the researcher recommends that blends such as digraphs and trigraphs, also known as complex consonant clusters, be included as part of the assessment, but not limited to being assessed but taught effectively. At micro level, teachers should be capacitated on reading trajectories beyond the basic decoding skills. Fleish (2018) states that at policy level, there should be explicit policies on the teaching of HL, and that we have in the form of the National Frameworks for the Teaching of Reading in African languages in the FP. However, we can have all the policies in writing, if teachers are unaware or trained on these reading policies or trajectories in HL, specifically in isiXhosa, the ‘reading for meaning’ objective is far reaching. Furthermore, the incapacitation of reading or literacy interventions should also incorporate parents from disadvantaged backgrounds to reach the educational objectives.

This study has opened opportunities for possible further research. The researcher would like to see a study conducted on a similar topic exploring the strategies used to teach letter-sound knowledge, phonics, vocabulary and comprehension. Furthermore, it would be ideal to explore how in-service teachers are capacitated to teach reading in HL.

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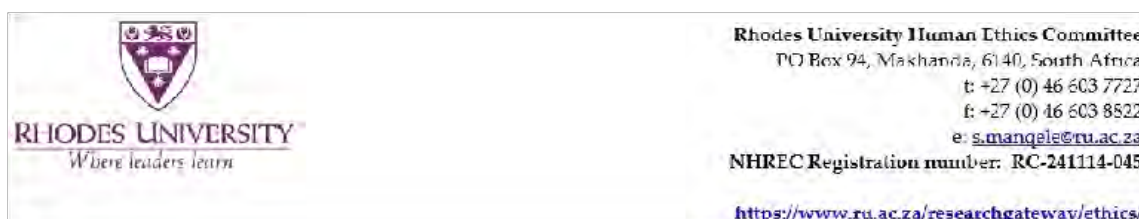
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Ethical Clearance

Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethical Clearance



02/08/2021

Miss Amanda Nesi

Email: A.Nesi@ru.ac.za

Review Reference: 2021-1008-5964

Dear Professor Dion Nkomo

Title: Baseline assessment for Foundation Phase reading in isiXhosa: a case study

Principal Investigator: Professor Dion Nkomo

Collaborators: Miss Ntubuhle Amanda Nesi,

This letter confirms that the above research proposal has been reviewed and **APPROVED** by the Rhodes University Human Ethics Committee (RU-HEC). Your Approval number is: 2021-1008-5964

Approval has been granted for 1 year. An annual progress report will be required in order to renew approval for an additional period. You will receive an email notifying when the annual report is due.

Please ensure that the ethical standards committee is notified should any substantive change(s) be made, for whatever reason, during the research process. This includes changes in investigators. Please also ensure that a brief report is submitted to the ethics committee on the completion of the research. The purpose of this report is to indicate whether the research was conducted successfully, if any aspects could not be completed, or if any problems arose that the ethical standards committee should be aware of. If a thesis or dissertation arising from this research is submitted to the library's electronic theses and dissertations (ETD) repository, please notify the committee of the date of submission and/or any reference or cataloging number allocated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Arthur Webb', is written over a light blue grid background.

Prof Arthur Webb

Chair: Rhodes University Human Ethics Committee, RU-HEC

cc: Mr. Siyanda Mangale - Ethics Coordinator

Appendix 2: Department of Basic Education Consent Letter

CORPORATE PLANNING MONITORING POLICY AND RESEARCH COORDINATION

Steve Vukile Tshwete Complex • Zone 6 • Zwelitsha • Eastern Cape Private Bag
X0032 • Bhisho • 5605 • REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: +27 (0)40 608 4537/4773 • Fax: +27 (0)86 579 7182 • Website: www.ecdoe.gov.za

Enquiries: F. Pakade

Email: fundiswa.pakade@ecdoe.gov.za

Date: 28 May 2021

656 Extension 6, Joza Location,

Grahamstown, 6139

Dear Ms. **Nolubabalo Amanda Nesi**

PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKE AN INDEPENDENT RESEARCH: RESEARCH TOPIC: BASELINE ASSESSMENTS FOR FOUNDATION PHASE READING IN ISIXHOSA: CASE STUDY

1. Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research involving Two Quintile 1 schools in a township in Makhanda under the jurisdiction of the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) is hereby approved based on the following conditions:
 - a. there will be no financial implications for the Department;
 - b. institutions and respondents must not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation;
 - c. no minors will participate without the consent from their parent/guardian;
 - d. it is not going to interrupt educators' time and task;
 - e. the research may not be conducted during official contact time;
 - f. Physical contact with educators and learners is not encouraged due to COVID-19, but mainly virtual means of communication are encouraged and that should be arranged and agreed upon in writing with the Principal and the affected teacher/s. Only in exceptional cases will physical contact with educators and learners is allowed and there must be strict adherence to COVID-19 protocols;
 - g. you present a copy of the written approval letter of the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) to the Cluster and District Directors before any research is undertaken at any institutions within that particular district;

- h. you will make all the arrangements concerning your research;
 - i. should you wish to extend the period of research after approval has been granted, an application to do this must be directed to Chief Director: Corporate Strategy Management;
 - j. you present the Department with a copy of your final paper/report/dissertation/thesis free of charge in hard copy and electronic format. This must be accompanied by a separate synopsis (maximum 2–3 typed pages) of the most important findings and recommendations if it does not already contain a synopsis;
 - k. you present the findings to the Research Committee and/or Senior Management of the Department when and/or where necessary;
 - l. you are requested to provide the above to the Chief Director: Corporate Strategy Management upon completion of your research;
 - m. you comply with all the requirements as completed in the Terms and Conditions to conduct Research in the ECDoE document duly completed by you;
 - n. you comply with your ethical undertaking (commitment form);
 - o. You submit on a six-monthly basis, from the date of permission of the research, concise reports to the Chief Director: Corporate Strategy Management.
2. The Department reserves a right to withdraw the permission should there be non-compliance to the approval letter and contract signed in the Terms and Conditions to conduct Research in the ECDoE and/or legal requirements to do so.
 3. The Department will publish the completed Research on its website.
 4. The Department wishes you well in your undertaking. You can contact the Mrs. Fundiswa Pakade on the numbers indicated in the letterhead or email fundiswa.pakade@ecd.gov.za should you need any assistance.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T Masoeu', written over a horizontal line.

T MASOEU
CHIEF DIRECTOR: CORPORATE STRATEGY
MANAGEMENT FOR SUPERINTENDENT-GENERAL:
EDUCATION

Appendix 3: School Principal Consent Letter



Room 220, Main Admin Building, Drostdy Road, Grahamstown, 6139

PRINCIPAL LETTER AND CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Baseline Assessments for Foundation Phase Reading in isiXhosa: A Case Study

Dear Ms Glover

My name is Amanda Nesi, and I am an isiXhosa literacy student from the School of Languages and Literatures at Rhodes University in Makhanda. The research I wish to conduct for my Master's degree involves exploring isiXhosa literacy practices in the Foundation Phase. This project will be conducted under the supervision of Professor Dion Nkomo (Rhodes University).

I am hereby seeking your consent to approach Foundation Phase teachers and learners who would be willing to share information regarding isiXhosa reading literacy practices to be participants in this project. As part of the study, I will ask the teachers to fill in a questionnaire. Also, I will interview teachers about baseline assessment for reading in isiXhosa and I would like to audio record this information so that I preserve the valuable information. Additionally, I would like to observe them whilst teaching learners to read and video record the lessons. Furthermore, I will ask learners to read for me and I would also like to audio and/or video record their responses.

The participation of teachers and learners is voluntary, and all participants will be allowed to withdraw from the research at any time should they wish to do so. All interactions will be confidential and respectful, and no names or photographs will be made public. The information received from the participants will be used only for research purposes. The results of this study will be presented as an MA thesis, as academic papers at conferences or seminars and published in journals or books. Furthermore, they will be presented to the participating schools as a workshop for feedback purposes.



