

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The South African education system and its fragmented definition was one of the many distinctive features of apartheid (Goodson and Medway, 1990). The new democratic South Africa saw a profound change to all aspects of society, with notable impact on education. This transformation brought challenges for educators as well as learners and their families. Many educators were not prepared for this change in education, which posed a great challenge for teachers who had to accommodate a diverse and multilingual classroom (Myburgh, Poggenpoel, & van Rensburg, 2004).

As a result of the changes in the education policy English medium schools with their better facilities, became more accessible to the previously marginalised groups (Buthelezi, 2003). Parents were keen for their children to attend the schools that were previously inaccessible. English became the most widely used official language of South Africa and as a result the traditional language of instruction also changed. In South Africa very few high schools use indigenous languages as a medium of instruction. In most countries the first language generally is the dominant language, in South Africa this is not so. Within the new education system parents can enrol their children in any school of their choice. Often parents do not take cognisance of the correlation between the child's first language (L1) and the language of instruction (Myburgh et al., 2004). English is largely seen as the dominant language of the work place. Parents aspire for their children to have better opportunities than they had. Many parents perceive English proficiency as being essential to educational success, occupational achievement, and socio-economic mobility (Buthelezi, 2003, Goodson & Medway, 1990).

Therefore there is a strong desire for second language (L2) instruction. Further, (L2) parents are keen to encourage their children to establish fluency in English.

Changes in the educational system have resulted in many of the learners being encouraged to attend English medium schools although this is not their L1. There is a growing concern to establish how to consolidate the gaps that are emerging within the educational system. Many South African learners, who are forced to learn in English, are currently experiencing difficulty both at University as well at high school level. Thus, learners are struggling to cope on all levels of their educational journey.

One possible reason is that learners are expected to learn in a language that is not their first language. Further, the learners are often expected to make the transition from their home language to their language of learning without really consolidating his/her knowledge in his/her first language. This is often not easy and often impacts on the learners' academic proficiency as well as academic development. One possible contributing factor could be learners having poor reading skills. Further, learners' have not established the necessary language skills in their L1. A learner needs to have a good foundation in their L1 in order to develop competence in his/her L2 learning experience.

This research gives consideration to the factors that impact on academic success. It also looks at the possible contributing theoretical issues that relate to reading in the context of a second language.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Research has shown that a learner's proficiency in their first language is a predictor of the level of competence that they will achieve in reading comprehension in a second language (Bialystok, as cited in King & Jordaan, 2005). This is linked to a "synergistic relationship" that includes reading and cognitive development with reading comprehension being the central consideration (Jordaan, 2005). Research further highlights that if learners have not had the opportunity to fully develop their L1 competence then their L2 achievement would be problematic. Research suggests that their academic achievement will ultimately be affected. "There may be threshold levels of linguistic competence which a bilingual child must attain to avoid cognitive disadvantages and allow the potentially beneficial aspects of becoming bilingual to influence his cognitive functioning"(Cummins & Swain, 1986, p.18).

It is often assumed that once a learner has developed conversational competence then the learner has also attained competence in "deeper language proficiency"(King & Jordaan et al., 2005.p.11). This conception ignores that the manner in which we acquire and develop conversational and academic language is vastly different. For a learner to develop competence in a second language, s/he first needs to be well established in his/her first language. This provides the understanding necessary for appropriate language development. When a learner has attained success in their first language a learner can enjoy improved success in developing these skills in a second language.

Cummins (1999a) theory, of BICS (basic interpersonal communication skills) and CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency) provide a useful insight into the acquisition of language. Cummins argued that Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) take approximately two years to acquire. He further explained that cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) is a skill that was necessary for learners to cope with academic tasks. It has been found by various researchers that it takes approximately two years to attain fluency in a language on an oral and conversational level, but to gain academic proficiency in a new language one needs between 5-10 years (Cummins, 1999a). “Differences in the rate of acquisition of the two levels need to be considered so that the academic language education of bilingual children with good conversational English ability does not suffer” (Cummins, 1999, b, p.1.). Cummins explains that BICS and CALP are not mutually exclusive but rather that they are conceptually distinct and that the acquisition of CALP is ongoing.

Cummins maintains that when a learner has bi-lingual experience and has established the underlying principles of his/her first language, this conceptual knowledge can be transferred across languages (Cummins, 1999 a). To achieve this, the learner needs to have the ability to develop their academic skills in their first language. Using a learners’ L1 in all contexts provides the perfect medium for teaching, learning and expression (Thwala, 2007). Then the learner will be able to facilitate the development of the appropriate conceptual skills so as to be competent at using these skills in their L2. The competency of L2 learners to develop the appropriate cognitive academic skills is largely dependent on their level of competency in their first language (Cummins as cited in King et al., 2005).

A critique of Cummins theory of bilingualism is that culture plays a significant role. L2 learners are often expected to engage in texts that are foreign to their own culture creating a further dimension to what impacts on the acquisition of the appropriate literacy skills. Ferdman, Weber, & Ramirez, (1994) argue that learners are often expected to acquire literacy in a context where the theories and practices are different from their own realities and experiences and therefore forces them into a world that is very different from their own. These factors impact on their ability to gain meaning from texts. In South Africa this is particularly a cause for concern were learners in the majority of the schools are being educated in a language that is not their L1.

Furthermore, Cummins theory was formulated through his observation and study of learners in Canada who were receiving education in their home language and their second language simultaneously (Cline & Frederickson 1996). In South Africa the lack of resources as well as limited literature that is available in any of the 14 vernacular languages prevents learners from having a similar learning context. One of the key challenges is the scarce availability of resources both in terms of educators as well as suitable material (Thwala, 2007). As such, learners in South Africa schools are generally exposed to English literature before having had any exposure to literature in their home language (Weideman & van Rensburg, 2002). To further understand bilingualism in South Africa it is important to examine the historical background to education in South Africa.

