

THE IMPACT OF LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION AND GENDER ON THE
ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE:
THE CASE OF AFRIKAANS SPEAKING LEARNERS IN TWO WINDHOEK
SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

The language policy of schools in Namibia states that learners should receive instruction in their mother tongue during the first three years of their primary school education (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993). The multilingual nature of Namibia results in the notion of mother tongue medium of instruction not to be implemented effectively. Therefore some schools have English as medium of instruction from grade one (Wolfaardt, 2004) and this could result in the neglect of the mother tongue.

It is important to investigate the influence that the neglect of mother tongue medium of instruction will have on the learners' proficiency in the second language. This study was conducted to find out if there is a difference in English Second Language performance in grade five of those Afrikaans speaking learners who received mother tongue instruction during the first three years of formal education as opposed to those that received instruction through English. The areas in which there are differences in the two groups' performance were also investigated. The Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) report (2004) suggested that the ability of grade six learners to read is very low in Namibia and these results are a reason for concern. The assumption might be that the neglect of mother tongue instruction can partly be the reason for these poor grade six results. Currently, there is a decline in the performance of English as a Second Language results in grade twelve (Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture, 2008) and this might partly be as a result of a language deficiency that has occurred in the primary school. Therefore recommendations need to be made and implemented that are research based for the rectification of this problem.

Furthermore, there are various biological and social factors that constitute for differences in performance between males and females. These differences can also influence the academic performance of learners, especially their rate of academic

success. According to Swann (1992), girls tend to have a greater verbal ability than boys. This verbal ability includes word fluency, grammar, spelling, vocabulary and reading. The researcher also investigated the difference in language performance for boys and girls.

In this study a Quantitative approach was employed. The research is based on a Causal-Comparative design. The researcher tested proficiency through a number of tests: a vocabulary test, a syntax test and an oral communication test that was an interview with each participant. The sample included two schools: in Windhoek that offered a two language curriculum. A total of 70 learners were part of the study of which 35 learners were taken from each school. The learners at each school were further divided into, learners that had Afrikaans as a medium of instruction from grade one to three and learners that started with English as medium of instruction from grade one. The schools were selected through purposive sampling. A pilot study was conducted before the actual study.

In the final study, the findings for the language groups were not statistically significant, however, the English medium of instruction participants performed better than the Afrikaans medium of instruction participants in all three tests. The findings for the vocabulary test for girls and boys were not statistically significant, but the findings for the syntax and oral communication tests were statistically significant. Clear trends were demonstrated in the study but further research is needed before any solid conclusions can be made about the influence of the neglect of mother tongue instruction.

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DECLARATIONS

I, Jacolynn Anderson, declare hereby that this study is a true reflection of my own research, and this work, or part thereof has not been submitted for a degree in any other institution of higher education.

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| Ms. Jacolynn Anderson

| **CHAPTER 1**

| **1.1 ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY**

| The language policy of schools in Namibia states that learners should receive instruction in their mother tongue, during the first three years of their primary school education (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993). The ideal situation would be that every learner's mother tongue would be accommodated, but unfortunately that is not always possible. Namibia is a country rich in languages and provision for every language spoken in the country, is not always possible because of limitations of resources, either human or material. In the language policy discussion document (Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture, 2003), fourteen languages are indicated as languages that could be offered as a first language at school. This would mean that fourteen mother tongues can be offered as the medium of instruction from grade one to three and from grade four, the mother tongue should be offered as a subject when the medium of instruction changes to English.

The multilingual nature of Namibian schools, results in the ineffective implementation of mother tongue medium of instruction. There are schools that are unable to provide mother tongue medium of instruction, because they lack the necessary material and human resources in order to implement mother tongue medium of instruction (Wolfaardt, 2004). Another issue is where learners with diverse mother tongues are found in one classroom and it becomes difficult in selecting one mother tongue as the medium of instruction. Because of these reasons, some schools have English as medium of instruction from grade one and this may result in the neglect of the mother tongue. (Wolfaardt, 2004).

Another interesting aspect that can be related to language teaching is the issue of gender. Various researchers (Swann, 1992; Spolsky, 1998; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003; Browne, 2005), have focused on gender based differences in language performance, as well as gendered differences in overall academic performance. There are researchers (Swann, 1992, Browne, 2005), that state girls tend to perform better than boys in language related activities. There are various biological and social factors that constitute for differences between males and females. These differences can also influence the academic performance of learners. According to Swann (1992), girls tend to have a greater verbal ability than boys. This verbal ability includes word fluency, grammar, spelling, vocabulary and reading.

Mother tongue neglect is not an issue that can be ignored, because of its far reaching and serious influences. The issue of gender in the school, more specifically in the

Namibian language classroom, is one that needs to be investigated, as information on gendered language performance differences for Namibia, is not readily available.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Even though the Namibian Language policy clearly states that during the first three years of primary education, learners should be taught via the mother tongue medium of instruction (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993), this policy is not equally applied across the whole country (Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture, 2003). Many learners do not have the opportunity to learn through their mother tongues, and many schools do not offer Namibian indigenous languages as subjects for study, up to Grade 12 level (Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture, 2003). Researchers (Cummins, 1998; Harlech-Jones, 1998) have done multiple studies, to emphasize the importance of mother tongue medium classrooms as a way to enhance learners cognitively and socially.

The neglect of mother tongue instruction during the first three years is evident in Namibia and it is important to highlight the influence that this neglect has on the learners' proficiency in the second language. A study was conducted in 2000, at twenty six urban primary schools in Windhoek and from that study it was concluded that only ten of the twenty six schools offered a two-language curriculum (Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture, 2007). Windhoek is the capital city and people come to

Windhoek from other towns with the hope to find a job (Housing index, 2006), resulting in various languages and cultures coming together in Windhoek. This results in the challenge, as to which language should be used as the medium of instruction from grade one to grade three. In order to solve this problem and other problems experienced as a result of the great language diversity, some schools opt for English as medium of instruction from grade one (Wolfaardt, 2004). This study planned to determine the influence that the neglect of the mother tongue, Afrikaans, from grade one to three, would have on the learners' acquisition of English as a second language.

The Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) report suggests that the reading ability of grade six learners is very low in Namibia (SACMEQ II, 2004) and these results are a reason for concern. The assumption might be that the neglect of mother tongue instruction could partly be the reason for these poor grade six results.

An improvement in learners' performance in English should already be visible during their primary school years. If a strong decline or weak performance is observed during these years, then this problem might continue until grade twelve, if it is not rectified. Currently, there is a very low performance in English as a Second Language, in grade twelve (Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture, 2008) and this might partly be a result of a deficiency in language development that has occurred in the primary school. Therefore recommendations that are research based, need to be made and implemented for the rectification of weak language performance of learners.

Although boys tend to outperform girls in mathematics and science (Sleeter & Grant, 1994), this is normally not the case with languages and gendered differences in language performance in Namibia are evident from the available statistics (EMIS, 2009). The researcher also intended to investigate the difference of performance, if any, of male and female learners in English as a second language.

1.3 QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY

The research was guided by the following questions in order to address the impact of language of instruction and gender on the acquisition of English as a second language.

1. What are the differences in ESL performance in grade five, of those Afrikaans speaking learners who received mother tongue instruction during the first three years of formal education, as opposed to those that received instruction through English?
2. In which areas are there differences in these two groups' performances?
3. In which areas are there differences in ESL performance, of boys and girls in grade five, regardless of their medium of instruction during the first three years of formal education?

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The alarming results of the SACMEQ report (SACMEQ II, 2004) on the reading ability of learners in English, as well as the low performance of grade twelve learners in English as a Second Language (EMIS, 2009) is a reason for concern. Another reason for apprehension is the lower promotion rates and higher school leaving rates of males in lower primary and junior secondary grades in Namibia (EMIS, 2009). The results of this report may assist policy makers to make informed recommendations regarding the Language policy of the country.

This study will add to the pool of research in the field of mother tongue instruction, in Namibia. The mother tongue of 11% of the Namibian population is Afrikaans (Namibian Population and Housing Census, 2001), yet there are parents that opt for English as medium of instruction for their children from grade one (Wolfaardt, 2004). The results of this study may assist parents to make more informed decisions regarding the language instruction of their children in initial grades. Parents and teachers may also be more informed with regard to the differences between girls and boys in the language classroom. This knowledge might result in parents and teachers providing the necessary assistance to their children and learners, with regard to second language learning.

1.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted only in Windhoek, at two schools; therefore the results cannot be generalized to other regions.

Due to time constraints, participants' performance was observed for a short period of time. The duration of the study could have influenced the results thereof.

There were learners who had difficulty understanding English. That made it difficult for them to follow instructions given in the instruments. The researcher had to elaborate and explain to the participants, yet some of them still could not complete certain parts of the instruments.

The time in which the participants had to complete the instruments, could have affected the participants' level of concentration and ultimately, their final responses.

The researcher did not use standardized tests that have been used by other researchers, but opted to adapt and use tests from language textbooks. This was done to ensure that the tests would be suitable for Namibian learners, but may have influenced the reliability of the study.

The researcher also acknowledges the possibility of subjective judgment with regard to the scoring of the oral communication test. The researcher used a grid to guide the assessment of the participants' oral communication ability, but subjectivity might have influenced the researcher's assessment.

There was no recording made of the interview that the researcher had with the participants and this can be viewed as a limitation. The assessment was completed

directly after each interview, but the researcher had no tangible way of reviewing interviews at the end of the day, as there was no recording.

1.6 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS AND TERMS

The following terms will be used frequently and they need to be defined in the context of this research, as various definitions or ways of understanding them exist.

Second Language Acquisition (SLA): “refers to the subconscious or conscious process by which a language other than the mother tongue is learnt in a natural or a tutored setting. It covers the development of oral communication, lexis, grammar and pragmatic knowledge, but has been largely confined to morph syntax” (Ellis, 1985, p.6).

Mother Tongue or First Language (L1): “One’s home language; the language learned by children and passed on from one generation to the next” (AudioEnglish.net, 2008).

English as a Second Language (ESL): “ESL refers to English language learning in countries where English is the main and or official language and the student’s own first language is not English” (Japan Zone, 2008).

Second Language (L2): “The language a person knows, is learning or is acquiring in addition to their first or home language”(Japan Zone, 2008).

Language of Wider Communication (LWC): “it is a language people commonly use to communicate across language and cultural boundaries” (Literacy Terms, n.d.).

Syntax (test): “The way that words and phrases are put together to form sentences” (Turnbull et al., 2010).

Oral communication (test): “to make your ideas, feelings, thoughts, etc. known to other people, so that they understand them” (Turnbull et al., 2010).

1.7 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

In the first chapter the orientation of the study is discussed, including the statement of the problem, questions of the study, significance of the study, limitations of the study and the clarification of concepts and terms. The second chapter focuses on the theoretical framework and the literature review. The third chapter discusses the research methodology. Furthermore, the research findings are presented in the fourth chapter.

Lastly, the discussion, limitations and the recommendations are presented in chapter five.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Firstly the theoretical framework will be looked at, after which the views on mother tongue instruction implementation and the results of such practices in various countries will be addressed. This discussion includes arguments in favour of mother tongue instruction, bilingual education and the maximum exposure hypothesis. After this the difference in language performance based on gender is explained. Lastly, the Namibian

language policy and some similarities and differences between Afrikaans and English will be discussed.