Room 220, Main Admin Building, Drosty Road, Grahamstown, 6139

This study has been approved by the Rhodes University Ethics Standards Committee and has received permission by the Provincial Department of Education and the District Department of Education. If you are unsure of anything pertaining to this study and would like to ask questions, you may contact:

Ms Amanda Nesi (Student researcher): 078 3665517/ a.nesi@ru.ac.za

Prof Dion Nkomo (Supervisor): 046 603 8304/ d.nkomo@ru.ac.za

Siyanda Manqele (Research ethics coordinator) 046 603 7727/ s.manqele@ru.ac.za

Yours sincerely

Amanda



Room 220, Main Admin Building, Drostyd Road, Grahamstown, 6139

participants of my school and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conduct of the research.

10. My school will receive feedback in the form of a workshop or seminar regarding the results obtained during the study.
11. Any further questions that I might have concerning the research or my participation will be answered by Amanda Nesi. Contact details are as follow: a.nesi@ru.ac.za, 078 366 5517.
12. Any further queries or concerns about the researcher you may contact the supervisor, Prof Dion Nkomo (d.nkomo@ru.ac.za, 046 603 8304) or research ethics coordinator, Mr Siyanda Manqele (s.manqele@ru.ac.za, 046 603 7727).
13. By signing this informed consent declaration I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.
14. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.
15. Request to take pictures, video and voice recording for this study has been granted.

I, Priscilla Chauh.....(Name) have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of my school, teachers and learners during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and my school voluntarily participates in the above-mentioned project.

[Signature]
Principal's signature

11/5/21
Date



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[Signature]
Witness signature

A. Hugo
Witness name

Appendix 4: School Principal Consent Letter



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PRINCIPAL LETTER AND CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Baseline Assessments for Foundation Phase Reading in isiXhosa: A Case Study

Dear Ms Kate

My name is Amanda Nesi, and I am an isiXhosa literacy student from the School of Languages and Literatures at Rhodes University in Makhanda. The research I wish to conduct for my Master's degree involves exploring isiXhosa literacy practices in the Foundation Phase. This project will be conducted under the supervision of Professor Dion Nkomo (Rhodes University).

I am hereby seeking your consent to approach Foundation Phase teachers and learners who would be willing to share information regarding isiXhosa reading literacy practices to be participants in this project. As part of the study, I will ask the teachers to fill in a questionnaire. Also, I will interview teachers about baseline assessment for reading in isiXhosa and I would like to audio record this information so that I preserve the valuable information. Additionally, I would like to observe them whilst teaching learners to read and video record the lessons. Furthermore, I will ask learners to read for me and I would also like to audio and/or video record their responses.

The participation of teachers and learners is voluntary, and all participants will be allowed to withdraw from the research at any time should they wish to do so. All interactions will be confidential and respectful, and no names or photographs will be made public. The information received from the participants will be used only for research purposes. The results of this study will be presented as an MA thesis, as academic papers at conferences or seminars and published in journals or books. Furthermore, they will be presented to the participating schools as a workshop for feedback purposes.



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This study has been approved by the Rhodes University Ethics Standards Committee and has received permission by the Provincial Department of Education and the District Department of Education. If you are unsure of anything pertaining to this study and would like to ask questions, you may contact:

Ms Amanda Nesi (Student researcher): 078 3665517/ a.nesi@ru.ac.za

Prof Dion Nkomo (Supervisor): 046 603 8304/ d.nkomo@ru.ac.za

Siyanda Manqele (Research ethics coordinator) 046 603 7727/ s.manqele@ru.ac.za

Yours sincerely

Amanda



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**INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION
(PRINCIPAL)**

I Z. L. KATE (Name) am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to add to knowledge of improving isiXhosa literacy practice in the Foundation Phase.
2. The Rhodes University has granted ethical clearance to this research project and I have seen/ may request to see the clearance certificate.
3. By participating in this research project, my school will be contributing towards the isiXhosa literacy practice in the Foundation Phase.
4. Teachers and learners be will participating in the project by being interviewed and/or observed by the researcher and providing her with documentation requested.
5. I agree to teachers and learners being video/audio recorded for the purposes of this study.
6. Participation of my school is entirely voluntary. Should I, at any point, feel that my school needs to withdraw from participating further in this study for ethical reasons, we may do so without any negative consequences. Should any of the participants feel uncomfortable to proceed with the research they may also withdraw at any stage.
7. My school or any participants from my school will not be compensated for their involvement in the research.
8. There may be risks associated with my participation in the project. I am aware that
 - a. the following steps have been taken to prevent the risks: The name of the school will be changed to minimize it being identified in the project. No real names of the participants will be revealed in the study.
9. The researcher intends presenting the research results in the form of a master's thesis, academic papers at conferences or seminars and publish in journals or books. However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained and that my name,