To consider the learners' performance and their comparative competence academically one cannot exclude the context within which the learners are receiving their education. In a country

like South Africa many factors play an integral role in defining the educational success of learners. These factors include the historic past of a segregated education system, economic growth and the emergence of a democratic South Africa.

The National Party came into power in 1948 in South Africa. It was the National Party governance that introduced the policy that all black children must be educated in their mother tongue for their entire primary school education. The purpose of the Bantu education system by the National Party was to prepare Black people for the working class, which they were essentially meant to remain (Janks, n.d, as cited in Goodson, 1990). As such learners were educated in their vernacular language until they reached high school. The design of the Bantu education curriculum prior to 1994 was to leave its learners ill prepared for higher education (Moodley, 2006). The very same learners were then expected to be educated through the medium of English. Further, Afrikaans was introduced as another compulsory subject to the learners even though the learners had had minimal exposure to the Afrikaans language. This facilitated a further sense of disempowerment and marginalisation of these learners. Leaving learners feeling frustrated about the process of learning and education in general.

With the emergence of a free and democratic society, education became the cornerstone for the implementation of change. The new South Africa and all that it had come to represent had placed great effort in inculcating principles that were based on equal and democratic rights for all in an attempt to correct the injustices that were established by the previous constitution. As such the government is committed to rectify the inequalities of the past by promoting improved, quality education for all (Asmal, 1996). The government has officially sanctioned

11 official languages into the constitution, which in essence is promoting multilingualism (Broom, 2004), and giving each language the accreditation that it deserved. The current language policy is that an individual learner has the right to choose the language within which he or she wishes to receive instruction.

Post apartheid South Africa meant equal opportunity for all in terms of property, schools, and job opportunities. Previously marginalized communities began scrambling for the opportunities that they had been deprived of. Families and communities became disbanded; schools became mixed and with it came a diverse school community. It is therefore ironic that previously disadvantaged communities are opting to send their children to schools that were previously better equipped but where the language of instruction is English (Larson, as cited in Balfour, 1999, Myburgh et al., 2004). The majority of South Africans seem to value English as the language of empowerment and academic achievement and although this remains not their first language these learners and their parents are striving for academic success in English (Broom, 2004). Further, parents did not encourage the use of their mother tongue as they were afraid that their child's success will be compromised (Buthelezi, 2003). This has been compounded by the belief that black languages have come to be associated with a lack of social and economic empowerment. English, the home language of only 9% of the population, remains the language that holds the highest status and as such it threatens to become the sole official language in South Africa (Broom, 2004). Many parents chose to facilitate their children going to schools that were perceived as providing better education.

On the other hand English also has the added role of uniting a multilingual country in that it has the potential of functioning as a linking language. (Janks, as cited in Goodson and Medway,1990). The consequence of this is these learners are being educated in their L2 without first acquiring CALP in their L1. Cummins argues that these negative beliefs that are perpetuated by educators as well as the general community are based on misconceptions. These misconceptions are about the role of language in a learner's educational development as well as the specific manner in which bilingualism affects this development (Cummins, 1999 b).

English medium schools were filled with learners with rich and diverse language backgrounds that provided the average South African educator with a phenomenal challenge. A large proportion of the educators were ill equipped to deal with the challenges that a second language learner experienced making it difficult for these educators to engage all the learners in a meaningful learning experience (Myburgh et al., 2004). Parents of L2 learners also encouraged their children to speak English at home to ensure that they developed a good command of the language.

Literacy facilitates access to knowledge, success at school and access to experiences that are often beyond the lives of the learners. Most learners need to achieve reading and writing skills within their first four years of their schooling. If this is not successfully achieved learners will be challenged over time in their efforts to bridge the gap in their reading skills (Stein & Janks, 2007). According to Weideman et al., (2002), reading ability more than any other skill is critical to academic success. Most learners who lack the skills to read and write their overall matric results would suffer (Mohlala, 2007).

In South Africa deteriorating academic results as well as a decline in literacy competence suggests that literacy proficiency among South African learners is deteriorating (Weidman & van Rensburg, 2002; Pretorius, 2002). This research aimed to investigate if there was a relationship between the learners' competence in the language that they were being educated in and their overall academic performance. This was particularly aimed at determining if L2 learners achieved the same degree of competence as the L1 learners. In this study, the researcher considers and discusses the role of social and political background of the South African context and its possible influence on the overall research study. Consideration is also given to reading competence and the possible impact reading can have on academic success.

Reading is a key skill in the context of learning. Reading facilitates access to information, providing access so that learners' are able to acquire and mediate knowledge within the world that they interact in (Pretorius, 2002). Research suggests that some of the main areas that facilitate effective reading include phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (Armbuster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001). "Phonemic awareness refers to the ability to hear, identify and manipulate the individual sounds in spoken words." (Armbuster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001, p.1). Phonics is the inter relationship between the sounds of expressive language and the letters that represent the sounds. Vocabulary refers to the words that one needs to know to communicate effectively. Fluency in reading is the skill that facilitates reading quickly and accurately. Comprehension is the ability to understand, and largely the reason for reading. (Armbuster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001). Rudell (1994) explains that comprehension is the process by which the reader constructs meaning through interacting with the text. The reader does this by using a combination of skills. These include previous

experience, knowledge information in the text, together with anticipated social interactions and communications elicited by the text. All of the above skills facilitate the development of appropriate reading competency. Pretorius (2002) defines reading as a “cognitive–linguistic activity,” which is made up of various skills. She describes the two main components of these skills as being decoding and comprehension. It is believed that in order to be a successful reader one has to be successful at decoding the text as well as having the ability to make meaning of the text itself (Stein & Janks, 2007). Pretorius (2005) concurs that comprehension refers to the overall understanding, which facilitates meaning of the entire text. Thus suggesting that various skills are involved in reading and mastery of these skills occurs over time. Also, a reader needs to possess the knowledge of all the elements of reading from phonemic awareness to comprehension to perform the process of reading.