The issue of mother tongue medium of instruction in the initial school grades has become a debatable issue, not only in Namibia, but in Africa and in the world at large. Various studies (Kouraogo, n.d.; Ellis, 1985; Rivera, 1988; Spolsky, 1989; Bamgbose, 1991; Cummins, 1998; Bada, 2001; Ramasamy, 2001; Klein, 2003; Wolfaardt, 2004; Makalela, 2005; Molosiwa, 2005; Murray, 2007; Prinsloo, 2007; Shoebottom, 2007) have been conducted in support of different views concerning the issue of whether or not the mother tongue has an influence on the learning of a second language. An aspect that is prominent in research studies in the field of mother tongue instruction is that researchers either support or reject mother tongue instruction or the strong focus of the first language in the initial grades at school, based on second language acquisition theories.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of this study is the Developmental Interdependence Hypothesis of Cummins (1979). “This hypothesis proposes that the development of competence in a second language is partially a function of the type of competence already developed in the first language at the time when intensive exposure to second language begins” (Cummins, 1979). The focus of Cummins research was bilingual

education stating the first language should not be neglected in order for second language learners to reach sufficient levels of proficiency.

In addition, Krashen (1985, as cited in Cook 1993) developed the Input Hypothesis Model which intended to account for Second Language Acquisition (SLA). According to Krashen, “humans acquire language in only one way – by understanding messages or by receiving comprehensible input. Therefore language acquisition depends upon trying to comprehend what other people are saying. Second language acquisition fails when the learner is deprived of meaningful language” (p.51).Krashen further states that bilingual education programmes where the mother tongue is used alongside the L2, is successful because comprehensible input is provided through the use of the mother tongue. This model by Krashen also links with the Developmental Interdependence model of Cummins (1979), because the mother tongue of the second language learner is valued as a tool to develop advanced proficiency in the second language. According to Cummins (1979), the second language cannot develop effectively unless the learner is competent in his first language. Krashen further states that for second language acquisition to take place there must be comprehensible input which can be provided by the first language but this can only occur when the learner is competent in his first language.

Research (Makalela, 2005; Prinsloo, 2007) has indicated the need and importance for mother tongue instruction in order for performance in the second language; therefore,

the Language Developmental Interdependence Hypothesis provided a sound basis for this study.

2.3 ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF MOTHER TONGUE INSTRUCTION

2.3.1 MOTHER TONGUE INSTRUCTION

The advantages for mother tongue medium of instruction that serve as a motivation for implementing it have been researched in recent years. Researchers like, Harlech-Jones (1998), Bada (2001), Ramasamy (2001), Makalela (2005), Cummins (2006) and Prinsloo (2007) are some of the researchers that have found this particular field interesting and important, therefore devoting time to research.

A study was conducted by Umbel and Oller (1995, as cited in Cummins, 2006) where a strong positive relationship between receptive vocabulary in Spanish (L1) and English (L2) was found. The researchers concluded that from the sample of 102 English-Spanish first, third and sixth graders in Miami, Spanish receptive vocabulary development were the strongest predictor of English receptive vocabulary scores. The researchers further linked their findings to the interdependence hypothesis of Cummins (1979), which stipulates that the learner should be competent in the first language because this will aid the acquisition of the second language. Cummins (1984, as cited in Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998) conducted a study on transfer of literacy related language tasks. Transfer was not restricted to languages that are similar orthographically and typologically, even distant language pairs such as English and Japanese and English and

Vietnamese showed high inter-language correlations. This supports the idea that time invested in developing first language literacy, works to the advantage of second language literacy achievement.

In line with the above, Weitzman (2007) reported on a study conducted by Lopez and Greenfield (2004), who investigated whether there is a predictive relationship between Spanish oral communication skills and English phonological awareness in 100 children attending Head Start in the United States. Lopez and Greenfield concluded that strengthening the oral communication proficiency and metalinguistic skills in the home language of these young children would facilitate the subsequent acquisition of English literacy skills. In addition Kohnert, Yim, Nett, Kan and Duran (2005, as cited in Weitzman 2007), concluded that a lack of competence in the home language can seriously impact the academic progress of a child because the child would fail to develop the prerequisite cognitive skills in his or her first language.

One of the most important areas where mother tongue instruction plays an important role is in the cognitive development of learners and research shows that language development and cognitive development are closely related (Ramasamy, 2001; Rivera, 1988). Mother tongue instruction leads to concept formation in learners because they are able to comprehend knowledge in a language that they are familiar with; therefore, they are able to perform, not only in languages but in other school and content based subjects. Researchers such as Moraes, Cummins, Skutnabb-Kangas state that “Research is replete with studies on mother-tongue education showing that children can best learn

subject matter when the content is conveyed through mother tongue or the language the learners are most competent in” Makalela (2005:163).

As stated in the introduction of this section, certain research is based on Second Language Acquisition theories or hypotheses. A study conducted by Bada (2001) describes the phonological analysis of Japanese speakers learning English. The results obtained from this study suggest that some sounds posed difficulty in production while other sounds did not pose any difficulty and that this was due to first language transfer. This means that speakers transferred their knowledge of their L1 to their L2. According to the Contrastive hypothesis of Lado (Klein, 2003), there are positive and negative transfer of language and in this particular study of Japanese speakers it can be concluded that the positive transfer resulted in speakers not encountering difficulty with certain English sounds because the sounds also exist in their first language. Yet negative transfer was also experienced when speakers made errors because they transferred sounds from Japanese to English that do not exist in English. Therefore sound knowledge of the L1 can assist SLA although it might also interfere (errors).

In addition, Cummins (1998) and others such as Heugh (2006, as cited in Prinsloo, 2007) emphasize the importance of mother tongue in second language achievement. They note that neglect of the mother tongue leads to poor results, high dropout rates and general under achievement of second language learners. The medium of instruction is the second language which was not well developed; therefore, learners struggle in other

content based subjects like Science and History, resulting in the general underachievement of the second language learners.

Mother tongue medium of instruction also serves a purpose in social affiliation between speakers of the same language as well as cultural identity and a sound heritage. When, for example, immigrant children in America are expected to leave their language at the door of the school and communicate in the language of wider communication, English, then they leave a part of who they are behind (Cummins, 1998). Culture is transmitted through language and the affective role that language plays in societies should not be undermined by situations where there is a neglect of the mother tongue in schools (Makalela, 2005).

An investigation by Wolfaardt (2004), that was conducted in Namibia on the literacy and numeracy levels of grade eight learners, found that learners that did not achieve the required literacy or numeracy levels in grade eight, came from schools where English, and not the mother tongue, was chosen as the medium of instruction from grade one. Verhoeven and Gillijns (1994, as cited in Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998) conducted a study on Turkish-Dutch bilinguals in the Netherlands. They found that word recognition and reading comprehension levels in the language in which literacy instruction occurred correlated with the same measures in the other language. Verhoeven and Gillijns, indicated that strengthening the language instruction in the mother tongue will have positive influences on the second language.

When the positive influence of mother tongue medium of instruction is analyzed in a general sense, then the conclusion can be made that learners with good mother tongue proficiency are confident because they have an identity in society and they are able to comprehend the world or environment they live in. Furthermore, Shoebottom(2007) states, English Second Language learners that neglect their mother tongue can suffer from problems of identity loss or alienation from their parents.

2.3.2 BILINGUAL EDUCATION

There are various forms of bilingual education (Baker, 2008), some are classified as weak forms of bilingual education and others are strong forms of bilingual education. According to Baker (2008), the strong forms of bilingual education “generally promote both first and second languages for academic purposes with no lowering of performance elsewhere in the curriculum and typically increase achievement (p.288).”

Snow and Shattuck, two professors at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, carried out research on first and second language acquisition, and literacy development in monolingual and bilingual children. Bucuvalas (2002) conducted an interview with Snow about second language learning, where Snow commented on the language learning of immigrant children in America. According to her, it should not be compulsory for immigrant children to start with English as soon as possible because, based on research, they will be able to become fluent in English even if they start with

English at a later stage. She further noted that if the approach of bilingualism is implemented in America, then educational programs that provide first language maintenance, while building second language competence, should be valued. This observation by Snow can be linked to research by Cummins (1979) and Ramasamy (2001) that states children's first language should be sufficiently developed and during this phase of first language development, second language exposure should take place. Once the first language is well developed, the second language can become the medium of instruction but the first language should still be maintained.

Research has been conducted to identify whether or not bilingual education has a positive influence on learners' performance at school. Thomas and Collier (1997, as cited in Cummins, 2006) conducted a study entitled *School Effectiveness for Language Minority Students*. The study posed two central questions: (1) How long does it take English language learning students to reach the 50th Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE), taking account of age on arrival in the US and type of program attended? (2) What is the influence of school program and instructional variables on the long term academic achievement of English language learning students? The study included 42,317 students who attended the schools participating in the study for four or more years. More than 150 languages were represented in the sample, with Spanish the largest language group. Thomas and Collier reported that the amount of formal schooling that students received in the first language was the strongest predictor of how rapidly they would catch up academically in the second language.

Another study was conducted in the United States of America by Ramirez (as cited in De Klerk, 1995) on the impact of English (L2) instruction on first language Spanish speakers. This was a longitudinal study over eight years from 1983 to 1991. This study looked at the performance of Spanish speaking children in 51 schools in various states. These children were either in a straight for English programme; early exit bilingual programme: L1 instruction limited to 40 minutes of a day offered for only two to three years; or the late exit bilingual programme: instruction in the L1 for 40% of the day until the end of grade six. Regardless of the school or state in America where the children received instruction, the study showed that the children in the straight for English (L2) programmes performed the weakest in the English tests. The early transition or straight for English models are not viable for academic or conceptual challenging language skills from grade four onwards. The study also showed that substantial L1 instruction does not hinder English (L2) or Math learning and that prolonged L1 instruction shows faster growth rates than the national norms for Math and English (L2) from grade three onwards.

Ricciadelli (1992, as cited in Cummins, 2006) investigated the influence of bilingualism on children's cognitive abilities and creativity. Ricciadelli included 57 Italian-English bilingual and 55 English monolingual children who were aged five or six in the study. The study found that the bilingual English and Italian children performed better than the English monolingual children. This study indicates that when a child learns a second language, it can be beneficial to retain the first language rather than focusing on the second language only (monolingual approach).

In South Africa, already during the Apartheid era, a limited version of additive bilingualism (Heugh, 1995) had been offered to Afrikaans and English speaking children. An additive bilingual programme is one where “a person learns a second language at no cost to their first language” (Baker, 2008, p.4). The L1 for the majority of the students is retained throughout the schooling process while the L2 is introduced as a subject alongside the L1. It was also noted during the Apartheid era that children that had an African language as their first language were disadvantaged. They did not have the same additive bilingual education programme but rather a weak form of bilingual education. They were taught in their mother tongue during the first four years of schooling after which they had to switch to English medium of instruction. They had inadequate proficiency in English to meet the requirements of the next grade probably because their curriculum of the early years was cognitively impoverished in comparison to the Afrikaans and English children’s curriculum.