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**INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION
(PRINCIPAL)**

I Z. L. KATE (Name) am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to add to knowledge of improving isiXhosa literacy practice in the Foundation Phase.
2. The Rhodes University has granted ethical clearance to this research project and I have seen/ may request to see the clearance certificate.
3. By participating in this research project, my school will be contributing towards the isiXhosa literacy practice in the Foundation Phase.
4. Teachers and learners be will participating in the project by being interviewed and/or observed by the researcher and providing her with documentation requested.
5. I agree to teachers and learners being video/audio recorded for the purposes of this study.
6. Participation of my school is entirely voluntary. Should I, at any point, feel that my school needs to withdraw from participating further in this study for ethical reasons, we may do so without any negative consequences. Should any of the participants feel uncomfortable to proceed with the research they may also withdraw at any stage.
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participants of my school and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conduct of the research.

10. My school will receive feedback in the form of a workshop or seminar regarding the results obtained during the study.
11. Any further questions that I might have concerning the research or my participation will be answered by Amanda Nesi. Contact details are as follow: a.nesi@ru.ac.za, 078 366 5517.
12. Any further queries or concerns about the researcher you may contact the supervisor, Prof Dion Nkomo (d.nkomo@ru.ac.za, 046 603 8304) or research ethics coordinator, Mr Siyanda Manqele (s.manqele@ru.ac.za, 046 603 7727).
13. By signing this informed consent declaration I am not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.
14. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record.
15. Request to take pictures, video and voice recording for this study has been granted.

I, ZOLEKA LETTICIA KATO.....(Name) have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of my school, teachers and learners during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and my school voluntarily participates in the above-mentioned project.

.....


Principal's signature

.....
02/07/2021

Date

Room 220, Main Admin Building, Drosty Road, Grahamstown, 6139

.....


Witness signature

.....
Thembeka L. Lepe

Witness name

Appendix 5: Survey questionnaires for teachers

Appendix 5: Survey questionnaires for teachers



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SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FP TEACHERS

This short questionnaire is part of research that seeks to establish the use of baseline assessment for reading in isiXhosa as a way of building a solid literacy foundation for future learning. The researcher, Amanda Nesi, is a Master's at Rhodes University. You are kindly requested to complete the questionnaire as honestly as possible, but you are not compelled to answer all the questions. It will take about 20 minutes of your time. There are no right or wrong answers and there is no danger whatsoever associated with this research, neither are there any personal benefits that you will get from your direct participation. However, the information that you provide will give useful insight regarding isiXhosa baseline assessments for reading. The data obtained through this questionnaire is intended for Master's study. Confidentiality and anonymity will be cautiously exercised throughout the analysis of the collected data, so your name or that of your school will never be used. Should you have any questions, please contact me or my supervisor through the details given at the end of the questionnaire.

1. Personal Data

- a) Name: _____
- b) Number of years of experience as FP teacher: _____
- c) Highest teaching/ educational qualifications held: _____
- d) Subject training specialising: _____
- e) Subject(s) taught: _____

f) Language spoken as mother tongue: _____

g) Other language(s): _____

2. Background Information

(a) What motivated you to become a FP teacher?

(b) How do you find teaching in FP?

(c) What grade do you teach?

(d) Did you train to teach in FP? Please indicate with an **X**.

YES	NO
-----	----

3. Baseline assessment for reading in isiXhosa

(a) Are you aware of the National guidelines for baseline assessment for literacy/reading in FP? Please indicate with an **X**

YES	NO
-----	----

(b) If your above answer is YES, please state how you do a baseline assessment for reading?

(c) Does the school do baseline assessments for reading for all languages? Please indicate with an X.

YES	NO
-----	----

(d) If you indicated NO to (c), do you know why the school does not do it?

(e) As a teacher have you personally conducted baseline assessment for reading? Please indicate with an X.

YES	NO
-----	----

(f) Is there an external organisation that conducts baseline assessment for reading?