Reading can be described as a skill that involves the process of constructing knowledge from all forms of texts, which facilitates the development of language skills as a result of reading. There are many reading assessment tools that are on the market, which look at a variety of different types of knowledge and test these skills in various formats. Of relevance is that reading success is based on various factors. Reading tests usually include sight word reading, reading comprehension, reading fluency, reading accuracy to name a few. Most reading tests involve a reading comprehension assessment. Some tests involve the learner reading out loud and other tests require the learner reading to themselves. Research demonstrates that when a learner is asked to read a text out loud they tend to focus on their reading accuracy as opposed to paying attention to comprehending the content (Wren, Litke, Jinkins, Paynter, Watts, Alanis, 2000). A reading comprehension test has been found to be most accurate when the learner is

not required to read for an audience (Wren, et al, 2000). The Stanford Reading Test (SDRT) is a test that measures reading comprehension as well as the factors underlying reading comprehension. As such it is a useful tool for gaining understanding about the strengths and weaknesses in learners reading skills.

The SDRT was developed for testing the skills that are essential for reading. It is designed to accommodate learners who are low achievers in their reading therefore facilitating a fairer reflection of their ability. Reading is usually measured using a diagnostic tool such as the SDRT which looks at a learners ability in the following areas namely, auditory vocabulary, reading comprehension, phonetic analysis, structural analysis and reading rate. The main purpose of such a diagnostic tool is to provide a measure of the learners' competence in relation to their individual reading ability. This test is based on the assumption that comprehension is the key purpose of reading. All the other subtests provide clarity as to what skills are impacting on their inability to achieve successful comprehension. There are different skills that facilitate comprehension; the SDRT looks at those sub skills and allows for isolation of which skills are causing differential performance between L1 and L2 learners. The various subtests of the SDRT Brown level are structured for learners between Grade 7 – Grade 9 (The Psychological Corporation, 1984). This level measures skills of phonetic and structural analysis, auditory vocabulary, literal and inferential comprehension of textual, functional and recreational reading material, as well as the reading rate of the learner.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Aims of the Study

1. This study aims to look at the relationship between reading and academic performance of first and second language English learners.
2. To explore the differences between the performance of L1 and L2 second language English learners' on the Stanford Diagnostic reading test and its different components.

3.2 Research Hypotheses

1. There will be a difference on the performance of first and second language learners on the subtests of the SDRT namely: structural analysis, auditory vocabulary, phonetic analysis, reading comprehension and reading rate.
2. Performance on the SDRT will correlate with and predict the academic performance of L1 and L2 learners.

3.3 Research Design

This research study is a quantitative investigation. The research design takes the form of an ex post facto research design. An ex post facto design as explained by Neale and Liebert (1986) is used to simulate experimental procedures after an event has occurred. For the purpose of this research the ex post facto research design was used to investigate the factors that already exist. The factors for this research are: a).language status of the learners, b).reading ability, c).their overall academic performance for their Grade 8 year. The independent variable in this study is English first and second language speakers. The dependent variables are the results the learners obtained on the SDRT and for their overall academic performance for their Grade 8 year.

3.4 Subjects

This research was conducted at one English Medium High School (Ex- Model C), with grade eight learners. This is a government school located within an urban area of Gauteng. The school was co-educational that is catering for both male and female learners. All the learners were being educated in an English medium environment. All the learners that participated in the study were doing Grade 8.

In the selection of the sample a few factors were considered. Firstly, the location of the school was considered in relation to the population distribution of the learners. The school selected had a variety of language and cultural groups which included first and second language learners. A commitment from the school facilitated the research to be conducted.

All Grade 8 learners were asked to voluntarily participate in the study. Consent was obtained from the school and the parents. The learners were also asked to provide assent to participate in the study. Approximately 215 learners volunteered to participate. It was found that more L1 than L2 learners participated in the study (Table 1). The total numbers of L1 learners were approximately 122 of which males were 51 and females were 71. The L2 learners were approximately 92 in number: males were 45 and females 47. Learners participated in the various subtests. The total number that participated on each subtest varied due to the tests being conducted over a few days and as a result of absenteeism. The break down of L1 and L2 learners and their performance on the various subtests are shown in more detail in Table 2. All of the learners that participated met the criteria of the study in that they were all Grade 8 learners that had 7 years of being educated in an English medium school.

Table 1: Background of learners by gender and language

Subtests	Language Groups	Total
Academic Average	L1 M	51
	L1 F	71
	L2 M	45
	L2 F	47
Auditory Vocabulary	L1 M	50
	L1 F	69
	L2 M	45
	L2 F	46
Comprehension	L1 M	51
	L1 F	70
	L2 M	45
	L2 F	47
Phonetic Analysis	L1 M	49
	L1 F	68
	L2 M	45
	L2 F	46
Structural Analysis	L1 M	50
	L1 F	67
	L2 M	41
	L2 F	43
Reading Rate	L1 M	49
	L1 F	66
	L2 M	41
	L2 F	43

3.5 Materials

The Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test-SDRT (Bjorn, K., 1986)