Research thus seems to indicate that, in order to have successful mother tongue instruction, the focus should be on a strong form of bilingual education where the L1 and the L2 is developed during a child’s schooling.

2.4 ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF MAXIMUM EXPOSURE HYPOTHESIS

Various reasons have motivated people to go against the notion of mother tongue medium of instruction and rather opt for the Language of Wider Communication to be implemented in schools as soon as possible. According to Porter (1997), the ‘maximum

exposure hypothesis' or 'time-on-task hypothesis' states that the more time spent on learning a language, the better a person will do in it. Porter further stated that students with limited exposure to English should be given more opportunities to interact with English first language speakers. These students should also have more direct instruction in English, as this will result in them being able to do schoolwork in English earlier and more effectively. Bamgbose (1991) states that "language is like a currency: the more it can buy, the greater value it has. Consequently, a Language of Wider Communication which is of wider currency can give the child access to modern education and technology and ensure for rapid economic development" (p.74)

Firstly it is important to note that parents are important key players in selecting a particular medium of instruction for their children. According to Murray (2007) and Kouraogo (n.d.), there is a belief among parents that there are greater benefits for children being taught through the medium of English (L2). Porter (1998) stated, "A child who is taught mathematics one hour a day will learn more math than the student who receives only 30 minutes of relevant instruction a day."She thus believes that the same results can be expected from earlier ESL instruction and more ESL exposure in the school. These benefits can be that if learners start with English (L2) as soon as possible, they will perform better in English, which will result in better academic achievement and opportunities in the future job market. This will result in parents not enrolling their children in the mother tongue medium stream when children start grade one, and once there is not many learners of a particular language group in a class, then this class might cease to exist.

A study was conducted to examine the impact of mother tongue on students' achievement in English language in Junior Secondary Certificate Examination (JSCE) in Western Nigeria (Oluwole, 2008). The participants were 100 male and female students from government schools from Western Nigeria. The findings revealed that mother tongue was a factor, among other factors, that influenced the students' poor performance in English language in JSCE. The researcher made a recommendation that "English should be used as a medium of communication within and outside the classroom" (Oluwa, 2008, p.48). Studies like these can also influence the rejection of mother tongue medium of instruction and encourage schools to have English medium of instruction.

The status of languages also influences the choice to opt for mother tongue medium of instruction or not (Murray, 2007). In an African context, many African languages compete with the Language of Wider Communication within the country, whether it is English, French or any other European language. An example would be the case of Botswana, a country where the national language, SeTswana, is spoken by the majority of the population. SeTsawna is a language that is well developed and with teachers that can provide instruction in it, but it is still only offered as a subject in school, while English is the medium of instruction (Molosiwa, 2005).

In African countries there tend to be a multilingual environment, where more than one language is prevalent in the country. Therefore education planners usually select a language that is considered 'neutral' in the country, as the medium of instruction to

ensure that no language group will be considered superior. This is done to protect national unity (Kouraogo, n.d.; Makalela, 2005).

The main point of argument for mother tongue instruction and bilingual education is that the first language should be sufficiently developed before the second language is introduced. Furthermore, the first language should not be excluded from the curriculum, even when the second language becomes the medium of instruction. On the other hand, the maximum exposure hypothesis states that, the longer a person is exposed to the second language, the better the performance in that language will be.

2.5 LANGUAGE PERFORMANCE DIFFERENCES BASED ON GENDER

According to linguists in the field of Sociolinguistics there are gendered differences in language use that are influenced by the society (Swann, 1992; Eckert& McConnell-Ginet, 2003). Apart from only differences in language use, Browne (2005) states that there are:

A growing body of evidence which suggests that ... language competence at school is strongly gender differentiated (White, 1990; Whitehead, 1990; Swann, 1992). More boys than girls experience difficulties with reading and

writing. Girls seem to read more books, particularly fiction, and to produce longer and more effective pieces of writing than boys in early years classrooms (p.171).

Spolsky (1998) advocates, that the causes of language differences in males and females are social rather than biological. According to Spolsky, studies have shown that differences between educational opportunities for boys and girls will result in difference between male and female speech. Other socially related reasons why girls perform better in reading and spend more time reading, is because it is a more suitable leisure activity for girls than boys (Browne, 2005). Boys also observe the examples in society, which might result in them neglecting their ability to write well, as teachers expect girls to do well in writing (Swann, 1992).

Apart from the social factors that lead to differences in language performance, there are also biological factors that can influence this difference. Halpern (1986, as cited in Swann, 1992) refers to the lateralization of the brain which can result in girls having a greater verbal ability and boys a greater spatial ability. According to Halpern, this has resulted in pre-school girls performing better than boys in tests like word fluency, grammar, spelling, vocabulary and reading.

Halpern's view is supported by research conducted by researchers from the Northwestern University and the University of Haifa (Northwestern University, 2008). The researchers measured brain activity in 31 boys and 31 girls aged nine to 15 years on their performance in spelling and writing language tasks by using functional magnetic

resonance imaging. A complex statistical model was used by the researchers to account for differences associated with variables such as age, gender, type of linguistic judgment, and performance accuracy. At the end of the research study, it was found that girls showed significantly greater activation in language areas of the brain than boys.

2.6 NAMIBIAN LANGUAGE POLICY

The Namibian language policy of schools states that learners should receive instruction in their mother tongue during the first three years of their primary school education. From grade four onwards the official/national language in Namibia, English (L2) becomes the medium of instruction and the mother tongue can be offered from grade four as a subject (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993). Furthermore, fourteen languages have been indicated as languages that can be offered as a first language at school (Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture, 2003). The promotion of mother tongue education is reflected in the language policy, but according to Wolfaardt (2004) it is not successfully implemented at schools due to various reasons.

Namibia has a language policy that reflects bilingual education but unfortunately the type of bilingual education available is a weak bilingual education programme. According to Wolfaardt (2005), during the initial implementation of the language policy a combination of an additive and subtractive bilingual education model was used. Unfortunately the Namibian language policy can now be seen as a subtractive or early-exit language programme. A subtractive programme would favour the replacement of

the home language by the majority language (Baker, 2008), while an early exit programme requires mother tongue instruction for only a period of two to three years. In the current Namibian situation learners are expected to receive mother tongue instruction only during the first three years of schooling, while English (L2) is offered as a subject for this period. De Klerk (1995) and Heugh (1995) stated that, based on research, to expect English second language learners to become competent users of the language (as medium of instruction or learning) in three to four years, is unrealistic and irresponsible. The second language should also be introduced in a gradual systematic way.

Although Namibia attempted to introduce the second language gradually, by offering it as a subject for the first three years of schooling, the period of exposure to English in an academic context is limited (De Klerk, 1995; Heugh, 1995). In Namibia the national language is English (language of wider communication) and much of the national/official communication for example television, radio and newspaper is in English. It might be expected that learners are exposed to English outside the school environment. Unfortunately the low external results of grade twelve learners in English as a second language are reflecting a problem (Ministry of Basic Education Sport and Culture, 2008).According to EMIS (2009), there were only 15.7% of the grade twelve learners that obtained a C-symbol or better for the ESL external examination, while 84.3% scored less than 50% in the external examination for 2008.In order for learners to register for certain courses at the University of Namibia, there is a requirement of a C-symbol for ESL in grade twelve.

Furthermore, the maximum exposure hypothesis renders problems to mother tongue medium of instruction. According to Harlech-Jones (1998), most Namibians uncritically accept the belief that maximum proficiency in a second or foreign language, such as English, is achieved by being exposed to that language as a medium of instruction for as long as possible. He further states that because of the acceptance of the belief of maximum exposure, parents refrain from enrolling their children in mother tongue medium grade one classes.

When there is a lack in the resources necessary for mother tongue medium of instruction, then educational planners tend to reject the notion of mother tongue medium of instruction. Without the teachers and educational materials to implement mother tongue medium of instruction it would not be viable to even consider this notion (Kouraogo, n.d.). When teachers have to be trained and material needs to be developed then it can become a financial concern for the government. Also, if the standard of the teachers' education and the educational material is not sufficient, then mother tongue medium of instruction cannot be implemented. The mother tongue should be well developed, with a recognized or standard orthographic and phonological system in order for it to be considered as a medium of instruction (Kouraogo, n.d.). In Namibia lack of resources is also a hindrance in the successful implementation of some mother tongue instruction, particularly teachers and teaching material (Wolfaardt, 2004).

According to Swarts (2001), “shortcomings arise from the way in which the policy is interpreted/ misinterpreted, or implemented/ partially implemented; others arise as a result of practical problems, the reality on the ground...”(p.38).

2.7 SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AFRIKAANS AND ENGLISH

According to Ellis (1985), a popular belief is that the first language has a negative influence on second language acquisition. There are studies (Ellis, 1985; Spolsky, 1989) that focus on the problematic aspects of transfer in second language acquisition and it is advised not to promote the transfer of language knowledge from the L1 to the L2. Transfer results in errors being made, if the L1 and the L2 are different, then these errors can become habits that would create difficulty for the L2 learner in second language acquisition. In contrast, Littlewood (1989) stated that transfer can also be linked to the process of creative construction of the second language learner, and it should not only be viewed as part of the behaviourist theories of habit formation. He stated:”The transfer of rules from the mother tongue may be one of the learner’s active strategies for making sense of the L2 data” (1989, p.21).

Before the similarities and differences between Afrikaans and English are discussed, a short overview of the Afrikaans language will be included. The name Afrikaans is the Dutch word meaning African, i.e. the African form of the Dutch language (AllExperts, n.d.). Afrikaans is a language that was initially viewed as a dialect of Dutch referred to

by some as Kitchen Dutch but, according to the article “Afrikaans – Grammar, Orthography, Comparison with Dutch, German and English, Sociolinguistics (n.d.)”, it was recognized as a distinct language in the late nineteenth century. Although it developed from Dutch, it has a simpler grammar and spelling than Dutch. Afrikaans has a regular grammar (which makes it simpler than Dutch) because of the contact that the language had with speakers of other languages such as KhoiKhoi, German, French, Cape Malay and speakers of different African languages.

Languages are classified into different families, groups or categories. There are main family branches, which include, Altaic, with sub-family branches that include languages like Japanese and Turkish. Another main family branch is, Niger-Congo, with sub-family branches that include languages like Bemba, Zulu and Shona. Afrikaans and English are both classified as Indo European languages (Roberge, 2001). Indo European is the name given for geographic reasons to the large and well-defined genetic language family (Watkins, 1998). The Indo European, main family branch, includes 64 sub family branches that divide further with additional sub-branches (Rubino& Gary, 2001).Both Afrikaans and English are sub-classified as West Germanic languages (Donaldson, 1988). However, there is a further division in the categories where Afrikaans and English are separated. English is part of the Anglo-Frisian category, while South African Dutch, Afrikaans, is part of the Low German category (VaughAubuchon, 2011).

It would be ignorant to believe that the L1 and the L2 of learners will not have similarities or differences. Languages are classified into different classes or language

families and these classes constitute certain differences or similarities. As stated by Cook (1996), when the first language and the second language are similar in certain areas then the first language can be seen as beneficial but when the two languages differ substantially then the first language is a hindrance. The similarities and differences of two languages might also be relevant to the Namibian context where English is taught to Afrikaans learners.