(g) If you indicated YES to (c), (e) and (f) what tool have been used for reading in isiXhosa?

(h) What aspects does the tool that has been used assess?

(i) Are there any other aspects you think should be included in a baseline assessment for reading tool?

(j) What are the advantages and disadvantages of using this tool?

(k) Have you found the results of the baseline assessment helpful in your teaching practice? Please indicate with an **X**.

YES	NO
-----	----

(l) If you indicated YES above, please explain how they have been helpful. If you indicated NO above, please explain why you think they did not help you?

(h) What do you do with the baseline assessment results to support learners who are below grade level or learners reading at grade level?

Appendix 6: Interview schedule for language subject advisor

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SUBJECT ADVISOR

I will start by introducing myself once more and will explain what my research is all about and what I would like to achieve through it. I shall refer her/him to the letter I will have written to him/her previously and remind him/her of my research topic.

My interview questions will be the following:

A. Background of subject advisor

1. How many years have you been teaching?
2. How many years have you been a FP subject advisor?
3. What qualifications do you have?
4. How many schools do you support in the district?
5. Please tell me about your subject advisory experience?

B. Baseline assessment for reading

6. Some schools receive external support from NGOs to support literacy in FP, specifically reading. The support includes the administering of baseline assessment for reading in isiXhosa to FP learners. What do you understand of the baseline assessment for reading?
7. Has the baseline assessment been embraced by the Department of Education or the district?
If yes, how?
8. What kind of support is given to the FP teachers regarding baseline assessments for reading?

9. What kind of support is provided for FP teachers to improve literacy practices for isiXhosa reading?
10. Is it a prerequisite for schools in the district to conduct baseline assessments for reading?
11. How is it process of reading progress/level monitored that it is done?
12. Do you have classroom visits in support of the schools?
13. What measures are there ensure schools are performing the baseline assessments?

Appendix 7: Interview schedule for teachers

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR TEACHERS: SEMI-STRUCTURE INTERVIEW

I will start by introducing myself once more and will explain what my research is all about and what I would like to achieve through it. I shall refer her/him to the letter I will have written to him/her previously and remind him/her of my research topic.

My interview questions will be the following:

A: Background information of the teacher

1. How many years have you been teaching?
2. What qualifications do you have?
3. Tell me about your teaching experience?
4. How do you find teaching in FP?
5. How many learners do you have in your classroom?

B: Baseline assessment of reading in isiXhosa

6. Is there an external organisation that has done baseline assessments at the school and in the class?
7. If yes, who does the assessing of the learners?
8. What is the name of the tool?
 - 8.1 Who developed the tool?
 - 8.2 What aspects of reading does this tool assess?
9. How long does it take to assess each learner?
10. Share examples of what is included in the baseline assessment?
11. Do you think the assessment results give a true reflection of a learners reading competency/level?
12. How do you monitor learners' progress?
13. Is there anyone who monitors the progress of the learners reading levels besides you?
14. If yes, who and what happens in the monitoring process?
15. When do you conduct baseline assessments for reading?

16. What does the rest of the learners in the classroom do when you assess a learner/s?
17. How long does it take you to assess all the learners in your classroom?
18. How do you record the results obtained from the baseline assessment?
19. Share with me the purposes of a baseline assessment; why do it?
20. What do you do after you have obtained the results?
21. May you please share records of your top and least performing reading based on your previous BA results?

C: Feedback to learners about their performances

22. Do you give feedback to learners on their b/a results?
23. If yes, how do you give feedback?
24. Do you think learners benefit from receiving feedback on b/a? Why do you think so?

D: Remedial work or improving/maintaining results?

25. Do you plan for remediation when learners did not achieve the reading assessment objectives of the grade? If yes, how do you intervene with remediation work? If not, what do you do?
26. How do you monitor the success of the remediation?
27. How would you describe a learner who is reading isiXhosa at grade level?
28. For the learners reading at grade or above grade level; how do you maintain or improve those results?

E: Teacher's challenges and support

29. Do you encounter challenges conducting the baseline assessment for reading?
30. If yes, how do you deal with those challenges?
31. Do you receive support, and from whom? If yes, what kind of support and to what extent?
32. How confident are you in using a baseline assessment for reading in isiXhosa?
33. Do you have any ideas to share about baseline assessment for reading?