The SDRT is divided into four levels of testing tools. The first level is the SDRT Red level, which assesses Grade 1-3 learners, SDRT Green level which assesses Grade 4-5, the SDRT Brown level that was designed for Grade 6-8 learners, and the SDRT Blue Level that was designed for Grades 9- to College level. The Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT): Brown Level which is designed for Grade 6-8 learners was used. The purpose was to obtain scores for the participants in auditory vocabulary, reading comprehension, phonetic analysis, structural analysis and reading rate. In using these five sub tests the SDRT was able to assess Vocabulary (word parts as well as word meanings). The SDRT also assesses Comprehension (understanding and interpretation of passages), Rate (rate of reading, skimming, and understanding with time pressure), and lastly, Decoding (phonetic analysis as well as structural analysis). The subtests all provide insight into the specific skills that enhance and facilitate reading comprehension. The words used in the auditory vocabulary subtest were taken from the main content areas in the school curriculum. Here the learner is asked to find a word that is most appropriate to the content of the sentence. This subtest provides insight into the learners' language competence without involving them in reading (Bjorn, 1986). The comprehension subtest looks at the learners' literal and inferential understanding. The subtest further examines the learners understanding of textual and functional texts. Recreational understanding of passages is ascertained using questions on the passages concerned (Bjorn, 1986). This provides an indication of the level of understanding that a learner is capable of. The literal questions give an indication of the learners' ability to use the text and to understand what has been explicitly said in the text. The inferential type questions provide information of the learners'

ability to infer meaning based on the information that they encounter within the text. This requires the learner to be able to read beyond the detail of the text. The skill involved in the comprehension subtest is a lot more complex and requires more developed reasoning ability than the other subtests such as the auditory vocabulary subtest.

Phonetic analysis is focussed on assessing the learners' ability to understand the relationship between the different sounds and letters in the English language. The structural analysis subtest looks at the ability to decode words "through the analysis of word parts, such as affixes and root words" (Bjorn, 1986, p.8). The reading rate subtest determines the learner's ability to read material with speed and comprehension. The learners' accuracy in answering the questions is a reflection of their comprehension skill and the number of questions that they attempted is an indication of their speed.

There is research that supports that the elements that are measured by the SDRT are primary skills in the reading process (Etim, 1990; Pretorius, 2005; Kamper, Mahlobo, & Lemmer, 2003). The test is accommodating of the low achiever in that it facilitates a less threatening and anxiety provoking experience for the learners that are being assessed. The SDRT Brown level has been standardised on learners from Grade 5-8. However, these norms are based on the American population and may therefore not be a true reflection of the abilities of the South African population.

3.6 Procedure

Once a school was identified permission to conduct the study was obtained from the school principal. A detailed explanation was given to the principal explaining the purpose of the study and the benefits of the research to the school. Permission was obtained from the Gauteng Department of Education to work with the Grade Eight learners at school. Educators of the participating Grades were also informed of the purpose of the study. An appropriate time for testing was negotiated with all parties concerned. The study was conducted within a 10-day period prior to the learners' scheduled final exams. In South African schools the academic year ends in December, so the learners were near the end of Grade 8.

A biographical questionnaire (Appendix 1) was given to each learner to determine the language status and language experience of the learners. The academic performance which is a collation of the learners year marks, were also collected from the school. All the subjects were required to fill in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was aimed at determining the learners' formal and informal exposure to English. This was done by firstly, enquiring about the learners exposure to other languages in an academic setting prior to their current school placement. Secondly, the questionnaire was also aimed at establishing the learners' use of English in their social interactions. The purpose of the questionnaire was to establish an understanding of the learners' language proficiency, as well their exposure and use of English. The questionnaire was devised to help the researcher establish the differentiation between the learners' home language and language of education over the last seven years. The biographical questionnaire was thus used as the main tool to classify learners into L1 and L2 groups.

The assent forms and the biographical questionnaire were filled in the presence of the researcher so that the forms could be appropriately mediated if there were any queries. This was done a week before the actual testing commenced. Once all the consent and assent forms were returned together with the biographical questionnaire the researcher went into the school to conduct the testing with the Grade 8 learners. To ensure that the test was administered in a standardised manner, two testers were involved. Both testers were experienced in the administering of the test and both were English-speaking.

The SDRT was administered to the Grade 8 learners. The subtests were administered in the order that the test is designed. The order in which the subtests were administered was the following: auditory vocabulary, reading comprehension, phonetic analysis, structural analysis and lastly reading rate. Due to the length of the test and the number of learners involved, the testing was conducted over two separate days one week apart. This suggests that not all of the learners were necessarily there on both days due to absenteeism. The test was administered over a ten day period. The test responses were then entered into a spreadsheet. The responses of the learners who had not finished the full test were also included into the spreadsheet and scored. Both the biographical data as well as academic marks were captured onto the spreadsheet. This data was then analysed statistically.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

- A meeting was arranged with the Grade 8 learners to explain the purpose of the study and information sheets and intention of the study.

- Assurance was provided to the learners explaining that this information will be used confidentially.
- Following this, the learners were given assent forms (see appendix 2), as some learners were too young to give consent. Voluntary participation was explained to the learners.
- The learners took consent forms (see appendix 1), information sheets home to request that their parents/ guardians sign to consent to the learner's participation in the study. Parents/guardians filled in the consent form to allow for the use of biographical data as well as the learners mid and end of year exam results and that these forms were returned to the school.
- The difference between the two forms and their value was also explained to the learners. A biographical questionnaire was also given (see Appendix 3).
- Information gathered was only used for the purpose of this study.
- The SDRT results were only to be used by the researcher with no names being entered in the analysis of the data
- Further, individual results on the Stanford Diagnostic Reading test would not be made available to the school or to the individual learners

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

4.1 Data Analysis

The biographical data was used to categorize the learners according to their home language. This was done by identifying the learners' home language. The language groups were categorized in the following way: learners who spoke a black language at home were categorized as L2 learners. Learners' who spoke English or any other European or other language at home e.g. French, Afrikaans, Hindi were categorized as L1. All the learners had seven years of English schooling and learning.