According to Donaldson (1988), Afrikaans and English have a common Germanic background. Whitney (1881, as cited in Donaldson, 1988) states, “the degree of facilitating kinship that exists between English and Afrikaans has made the ground fertile from the outset for interference to occur” (p.50). As the “ground is fertile for interference” this can result in a positive or negative influence that the languages can have on one another.

The orthographic system of particular languages can influence the second language learner. When the L1 and the L2 use a similar alphabet or writing system, it can assist SLA (Aebersold and Field, 1997). English is one of the few languages that use the basic set of 26 letters in the Latin alphabet, as other languages use accent marks (Wells, 2000). Afrikaans also makes use of accent marks on certain words which will make it different from the English orthographic system that does not make use of accent marks. Yet, SLA moves beyond the recognition of letters only, thus the orthographic system cannot be used as an exclusive basis for a positive influence. In instances where the orthographic system of the L2 is very different from the L1 it would mean that the L2

learner would have more difficulties to successfully acquire the second language, for example a L1 Afrikaans learner will have a slight advantage to a L1 Chinese learner learning ESL. This is because Afrikaans has the same alphabetic orthographic system as English, while Chinese uses a logographic system, a series of symbols that represent a complete word or a phrase (Char4u.com, 2011).

The sound system of different languages can differ and this can result in variation in pronunciation, resulting in foreign accents which in some cases are inevitable. This feature can be seen as a negative influence of the L1 on the L2 but it is not impossible for a L2 speaker to develop a near L1 speaker accent in the L2. In Afrikaans (Maho, 1998) the oral communication may be problematic, as Afrikaans has quite a distinct phonological pattern that will influence the acquisition process of English.

Two studies were conducted by Donin and Silva (n.d., as cited in Cumming, 1994), on the relationship between first and second language reading comprehension, of occupation-specific texts. Their findings were that there are certain skills, like semantic and syntactic processing skills, that are transferable from the first language that can assist reading comprehension in the second language. Research conducted by Zobl (1984, as cited in Towell and Hawkins, 1994) has shown that the acquisition of the determiners 'a' / 'the' in English is faster for L2 learners whose native language also makes a distinction between indefinite and definite determiners. In Afrikaans this distinction is also made. English has the Subject-Verb-Object construction of sentences

which is also the same for

Afrikaans(http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics>Nama_languages#encyclopedia).

“It is quite possible that the means for expressing a shared meaning are the same in the first and second language. For example when referring to age, German and English employ the same formal devices ‘Ich bin zwanzig Jahre alt’ is analogous with ‘I am twenty years old.’ This example can be extended to Afrikaans where the same structure is used “Ek is twintig jaar oud.” In cases such as this, it is possible to transfer the means used to realise a given meaning in L1 into the L2. When this is possible, the only learning that has to take place is the discovery that the realisation devices are the same in the two languages” (Ellis, 1985). There is even a sentence that has the same meaning and that is written identically in Afrikaans and English, although it is not pronounced in the same way. The sentence is “My pen was in my hand.”

These are the types of features that can be identified as they will enhance SLA. Learners can also “borrow” certain words from their L1 (Ellis, 1990, p.194) in the form of translating, although this can be problematic when the learners translate words incorrectly or misunderstand a word in the L2. Devising ways that such errors can be avoided should be emphasized.

The similarities and differences between the two languages can influence the acquisition of the second language. According to Cook (1996), when the first language and the second language are similar in certain areas, then the first language can be seen as beneficial but when the two languages differ, the first language is a hindrance.

Tokuhama-Espinosa further stated, “Languages that ‘grew-up’ together historically are easier to learn” (2008, p.69). Languages from the same family, as the case of Afrikaans and English, will share roots and structures of words. This might also be relevant to the Namibian context where English is taught to Afrikaans learners.

In this chapter consideration was given to the theoretical framework, the arguments in favor of mother tongue instruction, bilingual education, maximum exposure hypothesis, gender based language performance differences, the Namibian language policy and the similarities and differences between Afrikaans and English. The next chapter will explain the research methodology that was employed to conduct the research.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The methodology that the researcher used was directed by the type of research that was conducted; in this case a quantitative approach was used (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2009).

The type of research was Causal-Comparative research which is a quantitative research design. The population, sample and sampling procedures are discussed in this section.

The procedures that were used to collect data and to analyze the data are also discussed in this section.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

In this study a quantitative design was employed. According to Gay et al. (2009), “Quantitative research design is a research design that involves the collection of numerical data to explain, predict and or control phenomena of interest (p.605).”

The researcher used a Causal-Comparative design. Three tests were administered to the participants. The tests were a vocabulary test, a syntax test, and an oral communication test, that was conducted in the form of an interview with the participants.

The reason for selecting this type of research was because there was a clear grouping variable used in the study: learners that were taught in the mother tongue from grade one to three and learners that were not taught in their mother tongue from grade one to three. The researcher did not manipulate any variables but investigated the effect of mother tongue or neglect of it on second language acquisition. The dependant variable was the second language acquisition that was accounted for by the learners’ performance (Gay et al., 2009). The researcher tested proficiency through a number of tests, the vocabulary, the syntax and the oral communication test.

3.2 POPULATION

The population was grade five learners in Windhoek whose mother tongue is Afrikaans. This population was studied based on the following groupings: learners that had Afrikaans as the medium of instruction from grade one to three and learners that did not have mother tongue medium of instruction from grade one to three and started with English as the medium of instruction from grade one.

3.3 SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

The sample included grade five learners from two government schools in Windhoek that offered a two-language curriculum. The schools were selected through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was used to ensure that there were both Afrikaans speaking learners that received Afrikaans as the medium of instruction from grade one to grade three and Afrikaans speaking learners that received English as medium of instruction. It was also used to ensure an equal representation of girls and boys. “Purposive sampling is the process of selecting a sample that is believed to be representative of a given population” (Gay et al., 2009, p.134). All Afrikaans speaking learners in grade five of the selected schools were included in the sample. The sample therefore, included grade five learners from both schools, but from different classes.

In total there were 35 learners that had Afrikaans as medium of instruction from grade one to three and 35 learners that did not have mother tongue medium of instruction from grade one but they started with English as medium of instruction. The 35 learners in each group were a combination of girls and boys from the two schools.

The sampling method that was used for the selection of learners was also purposive sampling. The reason for this particular sampling procedure was because the researcher had to identify the learners that had mother tongue medium of instruction from grade one to three and those that did not have mother tongue medium of instruction. Therefore the researcher identified set criteria by which the sample was selected and this is a

characteristic of purposive sampling (Gay et al., 2009). To ensure equality of the groups, the researcher also considered factors such as high, medium and low performers, the social economic status of the learners (learners from the same neighborhood) as well as an equal number of boys and girls for each group.

The final sample comprised of 34 male and 36 female participants. Furthermore the study comprised of 35 Afrikaans medium of instruction participants and 35 English medium of instruction participants. The study comprised of 16 Afrikaans medium of instruction boys, 18 English medium of instruction boys, 19 Afrikaans medium of instruction girls and 17 English medium of instruction girls. In the frequency table below the number of participants of the study, separated based on the medium of instruction and gender, is presented (see table one).

Table 1: Description of the sample based on medium of instruction and gender

<u>Language</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Group</u>			
<u>Afrikaans</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>22.9</u>
	<u>Girls</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>27.1</u>
<u>English</u>	<u>Boys</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>25.7</u>
	<u>Girls</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>24.3</u>
<u>Total</u>		<u>70</u>	<u>100</u>

3.4 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Three tests were given to the participants to complete. These tests were:

Test 1

The first test that was used was a vocabulary test. There were three exercises that the participants had to complete. One vocabulary exercise required the participants to identify a word that was different from a list of words. Secondly, the participants had to match words that belonged together and in the last exercise they had to match words and facial expressions shown as pictures (see appendix A).

Test 2

The second test that was given to the participants was a test of syntax. The first two exercises for the syntax test required the participants to correct the word order in different sentences and the last exercise required them to match the beginning of the sentence with the correct ending (see appendix B).

Test 3

The third test was an oral communication test. This test took place in the form of an interview, where the researcher conducted an interview on a particular topic (appendix D) with the participant. The interview was then evaluated by means of rating criteria (Aspinall and Bethell, 2001) (see appendix C). The participants were evaluated on communication and language content. There are various aspects like, grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation that influence communication. The researcher paid attention to these aspects during the interview and completed a rating criteria sheet for each participant, at the end of every interview.

3.5 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

In order to ensure the validity of these tests certain areas or aspects were considered. The first aspect or area was the content. The content of the tests was compared to tests that test the particular skill that the researcher intended to test. For example, when the researcher tested oral communication, knowledge about the topic discussed in the interview was not a determining factor and the researcher had to be flexible in this particular test to change the topic subtly in order for the participant to communicate at length so that the actual oral communication ability was tested.

Reliability of the tests was also important. In order for the reliability (consistency) of the tests to be determined, a pilot study was implemented. The pilot study identified whether the three tests were consistent or whether there were inconsistencies when the tests were used. Through the pilot study the researcher aimed to increase the validity and reliability of the tests.

The validity was also strengthened with the use of tests that were aimed to achieve the competencies stipulated in the syllabus for grade five ESL learners. Furthermore, apart from the language of instruction in grades one to three, the researcher ensured that the two groups were as similar as possible with regard to age, grade, gender and school setting or neighborhood. This increased the internal validity of the test scores.

3.6 PILOT STUDY

According to the New Dictionary of Social Work (1995, p.45 as cited in De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delpont 2002, p.211), a pilot study is defined as the, “process whereby the research design for a prospective survey is tested.” The researcher ensured that the components of the study were effective before the actual study was conducted.

Tests were given to learners that exhibit similar characteristics to the sample but the results of the pilot testing were not used in the research and the sample for the pilot test were not from the schools where the study was conducted. The pilot testing was done only to ensure that the tests were relevant to the sample.

The school that was selected for the pilot study was also in Windhoek and the particular school also offered Afrikaans as a mother tongue from grade one to three. The results from the pilot testing reflected that the content was not challenging enough, as all the participants scored far above average on the tests. This resulted in the researcher adjusting the tests to provide for the different levels of cognitive development. The majority of the participants from the pilot study achieved very high scores in the vocabulary test. The participants had to complete a paragraph by filling in words that were provided to them in the pilot vocabulary test. They had to complete only one exercise for the vocabulary test. The researcher decided to change the original vocabulary test by including three vocabulary exercises with varied levels of difficulty (see Appendix A). The exercise used in the pilot syntax test was used in the final study as the participants of the pilot study achieved different scores instead of all of them achieving very high scores. The adjustment that was made to the original syntax test was that two exercises were added in order for varied levels of difficulty to be included (see Appendix B). The rating scale that was used in the pilot study, for the oral communication test, was replaced with one that was more precise on the criteria of the participants' performance (see Appendix C).

3.7 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

In order to conduct the research, permission was obtained from the Director for the Khomas education region (Appendix E). The next step was to obtain permission from

the principals of the schools that were included in the study. The researcher had an appointment with the principals and the letter of permission (See Appendix F) and the tests (See Appendix A, B and C) were given to the principals. After permission was granted from all the principals and dates were confirmed the administration of the various tests began.