Appendix 8: Assessment 1 set

Assessment 1a Umzekelo: b s Itshathi 1.1

V	l	h	g	S	y	z	W	e	n
l	k	T	d	K	t	q	d	z	A
h	w	z	m	U	r	j	A	x	U
g	r	b	Q	L	f	l	Z	s	r

Assessment 1b

Ukufundwa kwamagama aqhelekileyo. (WR) Umzekelo: utata icici

Itshathi yamagama 2.1

umama	utata	usisi	usana	kuba	isikolo	wa ka	kudala
ikati	vuka	wabona	funa	lala	suka	wema	mna
bona	cula	iti	Imali	luma	Emva	cela	udade
imoto	sela	ubisi	yena	usuku	waya	Ihagu	intombi
wona	ifama	icawa	Ewe	jika	vasa	umfo	zathi
hayi	zisa	nomama	lilela	ibali	ukuba	njani	phambili
wabona	ubisi	Imini	isele	wafika	lila	phambi	imini
ubisi	imali	kuqala	ihagu	isofa	ibali	umhlobo	wabo
umalume	ikofu	wabeleka	qoqa	vela	vota	kusasa	umsebenzi
buza	xoxa	zola	bona	funda	esikhulu	amehlo	maziye

Assessment 1c

Passage reading (PR) Itshathi 3.1

ULolo wayeza kuqala ukuya kwisikolo	5
esikhulu. Lwalungathi aluf iki olu suku	5
yimivuyo.	1
Ngomhla wokuvulwa kwezikolo wavuka	4
ekuseni. Wahamba waza watya isidlo	5
sakusasa. Emva koko uLolo wabeleka	5
ubhaka wakhe waya esikolweni nomama	5
wakhe. 1	
Esikolweni waboniswa utitshalakazi wakhe.	4
Utitshalakazi wabalisa ibali likaSidumo.	4
USidumo libali elidlala kumabonakude.	4
ULolo wahleka izinto ezenziwa nguSidumo	5
Wabona ukuba kumnandi esikolweni	
esikhulu.	5

Imibuzo yesicatshulwa Itshathi 3.1

Umbuzo		Ichanekele	Ayichaneka nga
1.	Ngubani owayeza kuya esikolweni?		
2.	Wavuka nini ngosuku lokuvulwa kwezikolo?		
3.	Waya nabani esikolweni?		
4.	Wenza ntoni utitshalakazi wabo?		
5.	Ingaba wabona ngathi kumnandi na esikolweni uLolo?		

Appendix 9: Assessment 2 set

Assessment 2a

Iphepha Lokuhlola 2

Ukubizwa kwezandi zoonobumba. (LS) Itshathi 1.2

s	n	c	b	p	y	F	c	a	e
y	S	q	p	M	v	O	t	n	P
z	A	E	x	F	f	h	u	a	t
w	S	H	B	S	l	g	m	i	l
c	n	g	D	o	K	M	w	p	r
f	t	v	a	U	T	y	B	Q	i

Assessment 2b

Ukufundwa kwamagama aqhelekileyo.

(WR) Umzekelo: utata icici

Itshathi yamagama

lala	lila	vuka	umama	usana	Wabona	kuqala	kudala
jika	ukuba	wavuka	wabo	nomama	wema	wabeleka	bona
umhlobo	kusasa	wona	utata	luma	emva	qoqa	Udade
imoto	phambi	ifama	usuku	xoxa	waya	ihagu	intombi
iti	amehlo	icawa	ewe	ikofu	hayi	cela	Suka
waza	zisa	funda	phambili	ibali	maziye	imali	lilela
ihagu	sela	kakhulu	isityebi	ukuba	funa	usisi	Phila
ubisi	ibhokhwe	ukuya	isikolo	isofa	buza	imali	Kuba
ikati	imini	umfo	vela	vota	cula	umsebenzi	zola
ibali	yena	njani	imini	zathi	esikhulu	bona	ubisi

Assessment 2c

Iphepha lokuhlola (ekupheleni kwekota yokuqala)