The data was captured and scored using a computer marking system. Marks from the SDRT results together with the biological information and their academic results were collected and analyzed. L1 and L2 SDRT results and details were compared in order to investigate hypothesis one which aimed to investigate if there will be a difference between the L1 and L2 learners performance on the various subtests of the SDRT. The data of the SDRT was statistically analysed with consideration of the learners' academic marks to determine if the SDRT test did predict academic performance, to investigate hypothesis two.

Table 2: Results of the Performance of L1 and L2 speakers on the subtests of the SDRT.

<i>Subtest</i>	<i>Language Group</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
Structural Analysis	L1	117	60.57	11.24
	L2	84	57.45	11.02
Reading Rate	L1	115	17.35	7.20
	L2	84	12.92	6.02
Auditory Vocabulary	L1	119	31.65	5.41
	L2	91	26.23	5.16
Comprehension	L1	121	45.48	9.93
	L2	92	36.51	10.25
Phonetic Analysis	L1	117	19.53	6.46
	L2	91	17.93	6.85
Academic Average	L1	122	62.08	9.49
	L2	92	57.81	10.77

Hypothesis one postulated that language (L1 and L2) impacts on the performance on the SDRT subtests. Table 2 illustrates that the L1 learners performed better on the various subtests of the SDRT. The most notable difference between the two groups appears to be in the Reading Rate subtest. It can also be seen from Table 2 that the mean scores from the L2 group are lower than those for the L1 group for all the six subtests. Furthermore, the standard deviation in the scores

of the L2 group was higher than the L1 group on the Comprehension ($L2 \geq 10, 25$,- $L1 \geq 9, 93$), Phonetic Analysis ($L2 = 6, 85$ - $L1 \geq 6, 46$) and Academic performance scores ($L2 = 10, 77$ - $L1 = 9, 49$), indicating that there was a greater spread of scores in the L2 group than there was in the L1 group for those subtests.

The relationship between language and gender was considered in terms of the learners' performance on the SDRT subtests and their academic performance. A summary of these findings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of Male and Female L1and L2 Learners performance on SDRT subtests

Subtests	Language/Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Academic Average	L1 M	51	58.80	9.5
	L1 F	71	64.45	8.7
	L2 M	45	53.93	9.4
	L2 F	47	61.53	10.7
Auditory Vocabulary	L1 M	50	31.60	5.3
	L1 F	69	31.69	5.4
	L2 M	45	25.64	4.4
	L2 F	46	26.8	5.7
Comprehension	L1 M	51	43.88	10.0
	L1 F	70	46.65	9.7
	L2 M	45	32.5	9.9
	L2 F	47	40.3	9.1
Phonetic Analysis	L1 M	49	18.61	6.43
	L1 F	68	20.20	6.4
	L2 M	45	16.0	6.7
	L2 F	46	19.8	6.5
Structural Analysis	L1 M	50	60.04	10.6
	L1 F	67	60.97	11.7
	L2 M	41	55.87	11.1
	L2 F	43	58.9	10.8
Reading Rate	L1 M	49	16.0	7.3
	L1 F	66	18.36	6.9
	L2 M	41	11.5	5.5
	L2 F	43	14.23	6.2

Table 3 shows the performance of both L1 and L2 male and female learner's. It can be seen from Table 3 that the mean scores for the L2 group are lower than those for the L1 group for all the six subtests. The performance of L1 and L2 learners on the SDRT were further analysed for gender differences. The analysis of variance (ANOVA's) was conducted on each of the subtests as dependent variables. These were namely Auditory Vocabulary, Comprehension, Phonics, Structural Analysis, Reading Rate and their Academic Performance. Results of the ANOVA when males were considered as the independent variable showed the following. The relationship between the dependent variables were found to be most significantly related on the following subtests: Auditory Vocabulary ($F=33.87, df\ 1,93$), ($p\leq 0.001$), Comprehension ($F=31.14, df\ 1,94, p\leq 0.001$), and Reading Rate ($F=10.22, df\ 1,88, p\leq 0.05$).

Results of the ANOVA suggest that the dependent variables were found to be most significantly related on the following subtests: Auditory Vocabulary ($F= 21.17, df1, 113, p\leq 0.01$), Comprehension ($F=12.33, df\ 1,115, p\leq 0.001$), and Reading Rate ($F=9.84, df\ 1,107, p\leq 0.05$). Therefore the One Way ANOVA confirmed that there were significant effects of home language on the Auditory Vocabulary, Comprehension and the Reading Rate subtests. Results indicate that for both language groups and genders the Auditory Vocabulary, Comprehension and Reading Rate subtests have the most significant relationship to Academic performance (hypotheses 1 & 2).

Furthermore, the standard deviations in the scores of the L2 group were generally higher than the L1 group. Therefore, indicating that there was a greater spread of scores on the subtests in the L2 group than there was in the L1 group. There were no significant differences noted between L2 males performance on the Phonetic Analysis Subtest in relation to their academic performance ($p\geq 0.05$). L1 males also showed no significant difference between their performance on the

Structural Analysis subtest and their academic performance ($p \geq 0.05$). The Reading Rate subtest for both male and female L2 learners was not found to be significantly linked to their academic performance ($p \geq 0.05$). The Auditory Vocabulary subtests as well as the Comprehension subtests in Table 3 show the strongest link to academic performance and this is common to both L1 and L2 male and female learners ($p \leq 0.01$).