Data collection started at the end of August 2010 and it continued during the second week of September 2010. The researcher only had 3 hours per day at the one school; therefore four days were spent at the school. While at the other school only one day was spent at the school, because the researcher was allowed to work with the participants throughout the day.

Before the administration of the tests, the participants were thoroughly informed of how to complete the tests. The participants were also informed about the anonymity with which the final results of the tests will be dealt with. The participants from the comparative groups were then given the tests to complete. The researcher was present with the participants while they completed the test and they were able to ask questions if there was anything they did not understand.

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3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

Participants in the comparative groups completed the same tests. After the test scores were tallied, further analysis of data was done. The performance of the participants was

analyzed using the following methods: descriptive statistics such as frequency tables and mean scores were used as well as inferential statistics, the t-test. The scores of the participants were represented in frequency tables and graphically in bar graphs. This was done to indicate the spread of scores for the different groups. The mean was used to identify the average scores obtained for the various tests. Lastly, Levene's test for equality of variance was administered and it was found that variance is such that one can administer a test for comparison of means. Subsequently the t-test was administered to determine differences in the mean scores of the two groups and also to find out if these differences could be considered to be statistically significant. The frequency tables were constructed in Microsoft Word, while the bar graphs were constructed in Microsoft Excel. The calculations for the mean scores and the t-test were done with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0, a computer program for statistical analysis.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Gay et al. (2009) "...two overriding rules of ethics are that participants should not be harmed in any way- physically, mentally, or socially- and that researchers must obtain the participants' informed consent" (p.30). The study complied with these ethical rules as participants were not harmed in any manner. Permission was first obtained from the principal and then the participants themselves. Participants were

informed what the research was about and what they had to do. They were also informed that, if they did not want to participate, they were allowed to leave. Nobody was forced to participate in the study and the participants were not hurt or scolded if they were unable or unwilling to participate in the study.

3.10 SUMMARY

In this chapter the type of research, the population, sample and sampling procedures, research instruments, the validity and reliability, the pilot study, data collection procedures, data analysis and the ethical considerations were discussed in detail. The method that the researcher used precedes the research results. In the next chapter the research results will be presented in frequency tables and graphically in bar graphs.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH RESULTS

The results of the study are presented in this chapter. The results are presented to firstly address the differences in English Second Language performance of the Afrikaans medium of instruction and English medium of instruction participants, at the same time highlighting the language areas (vocabulary, syntax and oral communication) of

difference for the two groups. Lastly the language areas of difference in the performance of girls and boys are reported.

Frequency tables and bar graphs of the participants' performance for the different tests are presented. The frequency tables present the performance of both the Afrikaans medium of instruction and the English medium of instruction participants in the various tests. After each frequency table there is a graphical representation of the table in the form of a bar graph. Then the mean scores of the Afrikaans medium of instruction and English medium of instruction follow.

Furthermore, Levene's test for the equality of variance is presented to show the differences between Afrikaans medium of instruction and English medium of instruction participants. Similarly, scores demonstrating the differences in performance of females and males are presented.

4.1 RESULTS OF THE PERFORMANCE OF AFRIKAANS AND ENGLISH MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION PARTICIPANTS IN THE VOCABULARY TEST

4.1.1 The Frequency Table and Bar Graph for the Vocabulary Test

Each participant had to complete a vocabulary test that consisted of three exercises (Appendix A). The Afrikaans medium of instruction and English medium of instruction participants' scores for the vocabulary test are presented in table two and figure one.

The scores of the Afrikaans group ranged from 45% to 100%, while the scores for the English group ranged from 30% to 100%. Almost 60% of the English participants achieved scores from 80% to 100% and 62.9% of the Afrikaans participants achieved scores in the same range (see table two and figure one).

The scores of the Afrikaans participants seemed more condensed at certain scores for example there was a high number of participants that achieved 45%, 65%, 85% and 90% for the vocabulary test. While this was not the case for the English participants, as their scores were spread out on the graph.

The English participants performed better than the Afrikaans participants in the vocabulary test, but this is not clearly visible from figure one and table two. Therefore the mean scores need to be identified in order to see the difference in performance of the two groups.

Table 2: The performance of Afrikaans and English medium of instruction participants in the vocabulary test

<u>Scores</u>	<u>Afrikaans</u>		<u>English</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>30</u>	-	-	<u>1</u>	<u>2.9</u>
<u>40</u>	-	-	<u>1</u>	<u>2.9</u>
<u>45</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>8.6</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>5.7</u>
<u>50</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>5.7</u>	-	-
<u>55</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2.9</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2.9</u>

<u>60</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>5.7</u>
<u>65</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>14.3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>8.6</u>
<u>70</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2.9</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2.9</u>
<u>75</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2.9</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>8.6</u>
<u>80</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>8.6</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>5.7</u>
<u>85</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>14.3</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>14.3</u>
<u>90</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>11.4</u>
<u>95</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>11.4</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>17.1</u>
<u>100</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>8.6</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>11.4</u>
TOTAL	35	100	35	100

Graphically the scores of table 2 look as follows.

Figure 1: The performance of Afrikaans and English medium of instruction participants in the vocabulary test

4.1.2 The Mean Scores for the Vocabulary Test

The mean score is the average score of the two groups. As stated previously, both groups achieved high scores and when one views figure one, it might not be clear to identify which group achieved the overall best scores for the vocabulary test.

The mean scores for the vocabulary test indicates that the scores were very close to one another as there was a difference of only 0.15. The Afrikaans group achieved a mean score of 78.14 while, the English group achieved a mean score of 78.29. Both groups achieved high scores in the vocabulary test, and the difference between the scores of the two groups can be considered negligible.

Table 3: The mean scores of Afrikaans and English medium of instruction participants in the vocabulary test

	Language	N	Mean
Vocabulary %	Afrikaans	35	78.14

	English	35	78.29
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Graphically the scores of table 3 look as follows.

Figure 2: The mean scores of Afrikaans and English medium of instruction participants in the vocabulary test

4.2 RESULTS OF THE PERFORMANCE OF AFRIKAANS AND ENGLISH

MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION PARTICIPANTS IN THE SYNTAX TEST

4.2.1 The Frequency Table and Bar Graph for the Syntax Test

The syntax test required the participants to complete three exercises based on sentence structure. The scores that the Afrikaans medium of instruction and English medium of instruction participants achieved are presented in table four and figure three.

Table four and figure three reflected that an overall low performance was achieved by both the language groups for the syntax test. In the English group there was one participant that was unable to score even one mark in the test. On the other hand, there was no participant in the Afrikaans group that was able to achieve 100%. In the English group the scores ranged from 0% to 100%, while in the Afrikaans group the scores ranged from 13% to 93%.

The scores obtained by both groups are spread out but, from figure three it is visible that the high numbers of participants that achieved scores below 50% were from the Afrikaans group. The opposite is true for the scores from 67% to 100%.The English

group increased in the number of participants that achieved scores of 67%, while the number of Afrikaans participants reduced in this range of scores. Therefore, it could be concluded from figure three that the English medium of instruction participants performed better than the Afrikaans medium of instruction participants in the syntax test.

Table 4: The performance of Afrikaans and English medium of instruction participants in the syntax test

Scores	Afrikaans		English	
	N	%	N	%
0	-	-	1	2.9
7	-	-	1	2.9
13	2	5.7	-	-
20	6	17.1	1	2.9
27	1	2.9	-	-
33	1	2.9	3	8.6
40	6	17.1	1	2.9
47	2	5.7	4	11.4
53	1	2.9	1	2.9
60	1	2.9	1	2.9
67	1	2.9	4	11.4
73	3	8.6	5	14.3
80	2	5.7	6	17.1
87	5	14.3	3	8.6
93	4	11.4	1	2.9
100	-	-	3	8.6
TOTAL	35	100	35	100

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Graphically the scores of table 4 look as follows.

Figure 3: The performance of Afrikaans and English medium of instruction participants in the syntax test

4.2.2 The Mean Scores for the Syntax Test

The mean scores achieved by the Afrikaans and the English groups for the syntax test was lower than the mean scores achieved in vocabulary test. The Afrikaans group achieved a mean score of 54.46 while, the English group achieved a mean score of 63.83. The English group achieved a higher mean score than the Afrikaans group, with a difference of 9.37 between the two groups' mean scores.

Table 5: The mean scores of Afrikaans and English medium of instruction participants in the syntax test

	<u>Language</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>
<u>Syntax %</u>	<u>Afrikaans</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>54.46</u>
<u>-</u>	<u>English</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>63.83</u>

Graphically the scores of table 5 look as follows.

Figure 4: The mean scores of Afrikaans and English medium of instruction participants in the syntax test

4.3 RESULTS OF THE PERFORMANCE OF AFRIKAANS AND ENGLISH MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION PARTICIPANTS IN THE ORAL COMMUNICATION TEST

4.3.1 The Frequency Table and Bar Graph for the Oral Communication Test

The oral communication test was conducted individually with each participant in the form of an interview and various topics were available (Appendix D) for discussion. The participants were graded by means of a grid (Appendix C) and the scores they obtained were presented in table six and figure five.

Table six and figure five showed that the scores ranged from 20% to 90% for the Afrikaans group and 40% to 100% for the English group. A high percentage of participants achieved 60% and above in the oral communication test for both the Afrikaans and the English group, with 74.3% of the participants in the Afrikaans group and 82.9% in the English group.

There were a higher number of participants that achieved scores less than 60% for the Afrikaans group in comparison to the number of participants that achieved scores below 60% for the English group. This number of participants below 60% influenced the Afrikaans groups' overall performance although the majority of the participants achieved scores of 60% and above. Therefore, the English medium of instruction participants performed better in the oral communication test than the Afrikaans medium of instruction participants.

Table 6: The performance of Afrikaans and English medium of instruction participants in the oral communication test

<u>Scores</u>	<u>Afrikaans</u>		<u>English</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>20</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2.9</u>	-	-
<u>30</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2.9</u>	-	-
<u>40</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>11.4</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>5.7</u>
<u>50</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>8.6</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>11.4</u>
<u>60</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>34.3</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>42.9</u>
<u>70</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>11.4</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>17.1</u>
<u>80</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>25.7</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>14.3</u>
<u>90</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2.9</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>5.7</u>
<u>100</u>	-	-	<u>1</u>	<u>2.9</u>
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>100</u>

Graphically the scores of table 6 look as follows.

Figure 5: The performance of Afrikaans and English medium of instruction participants in the oral communication test

4.3.2 The Mean Scores for the Oral Communication Test

In table seven and figure six it was visible that the participants in both groups performed above the average score of 50% in the oral communication test, but the scores were close for the two groups. The mean scores in table seven indicate that although both groups have an average score above 60%, the English group performed better than the Afrikaans group with a difference of 3.14. The English group achieved a mean score of 65.14 while the Afrikaans group achieved a mean score of 62.

Table 7: The mean scores of Afrikaans and English medium of instruction participants in the oral communication test

	<u>Language</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>M</u>
<u>Oral communication%</u>	<u>Afrikaans</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>62</u>
	<u>English</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>65</u>

Graphically the scores of table 7 look as follows.