Isicatshulwa: Itshathi

Kwakukho utata owayefuna umsebenzi.	4
Wavuka ekuseni wayakufuna umsebenzi	4
emzini wesityebi. Wahambar wahamba	4
wada waf ika emzini wesityebi.	4
Esi sityebi sasinomzi omkhulu. Waf ika lo	6
tata wema phambi kwendlu waza	5
wathi ucela umsebenzi.	3
Isityebi sambuza utata ukuba ingaba	5
ufuna msebenzi mni na. Wathi ke yena	7
ufuna nokuba ngonjani nar angazityisa	
neehagu.	7
Isityebi ke samxelela ukuba	4
umsebenzi esinawo ngowokwalusa	3
iibhokhwe ezininzi kakhulu. Kufuneka	4
azijonge zingayi endleleni.	3
Wavuma ngovuyo olukhulu lo mfo.	5

Imibuzo yesicatshulwa Itshathi

Umbuzo		Ichanekile	Ayichanekanga
1.	Lingantoni eli bali?		
2.	Ngoobani ekuthethwa ngabo kweli bali?		
3.	Wathini utata akufika emzini wesityebi?		
4.	Yaba ngumsebenzi wantoni?		
5.	Kwenzeka ntoni akuba efumene umsebenzi utata?		

Appendix 10: Assessment 3 set

Assessment 3a

Itshathi Yoonobumba

Iphepha lokuhlola Itshathi

d	l	o	m	X	n	e	a	p	x
N	K	c	i	D	y	b	J	r	v
v	o	w	u	V	l	h	G	s	y
g	R	B	q	l	f	L	z	q	R
x	g	u	e	p	n	x	v	i	a
K	f	h	o	X	z	t	E	g	c
t	G	w	B	i	a	z	b	d	j
w	c	b	a	H	k	b	e	y	u
Z	X	h	u	e	v	N	e	a	u
b	z	n	C	o	k	l	H	y	o

Assessment 3b

Ukufundwa kwamagama aqhelekileyo.

(WR) Umzekelo: utata icici

Itshathi yamagama

amehlo	vuka	zola	phila	esikhulu	xoxa	buza	Ikofu
maziye	lila	lala	kuba	ubisi	suka	wena	Kakhulu
isityebi	ukutya	isitya	cula	iti	imali	luma	emva
Hayi	udade	umfo	ubisi	Yena	usuku	sela	ihagu
umhlobo	ifama	icawa	wabona	imoto	uloliwe	bona	Cela
isicelo	nomama	umakazi	lilela	inkwenkwe	ibali	ukuba	phambili
jika	wavuka	imini	intombi	yimivuyo	wabona	phambi	Indlu
kuqala	ihagu	isofa	Ibali	ibhokhwe	Wabo	kudala	Wabeleka
qoqa	vela	vota	izolo	kusasa	ebusuku	umsebenzi	Ikati
ukuba	isikolo	usisi	usana	isele	isonka	funda	incwadi

Assessment 3c

Iphepha lokuhlola.

Isicatshulwa: Itshathi

Kudala dala kwakukho ixhegokazi elalikhohlakele	5
kakhulu. Igama lalo yayinguNomehlo-mancinane.	4
Yayilizim elalizenza umntu onobubele.	4
Izim ngumntu otya abantu.	4
UNomehlo-mancinane wayenentombi	3
ewayeyithanda kakhulu.	
Wayenodadewabo owayehlala kwenye ilali.	4
UNomehlo-mancinane wayengamthandi kakhulu	4
udadewabo. Udade lo wayeneentombi	4
ezintathu. Ngenye imini ezi ntombi	5
zandwendwela uNomehlo- mancinane.	3
Zazingamazi ukuba ulizim. Zathi xa zisendleleni	6
zadibana nomnye umama owazixelela ukuba	5
umakazi wabo lizim. Zagqiba kwelokuba maziye	6
phambili zingoyiki, ziyombona umakazi.	4

Assessment 3d

Imibuzo yesicatshulwa

Itshathi

Umbuzo		Ichanekile	Ayichanekanga
1.	Ngubani igama lexhegokazi obufunda ngalo?		
2.	Yintoni izim?		
3.	Ucinga ukuba kulungile ukuba lizim?		
4.	Utsho ngoba?		
5.	Zazingaphi iintombi zakadade boNomehlomancinane?		