Table 4: Results of Correlation Analysis on Learners performance on the SDRT Brown Level

Subtests	Language / Gender	Structural Analysis	Reading Rate	Auditory Vocabulary	Comprehension	Phonetic Analysis	Academic Average
Structural Analysis	L1		0.10 115	0.34** 116	0.30** 0.0009	0.46** 0.0001	0.33** 0.0002
	L2		0.25 0.02	0.49 0.0001**	0.56 0.0001**	0.66 0.0001**	0.62 0.0001**
Reading Rate	L1	0.10 0.25		0.37 0.0001**	0.36 0.0001**	0.26 0.003*	0.48 0.0001**
	L2	0.25 0.21		0.37 0.0004**	0.46 0.0001**	0.33 0.002*	0.33 0.001*
Auditory Vocabulary	L1	0.34 0.0002**	0.37 0.0001**		0.54 0.0001**	0.43 0.0001**	0.58 0.0001**
	L2	0.49 0.0001**	0.37 0.0004**		0.61 0.0001**	0.53 0.0001**	0.57 0.0001**
Comprehension	L1	0.30 0.0009**	0.36 0.0001**	0.54 0.0001**		0.50 0.0001**	0.53 0.0001**
	L2	0.56 0.0001**	0.46 0.0001**	0.61 0.0001**		0.53 0.0001**	0.63 0.0001**
Phonetic Analysis	L1	0.46 0.0001**	0.26 0.003*	0.43 0.0001**	0.50 0.0001**		0.56 0.0001**
	L2	0.66 0.0001**	0.33 0.002*	0.53 0.0001**	0.53 0.0001**		0.47 0.0001**
Academic Average	L1	0.33 0.0002**	0.48 0.0001**	0.58 0.0001**	0.53 0.0001**	0.56 0.0001**	
	L2	0.62 0.0001**	0.33 0.001*	0.57 0.0001**	0.63 0.0001**	0.47 0.0001**	

*p≤ 0.05 **p≤0.01 *** p≤ 0.001

In Table 4 the correlations between the performance of L1 and L2 learners on the subtests of the SDRT and academic subjects are shown. The academic average is highly correlated with the comprehension subtest ($r=0.53$, $p\leq 0.001$). This is particularly so for the auditory vocabulary subtest for L2 learners, which correlates at a higher level ($r = 0.53$, $r = 0.63$, $p\leq 0.001$) than the Reading Rate subtest. With the L2 learners the vocabulary subtest shows a particularly high correlation with comprehension. This is more evident for L2 learners than L1 learners. This correlation is reflected in academic performance but appears to be less evident for L1 learners. The comprehension subtest looks at the learners' literal and inferential understanding of a text. All of the subtests on the SDRT for both L1 and L2 learners are significantly correlated to their academic performance.

The correlations reflected in Table 4 illustrate that academic performance has a significant relationship with Comprehension as well as all the other subtests of the SDRT. The Structural analysis subtest which looks at the ability to decode words was most closely correlated to the phonetic analysis subtest for L1 learners ($r= 0.46$, $p\leq 0.001$), which is more focussed on assessing the learners' ability to understand the relationship between the different sounds and letters in the English language. However, the L2 learners showed a more significant relationship ($r=0.62$, $r=0.63$, $p\leq 0.01$), between all the subtests and structural analysis than the L1 learners.

The L1 learners show a significant correlation between their academic performance ($p\leq 0.001$), and the rate at which they read and comprehend (hypothesis 2). The Reading Rate subtest looks at the learner's ability to read material with speed and comprehension. The learners' accuracy in answering the questions on the reading rate subtest is a reflection of the learners' speed of

comprehension. Although the L2 learners' performance indicates that all of the subtests correlate with their academic performance (hypothesis 2), the reading rate subtest has a less significant relationship ($p \leq 0.05$) to academic performance than the other subtests.

The auditory vocabulary subtest measures the different parts of speech and the words used in this subtest are taken from the main content areas of the school curriculum. Table 3 reflects that the L1 and L2 learners' scores on the auditory vocabulary subtest are closely correlated to the scores on the comprehension subtest ($p \leq 0.001$), phonetic analysis subtest ($p \leq 0.001$) and the scores of their academic performance ($p \leq 0.001$), (hypotheses 1 & 2). As reflected on Table 4 the results for both, the L1 and L2 learners show a strong correlation between the phonetic analysis subtest and the other subtests scores and their academic performance ($p \leq 0.001$).

In order to investigate whether the SDRT variables (Subtests) predict academic performance a stepwise multiple regression analysis was conducted. These independent variables served as the predictors for academic performance. The different learning areas were Arts and Culture; Economic and Management Sciences; Human Social Sciences; Language Literature and Communication (which includes English and Afrikaans); Life Orientation; M.L.M.M.S. (Mathematics and Numeracy); and Natural Science, which made up the learners' curriculum and constituted the dependent variables.

Due to the high correlations of the various subtests Comprehension was entered into the Regression analysis and comprehension was found to account for academic performance for both language groups ($R^2 = 0.9565$, $p \leq 0.0001$). This supports hypothesis 2 which was to investigate

whether performance on the subtests of the SDRT will predict academic performance of L1 and L2 learners. All the components which included both the dependent and independent components of the regression tests are shown to be significantly correlated at a ($p \leq 0.001$) level.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This study investigated two hypotheses, namely :a) that there will be a difference on the performance of L1 and L2 learners on the various subtests of the SDRT which measure (reading comprehension, auditory vocabulary, phonics, structural analysis and reading rate), b) that performance on the subtests of the SDRT would predict academic performance of L1 and L2 learners.

The results of the study showed that L1 learners showed better performance than the L2 learners on the various subsets of the SDRT. These results confirmed that learners who are instructed in their first language enjoy many benefits which one can assume to include improved academic success in comparison to their L2 counterparts (Buthelezi, 2003). Further, the improved performance of the L1 learners could also be a result of improved understanding of the language having had exposure to the English language since birth. These are in line with research conducted by Cummins & Swain, (1986), which revealed that if learners have not had the opportunity to fully develop their L1 competence, their L2 acquisition and academic success will be more of a challenge. This could explain the performance of the L1 learners on the SDRT. The different components of the SDRT are explored to understand which areas may have had a greater impact on the L1 and L2 learners' performance.