Figure 6: The mean scores of Afrikaans and English medium of instruction participants in the oral communication test

4.4 LEVENE'S TEST FOR EQUALITY OF VARIANCES FOR AFRIKAANS AND ENGLISH MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION PARTICIPANTS

In order to compare the mean scores of the two language groups in the vocabulary, syntax and oral communication test, Levene's test for equality of variance was administered. Homogeneity of variance for the groups was such, that a test for comparison of means could be administered. Subsequently the t-test was administered to determine differences in the mean scores of the two groups and also to find out if these differences could be considered to be statistically significant (Wielkiewicz, 2000).

For the vocabulary test it was concluded that the variances were equal ($F= 0.138$ and $p = 0.712$). Thus a normal t test was used to test for the equality of means between the two groups with regard to the vocabulary test. Based on the t-test for the equality of

means it was concluded that there was no statistically significant difference in means for the vocabulary test between the two language groups (t = .033; p = 0.97).

For the syntax test it was concluded that the variances were equal (F= 2.035 and p = 0.158). Thus a normal t test was used to test for the equality of means between the two groups with regard to the syntax test. Based on the t-test for the equality of means it was concluded that there was no statistically significant difference in means for the syntax test between the two language groups (t = -1.457; p = 0.15)

For the oral communication test it was concluded that the variances were equal (F= .780 and p = 0.380). Thus a normal t test was used to test for the equality of means between the two groups with regard to the oral communication test. Based on the t-test for the equality of means it was concluded that there was no statistically significant difference in means for the oral communication test between the two language groups (t = .873; p = 0.39).

Table 8: T-test for equality of means for the language groups

	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. error difference
Vocabulary	-0.033	<u>67.43</u> 7	0.97	-0.14	4.3
Syntax	-1.457	<u>67.41</u> 7	0.15	-9.37	6.4
Oral communicatio n	-0.873	<u>65.70</u> 3	0.39	-3.14	3.6

4.5 RESULTS OF THE PERFORMANCE OF GIRLS AND BOYS IN THE VOCABULARY TESTS

The performance of the girls and boys for the three tests are presented in this section. The results from the frequency tables, bar graphs, the mean scores and Levene's test for equality of variances in the vocabulary, syntax and oral communication test address the third and last research question as stated in chapter one.

4.5.1 The Frequency Table and Bar Graph for the Vocabulary Test

The girls' scores ranged from 45% to 100% for the vocabulary test, while the boys scores ranged from 30% to 100%. There were 16.7% of the girls that obtained 100% and 66.7% of their scores ranged from 80% to 100%. Furthermore, 17.6% of the boys obtained a score below 50% and 56% of their scores ranged from 80% to 100% (see table seven and figure five). A high percentage of the girls, 92.7%, achieved 60% and above while only 76.6% of the boys were in the same range of scores. These results were an indication that the girls achieved higher scores than the boys in the vocabulary test.

Table 9: The performance of girls and boys in the vocabulary test

Scores	Girls		Boys	
	N	%	N	%
30	-	-	1	2.9
40	-	-	1	2.9
45	1	2.8	4	11.8
50	-	-	2	5.9
55	2	5.6	-	-
60	2	5.6	-	-
65	4	11.1	4	11.8
70	1	2.8	1	2.9
75	2	5.6	2	5.9

80	1	2.8	4	11.8
85	6	16.7	4	11.8
90	7	19.4	4	11.8
95	4	11.1	6	17.7
100	6	16.7	1	2.9
TOTAL	36	100	34	100

Graphically the scores of table 9 look as follows.

Figure 7: The performance of girls and boys in the vocabulary test

4.5.2 The Mean Scores for the Vocabulary Test

Table ten and figure eight provide a clear indication that the girls performed better than the boys in the vocabulary test. The mean scores indicate that although the girls achieved a very high mean score, the boys did not lag behind the girls too far. Although the difference between the mean scores was 7.96, the boys achieved a good score of 74.12, but the girls achieved a better score of 82.08.

Table 10: The mean scores of girls and boys in the vocabulary test

	<u>Gender</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>
<u>Vocabulary %</u>	Girls	36	82.08
	Boys	34	74.12

Graphically the scores of table 10 look as follows.

Figure 8: The mean scores of girls and boys in the vocabulary test

4.6 RESULTS OF THE PERFORMANCE OF GIRLS AND BOYS IN THE SYNTAX TESTS

4.6.1 The Frequency Table and Bar Graph for the Syntax Test

In table eleven and figure nine it can be observed that one of the girls obtained zero for the syntax test. Although the girls achieved the two lowest scores (zero and seven percent) for the syntax test, there were only 33.5% of the girls that achieved scores below 60%, while 55.95 of the boys achieved scores within the same range.

However, 47.2% of the girls' scores ranged from 80% to 100% while, only 20.5% of the boys were able to obtain scores in the 80% to 100% range. Graphically, in figure nine, it is visible that a greater number of boys were in the range below 60%, while an increase in the number of girls were observed from the scores that ranged from 60% and above. Thus the girls achieved higher scores than the boys in the syntax test.

Table 11: The performance of girls and boys in the syntax test

Scores	Girls		Boys	
	N	%	N	%
0	1	2.8	-	-
7	1	2.8	-	-
13	-	-	2	5.9
20	1	2.8	6	17.7
27	-	-	1	2.9
33	1	2.8	3	8.8
40	5	13.9	2	5.9
47	2	5.6	4	11.8
53	1	2.8	1	2.9
60	2	5.6	-	-
67	2	5.6	3	8.8
73	3	8.3	5	14.7
80	4	11.1	6	17.7
87	7	19.4	1	2.9
93	4	11.1	1	2.9
100	2	5.6	1	2.9
TOTAL	36	100	34	100

Graphically the scores of table 11 look as follows.

Figure 9: The performance of girls and boys in the syntax test

4.6.2 The Mean Scores for the Syntax Test

Already from table eleven and figure nine it could be observed that the girls performed better than the boys in the syntax test. The mean scores for the syntax test re affirm what

was presented in table eleven and figure nine. There was a difference of 14.4 between the mean scores of the girls and the boys. The girls achieved a mean score of 66.14, while the boys achieved a mean score of 51.74.

Table 12: The mean scores of girls and boys in the syntax test

	Gender	N	Mean
Syntax %	Girls	36	66.14
	Boys	34	51.74

Graphically the scores of table 12 look as follows.

Figure 10: The mean scores of girls and boys in the syntax test

4.7 RESULTS OF THE PERFORMANCE OF GIRLS AND BOYS IN THE ORAL COMMUNICATION TEST

4.7.1 The Frequency Table and Bar Graph for the Oral Communication Test

The boys achieved the two lowest scores (20% and 30%) for the oral communication test, while the highest score of 100% was achieved by a girl. The majority of both the girls and the boys achieved scores from 60% and above.

There were 83.4% of the girls that obtained scores from 60% to 100%, while there were 73.6% of the boys that obtained scores from 60% to 80%. There was one girl that obtained 100% for the test whereas none of the boys obtained a score between 90% and 100% (see table thirteen and figure eleven). Although the majority of both boys and girls achieved scores above 50%, figure eleven gave a clear indication that girls performed better than boys.

Figure eleven indicated that the boys were more visible in the range from 20% to 60%, while the girls were more visible in the range of 60% to 100%. Therefore, the girls performed better than the boys in the oral communication test.

Table 13: The performance of girls and boys in the oral communication test

<u>Scores</u>	<u>Girls</u>		<u>Boys</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>20</u>	-	-	<u>1</u>	<u>2.9</u>
<u>30</u>	-	-	<u>1</u>	<u>2.9</u>
<u>40</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2.8</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>14.7</u>
<u>50</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>13.9</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>5.9</u>
<u>60</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>30.6</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>47.1</u>
<u>70</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>16.7</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>11.8</u>
<u>80</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>14.7</u>
<u>90</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>8.3</u>	-	-
<u>100</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2.8</u>	-	-
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>100</u>

Graphically the scores of table 13 look as follows.

Figure 11: The performance of girls and boys in the oral communication test

4.7.2 The Mean Scores for the Oral communication Test

The girls performed better than the boys in the oral communication test and this was observed from table thirteen, figure eleven and it is further highlighted with the mean scores in table fourteen and figure twelve. The girls achieved a mean score of 68.33 which was almost 10% higher than the mean score of 58.53 that was achieved by the boys.

Table 14: The mean scores of girls and boys in the oral communication test

	<u>Gender</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>
<u>Oral communication%</u>	<u>Girls</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>68.33</u>
	<u>Boys</u>	<u>34</u>	<u>58.53</u>

Graphically the scores of table 14 look as follows.

Figure 12: The mean scores of girls and boys in the oral communication test

4.8 LEVENE'S TEST FOR EQUALITY OF VARIANCE FOR GIRLS AND BOYS

In order to compare the mean scores of boys and girls in the vocabulary, syntax and oral communication test, Levene's test for equality of variance was administered. Homogeneity of variance for the groups was such, that a test for comparison of means could be administered. Subsequently the t-test was administered to determine differences in the mean scores of the two genders and also to find out if these differences could be considered to be statistically significant (Wielkiewicz, 2000).

For the vocabulary test it was concluded that the variances were equal ($F = 2.936$ and $p = 0.091$). Thus a normal t test was used to test for the equality of means between the girls and boys with regard to the vocabulary test. Although relatively close to 0.05, based on the t-test for the equality of means, it was concluded that there was no statistically significant difference in means for the vocabulary test between the two genders ($t = 1.871$; $p = 0.066$).

For the syntax test it was concluded that the variances were equal ($F = 0.075$ and $p = 0.785$). Thus a normal t test was used to test for the equality of means between the two groups with regard to the syntax test. Based on the t-test for the equality of means it was

concluded that there was a statistically significant difference in means for the syntax test between the two genders ($t=2.289$; $p = 0.025$).

For the oral communication test it was concluded that the variances were equal ($F=0.418$ and $p = 0.520$). Thus a normal t test was used to test for the equality of means between the two gender groups with regard to the oral communication test. Based on the t-test for the equality of means it was concluded that there was a statistically significant difference in means for the oral communication test between boys and girls ($t = 2.861$; $p = 0.006$).

Table 15: T-test for equality of means for gender

	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. error difference
Vocabulary	1.871	62.36	0.066	7.97	4.26
Syntax	2.289	67.88	0.025	14.4	6.29
Oral communication					
n	2.861	67.37	0.006	9.8	3.43

4.9 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the findings of the study in the form of frequency tables, the mean scores in tabulation form and Levene's test for the equality of variances and the t-test for the equality of means. Although there were no statistically significant differences found between the scores of the two language groups, there is an indication

of trends that coincide with the literature. For the genders, some of the differences in mean scores were found to be statistically significantly different. Therefore a discussion of these results follows in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the results of the data collected were analyzed and reported. The aim of this chapter is to interpret the results provided and to make recommendations based on the results.

The interpretation of the results will coincide with the order of the research questions in Chapter One and the presentation of the results in Chapter Four. The first research question focuses on the performance of the participants in the two language groups, while the second research question focuses on the language areas for example vocabulary, syntax or oral communication. The performance of the Afrikaans and English medium of instruction participants and the language areas are discussed simultaneously. Similarly the performance of girls and boys are discussed. The performance of the participants in the various tests was used as the dependent variable to determine differences in performance between the two language groups and also between girls and boys.