The results of the L2 learners' performances on the SDRT showed that the Auditory Vocabulary subtest together with the Comprehension subtests in Table 3 have the strongest correlation with academic performance ($R = 0.63$; $p \leq 0.001$). This indicates that good performance on these two subtests namely Auditory Vocabulary and Comprehension will be indicative of improved

academic performance. The auditory vocabulary subtest provides an understanding of the learners' language competence without involving them in reading (Bjorn, 1986). The comprehension subtest looks at the various areas of academic learning such as reading and literature, science and maths etc. This provides an indication of the level of understanding that a learner is capable of. Results of this study agree with research done that comprehension skills are linked to academic success (Pretorius, 2002). Research further suggests that if an L1 learner has competence in these skills, they will be able to facilitate the same competence at transferring these skills to their L2. The competency that L2 learners have with regards to the appropriate cognitive academic skills is largely dependent on their level of competency in their first language (Cummins & Swain 1986, Cummins, 1999). One can therefore infer that the performance of the L2 learners on the SDRT may have been affected by their limited skills in their L1 as well as limited reading skills in their L2.

The L2 learners' performance on the SDRT indicates that all of the subtests correlate with their academic performance (hypothesis 2). However, the reading rate subtest has a less significant relationship ($p \leq 0.05$) to academic performance. The results suggest that for L2 learners to establish academic competence in English they need to demonstrate competency in all the different elements of English such as phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension skills, etc. Cummins (1999a), maintains that when a student has a cross-lingual experience and the learner has established the underlying principles, this conceptual knowledge can be transferred across languages. The results of this research agree with research done by others (Cummins 1997). That is if learners have acquired academic concepts and literacy skills in their native language they are more competent at transferring those skills to a second language. The competency of L2 learners to

develop the appropriate cognitive academic skills is largely dependent on their level of competency in their first language (Cummins 1997, King & Jordaan, 2005). However, studies conducted within the South African context have shown that researchers are still challenged by the disparities that exist among learners. The challenge remains that learners have been exposed to formal English education for the past seven years (Pretorius, 2005) and yet their overall academic performance remains a concern. It is therefore important to investigate what impacts on learners and prevents from acquiring the relevant skills.

Learners' scores as reflected on Table 4 show that L1 and L2 learners scores on the auditory vocabulary subtest are closely correlated to the scores on the comprehension subtest ($p \leq 0.001$), the phonetic analysis subtest ($p \leq 0.001$), and the scores of their academic performance ($p \leq 0.001$), (hypothesis 1 & 2). However, the L2 learners show a stronger correlation than the L1 learners. These results suggest then, that the areas of challenge remain the same for both L1 and L2 learners in that for both groups of learners the same areas of learning predict their comprehension competence. This also implies that these areas will also have an impact on academic performance. Reading is a key skill to the context of learning. The results therefore imply that the reading skills of both the L1 and L2 learners are of concern. Therefore, suggesting that both the L1 and L2 learners may not have adequately developed their reading skills, which involve decoding and making meaning from the texts that they interact with, thus limiting their academic success (Stein & Janks, 2007; Wren et al., 2000). King & Jordaan (2005) found that a group of South African grade 7 learners of mixed language status was found to have a poor literacy level, even though the teacher maintained that the comprehension task that was given was not based on a difficult

passage. This suggests that reading comprehension is an area of challenge for both L1 and L2 learners (Jordaan, 2005; Pretorius, 2005).

The ANOVA results suggest that for both language groups and genders the Auditory Vocabulary, Comprehension and the Reading rate subtest have the most significant relationship with Academic performance (hypothesis 1 & 2). Due to the high correlations of the various subtests, Comprehension was entered into the Regression analysis and the variance accounted for suggests that comprehension accounts for academic performance for both languages as ($R=0.9565$, $p\leq 0.0001$), (Hypothesis 2). Research shows that for reading comprehension to be developed, other language knowledge is required to ensure that the learner has an understanding of what he or she reads (Jordaan, 2005). Most learners need to achieve reading and writing skills within their first four years of their schooling (Cummins, 1986). If this is not successfully achieved learners will be challenged over time in their efforts to bridge the gap in their reading skills (Stein & Janks, 2007). According to Weideman & van Rensburg, (2002), reading ability more than any other skill is critical to academic success. Most learners lack the skills to read and write which impacts on their overall academic success (Mohlala, 2007). As such one can infer therefore that a learners reading competence is not always linked to whether a learner is an L1 or L2 learner but rather their general reading ability and overall reading skills. Of further relevance is Cummins' (1986) theory which advocates that if learners have consistent exposure and are instructed in their L1 it would take approximately 5-10 years to develop their competency in their L2 on the same level as their first language peers. All the learners that participated in this study had a minimum of 7 years exposure to formal academic English (CALP) and should therefore have attained equal levels of competency. This finding that, after seven years of English medium instruction there were

differences in L1 and L2 comprehension abilities highlights the importance of L1 education before learners encounter education in their L2. Thus, supporting Cummins theory that academic success in a second language is largely dependent on the learners' first language competence. However, given the uniqueness of the South African situation where learners are multilingual and often educated from the age of seven years in English, with no formal education in their home language the context within which we consider Cummins theory is different.