**5.1.1 THE PERFORMANCE OF AFRIKAANS MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION
AND ENGLISH MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION PARTICIPANTS IN
THE VOCABULARY TEST**

The majority of the Afrikaans medium of instruction participants obtained scores from 80% to 100% in the vocabulary test, while the minority of the Afrikaans medium of instruction participants obtained scores less than 50%. These results are in line with the evidence (August & Shanahan, 2006) that language minority students (second language learners) are able to take advantage of higher order vocabulary skills in their first language. This would mean, if learners have acquired the skills to provide definitions, interpret metaphors and use cognates, in their first language; then they will be capable to use the skills in the second language. This is a favorable argument for mother tongue instruction as first language vocabulary in this case seemed to positively influence second language vocabulary. The Afrikaans medium of instruction participants' good vocabulary can be an indication of a well development first language (Afrikaans) which aided their second language (English). However, in Namibia, factors outside the school can also be seen as helpful in the building of vocabulary as the majority of the programs, including children's entertainment, on the Namibian national broadcaster is

in English. English is the national language of Namibia and in most regions of the country, opportunities to hear the language is ample.

The data furthermore revealed that the majority of the English medium of instruction participants achieved scores from 80% to 100%, while the minority obtained scores below 50%. This could mean that fewer participants from the English medium of instruction group would achieve below 50% as they might have the advantage over the Afrikaans medium of instruction participants. They have been instructed and exposed in the classroom setting to the language for a longer period of time than the Afrikaans medium of instruction participants. This assumption can be based on the “Maximum exposure hypothesis or Time-on-task hypothesis” by Porter (1997), which states that more time spent learning a language will result in better performance in that language. The English medium of instruction participants spent a longer period of time on the task (English) and one would have expected that they would have performed substantially better than the Afrikaans group. Yet the difference in mean scores between the two groups was negligible and the “time on task” hypothesis is therefore not supported for the vocabulary test.

These findings are consistent with those reached by other investigators (Harlech-Jones, 1998; Bada, 2001; Ramasamy, 2001; Makalela, 2005; Cummins, 2006 and Prinsloo, 2007) that emphasize the importance of the first language in order to achieve success in the second language. A greater difference might have been expected between the scores of the Afrikaans medium of instruction participants and the English medium of

instruction participants, as the English medium of instruction participants were exposed to three years more instruction in an English medium than the Afrikaans medium of instruction participants. This assumption of longer exposure resulting in better performance, based on Porter's hypothesis, is not supported by the vocabulary test.

However, the differences in mean scores for the vocabulary test, between the language groups were not statistically significant and only indicate a possible trend. Further research, on vocabulary acquisition for learners that were instructed in their mother tongue and those that were not instructed in their mother tongue, will be needed before either the "mother tongue instruction" or the "maximum exposure hypothesis" can be supported.

5.1.2 THE PERFORMANCE OF AFRIKAANS MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION AND ENGLISH MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION PARTICIPANTS IN THE SYNTAX TEST

In table four, in Chapter Four, the performance of the Afrikaans and English medium of instruction participants in the syntax test was presented. The results for the syntax test were very poor for both the Afrikaans medium of instruction and the English medium of instruction participants.

More than half of the Afrikaans medium of instruction participants achieved scores lower than 50% in the syntax test. Studies conducted by De Klerk (1995), Heugh (1995) and Baker (2008) stated that, a weak form of bilingual education will influence learners'

second language performance negatively. When learners are taught in their mother tongue during the initial school years, this should be done for not less than four years. (De Klerk, 1995; Heugh, 1995) in order for the necessary language development to take place. The Afrikaans medium of instruction participants did not achieve good results in the syntax test. This could mean a shortcoming in the ability of the learners to relate the Afrikaans sentence structure to English sentences.

It can be noted that the weak performance of the Afrikaans medium of instruction participants opposes the literature that states the structure of English and Afrikaans is similar. The Afrikaans medium of instruction participants should not really have had such a big a backlog with regard to sentence construction as the two languages have similarities, particularly in this area. Although the basic word order in Afrikaans is Subject-Object-Verb (Roberge, 2001), it should be noted, that there are various examples in Afrikaans where the word order is also Subject-Verb-Object, for example, “Ek speel krieket.” The translated sentence is, “I play cricket.” Both these sentences follow the Subject-Verb-Object word order. Furthermore, the structure of questions is also similar in Afrikaans and English and when the participants completed the syntax test they also had to construct questions.

In table four, in Chapter Four, the performance of the English medium of instruction participants in the syntax test was presented. Although a high percentage of the English medium of instruction participants achieved scores below 50% it is still less than half of the Afrikaans medium of instruction participants that obtained below 50% for this test.

The English medium of instruction participants might have had the advantage of being exposed to the English sentence construction for a longer period of time regardless of the fact that they were Afrikaans mother tongue speakers. These results are contrary to research by Cummins (1979), Krashen (1985, as cited in Cook 1993), Makalela (2005) and Prinsloo (2007), as these research studies indicate the need and importance for mother tongue instruction in order for achievement in the second language. The participants that were instructed in their mother tongue, for this study, performed poorly in the syntax test in comparison with the Afrikaans mother tongue speakers that were instructed in the second language, English. Therefore, from the results it seems as if the “Time-on-task hypothesis” (Porter, 1997) is relevant for this particular test.

For the syntax test there was a big difference in the mean scores for the two language groups (9.37). The English medium of instruction participants obtained a higher mean score than the Afrikaans medium of instruction participants. From the three tests that the language groups completed, the syntax test was the test where the p value was closest to being statistically significant ($p = 0.15$). However, since the difference was not statistically significant, the findings should be considered as an indication of possible trends and no firm conclusions can be made to confirm or reject the existing hypotheses on second language acquisition. However, the difference leans towards support for the maximum exposure hypothesis.

5.1.3 THE PERFORMANCE OF AFRIKAANS MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION AND ENGLISH MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION PARTICIPANTS IN THE ORAL COMMUNICATION TEST

In table six, in Chapter Four, the performance of the Afrikaans and English medium of instruction participants in the oral communication test were presented. The performance of the Afrikaans medium of instruction group in the oral communication test was much better than their performance in the syntax test. More than half of the participants obtained 60% and above in this test.

A study was conducted by Lopez and Greenfield (Weitzman, 2007) on the predictive relationship between Spanish oral communication skills (L1) and English (L2) phonological awareness. They concluded in that study, that strengthening the oral communication proficiency and metalinguistic skills in the home language would facilitate the subsequent acquisition of English literacy skills. The positive results in the oral communication test for the Afrikaans medium of instruction participants in this study might be due to the participants having sufficient oral communication skills in their first language.

The English medium of instruction participants also performed very well in the oral communication test, as the majority of the participants obtained 60% and above, while a small percentage of the participants obtained scores below 50%. This can be seen as consistent and in line with the Time-on-task hypothesis (Porter, 1997) that states that the longer one is exposed to a language, the better one will become in it. As the English

medium of instruction participants were provided with opportunities to communicate in English in a classroom setting from grade one, this could place them at a more favourable position than the Afrikaans medium of instruction participants. The English medium of instruction participants could have built confidence during the first three years of instruction as they might have been encouraged to communicate in English with the teacher and their peers.

For the oral communication test the mean score for the English group was slightly higher than that of the Afrikaans group (3.14%). Since this difference was not statistically significant, no firm conclusions can be drawn from the data. However, the results lean slightly towards support for the “maximum exposure hypothesis”.

5.1.4 THE AREAS OF DIFFERENCE FOR THE TWO LANGUAGE GROUPS’ PERFORMANCE

The areas tested for language performance for this study were vocabulary, syntax and oral communication. In the area of vocabulary a higher mean was obtained by the English medium of instruction participants than the Afrikaans medium of instruction participants (see table ten, in Chapter Four). This difference was negligible (0.14%) and not statistically significant.

The second area tested was syntax. Syntax requires comprehension of sentence construction, which goes beyond the single level of words (vocabulary); therefore, a

higher level of cognitive ability was required for this particular test. The mean score for the English medium of instruction participants was substantially higher than that of the Afrikaans medium of instruction participants' mean score (9.37%) (see table twelve, in Chapter Four).

The last area tested was oral communication. Communication is influenced by the confidence that a person has, as well as the awareness and understanding of vocabulary and syntax. The English medium of instruction participants obtained a mean score that was slightly higher than the Afrikaans medium of instruction participants' mean score (3.14%) (see table fourteen, in Chapter Four).

In the vocabulary and oral communication tests the difference in the performance between the two language groups was not very big. The Afrikaans medium of instruction participants performed well in the vocabulary and oral communication tests. This can be an indication that they received sufficient instruction in their mother tongue in these areas; therefore they were able to transfer their first language knowledge regarding these particular areas to their second language (Klein, 2003). Their poor performance in the syntax test can be due to various reasons, but a possible explanation could be that they have not been given direct support or scaffolding, in order for them to transfer learning from their first language to their second language. According to Kohnert and Derr (2004, as cited in Weitzman, 2007), skill transfer from the first language to the second language does not happen instinctively. Therefore, direct support or scaffolding from a teacher is required in order for the learner to identify the skills.

from their first language that could also be applied in their second language. Another possibility is an inability to relate the sentence structure of Afrikaans and English, but this should not be the case as Afrikaans and English have a similar sentence structure. The English medium of instruction participants might have been able to perform well in the syntax test because they had been exposed and consciously made aware of the English sentence construction in an educational setting for already five years, at the time they completed the syntax test.

Based on the results, it is clear that the English medium of instruction participants in this particular study performed better than the Afrikaans medium of instruction participants in all the areas that were tested. Although the mean scores were very close, almost equal in the vocabulary test, the English medium of instruction participants remained a step ahead of the Afrikaans medium of instruction participants.

The results of the two language groups in two of the three tests demonstrated clear trends but differences were statistically not significant and further research is needed before any solid conclusions can be made about the influence of the neglect of mother tongue instruction.

5.1.5 THE AREAS OF DIFFERENCE FOR GIRLS AND BOYS' PERFORMANCE

Based on research (Swann, 1992; Browne, 2005), there is a belief that girls perform better than boys where language is concerned. In this section the performance of the

girls versus the boys will be looked at regardless of the medium of instruction from grade one to three.

There were 34 boys and 36 girls that participated in this study. Table ten, in Chapter Four, presents the mean scores of the girls and the boys on the different tests. The girls obtained higher mean scores in all three tests. Table eleven, in Chapter Four, indicates that the results for the vocabulary test were very close to being statistically significant, while the results for the syntax and oral communication test were statistically significant. According to Browne (2005), "More boys than girls experience difficulties with reading and writing. Girls seem to read more books, ... (p.171)". Furthermore, Halpern (1986, as cited in Swann, 1992) states that girls have greater verbal ability than boys due to lateralization in the brain. The test results coincide with the findings and views of Halpern and Browne. The results for the vocabulary test were not statistically significant, although, the girls obtained a higher mean score than the boys. This could be due to the fact that girls tend to read more than boys therefore gaining more vocabulary. The motivation of girls to read more could be due to the biological factor of brain lateralization which states that girls tend to do better in language activities than boys. Another reason why girls tend to read more than boys could be that reading is a socially acceptable recreational activity for girls and not for boys (Browne, 2005). Therefore, it could be said that girls have both a biological disposition and a social encouragement to read more than boys. This further appears to influence girls' good performances in the syntax and oral communication tests. The greater verbal ability of the girls were observed during the oral communication test as they engaged in

longer and more detailed discussions and their high level of confidence was also observed.

As the girls tend to have a 'natural' advantage in language over boys, teachers should encourage and create conducive language learning environments for boys in the classroom. According to Halpern (1986, as cited in Swann, 1992), boys have a greater spatial ability. Teachers should try to add spatial activities to the language classroom in order to encourage language development in boys.

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5.2 LIMITATIONS

The study is inconclusive in its findings with regard to the language groups. Although the researcher initially intended for the results and recommendations to be generalized to other settings, this will unfortunately not be possible. There were limitations that influenced the final results.

The first limitation that this study had was the number of participants. The researcher initially intended that the study should consist of at least 100 participants. But unfortunately this was not possible, as the researcher wanted to have an equal number of participants from the two groups (English medium of instruction and Afrikaans medium of instruction) from a given school in order to control factors such as gender and socio-economic background. Although many schools in Windhoek offer Afrikaans medium of instruction from grade one to three, an equal number of participants in both

groups were not always possible, as the Afrikaans mother tongue participants that received English medium of instruction from grade one to three, were quite dispersed in Windhoek. The researcher was only able to find 70 participants from two schools that had the defined criteria as set out in chapter three.

This was not a longitudinal study and the researcher only observed the performance of the participants for a short period. The researcher was also cautious to intrude on class time.

The researcher did not use standardized tests that have been used by other researchers. Instead the researcher opted to adapt and use tests from language textbooks.

There were learners who had difficulty understanding English. This made it difficult for them to follow instructions given in the instruments. The researcher had to elaborate and explain to the participants, yet some of them still could not complete certain parts of the instruments.

Some of the participants already struggled to understand the instructions therefore; the tests might have been too long for them. This could have affected the participants' level of concentration and ultimately their final responses.

The researcher also acknowledged the possibility of subjective judgment with regard to the scoring of the oral communication test. The researcher used a grid to guide the assessment of the participants' oral communication ability, but subjectivity might have influenced the researcher's assessment.

There was no recording made of the interview that the researcher had with the participants and this can be viewed as another limitation. The assessment was completed directly after each interview, but the researcher had no tangible way of reviewing interviews at the end of the day, as there was no recording.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

A recommendation for future studies can be that a bigger sample be included, so that the findings can be generalized.

Another recommendation is that a bigger variety of participants be included in the study. In this study only learners from urban areas were included, but a comparison can be made in the difference between urban and rural participants.

In this particular study the researcher adapted tests from ESL textbooks to test the various areas of language. There are standardized tests available that other researchers have used and maybe these tests would be more appropriate and valid for a similar research.

From the results there is a need for improved syntax instruction. Although the English medium of instruction participants performed better than the Afrikaans medium of instruction participants, the syntax test remained the test with the lowest results. Furthermore, language teachers should make a conscious decision to make language instruction more appealing to boys, as they tend to struggle with language activities.

The language policy is not being implemented at all schools and it is not very effective in terms of initial mother tongue medium of instruction. Studies by Wolfaardt (2004) have specifically addressed the issue on the fact that Namibia has a subtractive and early exit bilingual programme, which is a weak form of bilingual education programme. Other forms of bilingual education programmes that are stronger in terms of sufficient first language development and later first language maintenance, when the switch is made to English medium of instruction, should be considered for Namibia.

Teachers should give direct support for learners, in order for the learners to be aware of learning transfer from the first language to the second language. The learners' first language should be used as a resource tool in the language classroom to enhance second language learning. When a teacher discusses a particular aspect in ESL, for example Degrees of comparison, learners could be made aware of the same aspect in their first language, for example Afrikaans, which is, 'Trappe van vergelyking'. Then they can test whether principles in their first language, for a particular aspect, is the same in the second language.

In Namibia, teachers are encouraged to use a learner-centered approach and this is also relevant for the language classroom. Learners should be given opportunities to contribute orally in class discussions, as well as to communicate effectively with their peers in group discussions. These activities encourage oral communication and give learners a chance to build confidence in their second language. This confidence can be built in a classroom environment where communication is encouraged.

5.4 CONCLUSION

Mother tongue instruction has become an important point of discussion in Namibia, as policy makers have included a Language Policy for schools (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1993). Yet there are various opinions regarding the influence and importance of mother tongue medium of instruction in the formative years of a child's life.

There are various advantages to initially use the first language. According to Auerbach, 1993; Philips, 1993; Cole, 1998; Buckmaster, 2000 and Burden, 2000 (as cited in Khamis Al-Hinai, n.d.), the use of the first language, reduces learner anxiety and it creates a relaxing environment; it means bringing the learner's cultural background knowledge into class; it facilitates the task of explaining meaning of abstract words and of introducing the main difference in grammar and pronunciation between the first language and the second language. These factors will not only assist success in the second language classroom, but it will also influence general academic performance (Collier, 1995), once the medium of instruction is English. The Namibian schools can take advantage of the range of benefits, when implementing effective mother tongue

instruction in the initial grades, but aspects like duration and quality of mother tongue instruction should be reviewed.

The study was not able to give conclusive findings but it does indicate trends in language learning, but some of the results may lean slightly towards Porter's Time - On - Task Hypothesis (1997). In this study the Afrikaans speaking participants that were taught in English medium of instruction performed better than the Afrikaans speaking participants that were taught in Afrikaans. Although the scores of the language groups were not statistically significant the results of the girls and the boys showed statistical significance.

The results of the study were not in favour of mother tongue instruction, but due to various limitations encountered in this study; this finding cannot be considered to be conclusive. The researcher concluded that the findings lean slightly towards Porter's Time-on-Task Hypothesis. The success of Porter's hypothesis is not documented widely and research is not concretely available to support this hypothesis within a language learning classroom. On the other hand, Cummins (1979), Developmental Interdependence Hypothesis, have been researched more extensively and the success of this hypothesis have been widely documented and accepted by schools in various countries, even Namibia. Therefore, this study should be expanded to identify whether there were other important factors, not identified by the researcher, which influenced the participants' performance in the various tests.

In Namibian studies, the differences in language performance for boys and girls have not been researched extensively. Thorough knowledge and understanding of the differences in performance, for boys and girls, might influence and even improve language teachers' teaching for boys and girls. Once teachers are aware of how the biological and social differences influence the language learning of boys and girls, then they can direct their teaching to assist learners in language learning, for optimal performance.

The investigation into the field of mother tongue instruction will not end with this study, but this study can be seen as part of the bricks to build the house of knowledge in this particular field.

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APPENDIX A**Vocabulary Test**

1. **Circle the one that is different. The first one has been done for you.**

sunglasses

pen pencil textbook sunglasses

(a) windscreen exhaust pipe chimney seatbelt

(b) clouds trees stars rainbow

(c) laugh frown worried smile

(d) soccer rugby computer games netball

(e) brother uncle sister mother

2. **Find words from the two boxes that belong together. The first one has been done for you.**

books games hard letters maths plans songs stories
pictures TV questions problems

asking doing drawing singing making playing reading
working solving telling watching writing

- (a) singing songs (g)
- (b) _____ (h)
- (c) _____ (i)
- (d) _____ (j)
- (e) _____ (k)
- (f) _____ (l)

(adapted from Aspinall, P. & Bethell, G. 2001)

3. **Match the words and the expressions. Write the letter of the expression (picture) next to the word in the box. One has been done for you.**



A



B



C



D

E



worried _____ happy _____ surprised _____ angry A sad _____

APPENDIX B

Syntax Test



4. Willy the word worm mixed up the following sentences. Help Willy to correct the sentences by writing them in the right order. Remember to begin your sentence with the word that has a capital letter and you should use all the words you are given to write the correct sentence. The first sentence has been done for you.

(a) Sarah was lived she farm on a name and Her

Her name was Sarah and she lived on a farm.

(b) other The cows want talk not her with did to

(c) said They did they like not name her

(d) ignored just them Sarah

(e) believed Sarah other cows jealous the were her of

(adapted from Redgrave, J.J., 1988)

5. The following sentences are also mixed up. Place them in the correct order but some of them are questions so they must end in a question mark and not a full stop.

(a) her why kiss you give a didn't?

Why didn't you give her a kiss?

(b) theus bring could money you?

(c) to for you like buy birthday something I'd your.

(d) you may I a offer lift?

(e) haven't left they any probably got.

(f) like slowly say you these I'd to words very.

6. **Match these to make sentences. One sentence has been done for you.**

<u>Where did you use to</u>	<u>if you didn't have to?</u>
<u>If there are more cars</u>	<u>won a competition?</u>
<u>Have you ever</u>	<u>so he takes a taxi to school.</u>
<u>They are going to the library</u>	<u>go to school.</u>
<u>His mother does not have a car</u>	<u>I would give everyone a day off.</u>
<u>Would you go to school</u>	<u>we will need more roads.</u>
<u>If I was the principal</u>	<u>to do their project.</u>

(adapted from Aspinall, P. & Bethell, G. 2001)

APPENDIX C

Oral communication Test

The test for oral communication will be an oral communication interview. There will be an interviewer, the researcher. It is important that the interviewer put the participant at ease at the beginning of the interview, adopting a sympathetic attitude and trying to hold a genuine conversation.

Each participant will choose one topic from the list and they will then need to talk about it. The participant will have an opportunity to think about the topic before the interview will begin. The participant should then talk about the topic for about one minute then the interviewer asks a few general questions, for example: Do you think life was easier then? What do you know about the way life was before you were born?

Marking the interview

During the interview the interviewer must make two independent judgments about the speaking ability of each participant. The first is about *communication*: can the participant talk about the past and the present? Can they convey

comparisons? The second is about the *quality* of the language used: does the participant use appropriate vocabulary, structures and grammar when comparing the past and the present?

If a learner is unable to communicate effectively on the given topic then the interviewer should change the topic so that the participant has an opportunity to elaborate in order for communication to be possible.

COMMUNICATION

4 OR 5 Can talk about his/her chosen topic with little difficulty. No help is required. Grammar may not be correct but fluency is good. May paraphrase for unknown words.

2 OR 3 Can describe for example, the present clearly. May need prompting/help in drawing comparisons.

1 Statements are limited to e.g. “ Mobile telephones is good.”
Generally needs help.

0 Cannot talk about any topic without significant prompting/help.

LANGUAGE CONTENT

4 OR 5 Descriptions are generally expressed using acceptable grammar/structures, e.g. “Computers are very fast now.”
“Mobile phones used to be expensive.”

2 OR 3	<u>Vocabulary is adequate for the task. Comparisons need some effort on the part of the listener.</u>
1	<u>Use basic vocabulary successfully for simple statements only. Significant evidence of missing vocabulary and grammar.</u>
0	<u>Vocabulary clearly inadequate for task</u>

(adapted from Aspinall, P. & Bethell, G. 2001)

APPENDIX D

TOPICS FOR ORAL COMMUNICATION TEST

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| **APPENDIX E**

| **LETTER TO THE DIRECTOR**

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APPENDIX F

LETTER TO THE SCHOOLS