The South African context needs to be considered more carefully in order to gain clearer insight as to what contributes to the general decline in academic performance (Macdonald, 2002). The participants of this research study were the learners who received their education post 1994. They were therefore subjected to a transitional educational system. Learners and their parents had the choice of choosing the language of instruction. The choice of many parents was to educate their children in English. These learners began learning in English, their L2 language, before being able to attain their level of CALP in their first language which Cummins (1999a) argues promotes and allows for linguistic success in a second language. However, the context within which Cummins research was conducted is different to the context within which this study was done in. In that learners that were involved in this study were only educated in English. Cummins' (1986) study was conducted on a population that was educated in a bilingual educational system. However Cummins theory is useful as it provides a background to the understanding of how L2 learners may acquire English. The BICS and CALP theory cannot be used in isolation to define and understand the discrepancies that exist in the L2 learners overall acquisition of English and the impact that this may have on their academic performance. Further, these learners were being immersed in a culture and language that was largely foreign to many of them.

One of the variables that could have impacted on the effectiveness of this research finding results is the learners' accessibility to English both in an academic environment and on a social level. In socialising with a language, children develop languages competency and learn to introduce more of the language into their world (Jorgensen, 2003.). In addition, an understanding of other languages is necessary for the learners to understand what they read (Jordaan, 2005.). Although the learners were asked to rate in what contexts they used English, the biographical data did not ask for details of when they began speaking English. It did not enquire how much and what type of exposure they had to reading in their L1 prior to being introduced to English. This information would have helped to understand Cummins theory more clearly in order to determine if L1 competence impacts on L2 language acquisition.

Observations made by educators of the L2 learners within a social setting suggest that the learners that were categorised as L2 revert to speaking their vernacular language once they leave the classroom. This is particularly so with L2 learners who communicate in an African language. As opposed to the other L2 learners, the learners with Black African languages as their L1, had many opportunities to communicate in their L1 with their peers during breaks etc. As such their use of English is less frequent. However, other language groups (which for the purpose of this study were categorised as L1,) namely Portuguese or Hindi forms a smaller fraction of the school population, with fewer opportunities to socialise in their L1. This was due to the fact that there were significantly fewer learners in these respective language groups. Therefore these learners are compelled to communicate in English in order to socialise with the general school population. As such it is possible that not only their reading skills but their experience and use of English inside

and outside of the classroom are more developed. In the study learners were differentiated based on what they considered to be their first and second language. The level of exposure and the frequency of exposure to English were not considered, so no distinction was made in terms of the level of exposure to English. Some learners may have only been exposed to English at school level while other learners may have encountered English from birth, but consider English as their second language. While other learners may have never encountered English till they had attended school. This information may have enabled the researcher to investigate Cummins theory more closely.

Learners' are expected to engage with texts that were often foreign to their own personal experiences. Leters (2004) explain that in attempting to balance instruction with texts were the content is culturally sensitive helps L2 learners bridge the gaps that occur in comprehension. The phenomenon of learners learning in their second language is not unique to South African learners but is a phenomenon that exists globally. Research has been done focussing on possible interventions that could help improve second language learners' academic performance (Cummins, 1981, Williams & Snipper, 1990, Myburgh et al., 2004).

Another factor that has the potential to possibly impact on academic and reading performance could be linked to gender differences. Many factors have the potential to influence and contribute to reading performance. Research has shown that gender has the potential to influence academic performance. It has been suggested that girls and boys tend to develop on the same lines however; research suggests that girls have a general tendency to develop at a quicker pace than most boys (Jorgenson, 2003). It has been found that reading difficulties are more frequent in males than females and they go on to clarify that boys tend to experience difficulties in reading across the

English speaking world suggesting that the difficulties that boys may experience in reading are not necessarily unique to certain countries or circumstances (Rutter, Caspi, Ferguson, Horwood, Goodman, Maughan, Moffitt, & Carroll, 2004). However, currently there is no proof to explain the causal influences on what exactly underlies the gender difference that may exist and that their elucidation could help understand the processes that may lead and contribute to the differences that appear to exist. In this research study no significant differences were noted between male and female learners in terms of their reading or their academic performance. Learning styles may contribute to different levels of achievement. As such gender and learning styles have the potential to also influence academic performance and should be possibly considered in future research studies.

Within the research certain factors may have interfered with the results. These factors are considered and discussed in the limitations section of this discussion. Consideration is given to the most prevalent difficulties that were observed, certain interventions are suggested.

5.1 Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

Some suggestions for interventions are now considered to improve the overall performance of the learners in the study.

Firstly, research suggests that there are many advantages to being bilingual (Cummins, 1999 a). Second language learners and their parents and caregivers need to be alerted to the many benefits of being bilingual and how this has the potential to enhance the learners' academic performance. That is, learners need to be educated on the benefits of achieving proficiency in their L1 in order to

gain competence in their L2. In South Africa this could enhance the learners' ability to develop and enhance their sense of identity and overall value in their culture while also encouraging a more embracing and tolerant society.

Environmental factors need to also be considered in the mediation of language to learners. Research in the field of literacy clearly shows that a caring and nurturing environment outside of school with the caring intervention of families and adults can make a significant contribution to facilitating literacy success (Stein & Janks, 2007). Parents need to be alerted to the value of encouraging a culture of reading throughout their children's educational journey. This is also a role the general society needs to advocate (Kamper et al., 2003). Learning environments need to actively alert and encourage parents and caregivers to the value of reading. Studies have shown that exposure to stories has been shown to improve a learners ability to develop and use language with improved proficiency (Stein & Janks, 2007). Hence, "stories become the bridge to enable learners to develop their competence in their Second Language" (King & Jordaan, 2005.p.11). Local schools need to work co-operatively in developing programs and systems that can enable learners to develop understanding, analytical and independent study skills in education (Moodley, 2006). With other schools also collaborating on how they can enhance reading and comprehension skills amongst their learners. Learners need to be taught through methodologies that allow them to experience the language through a non-threatening medium of instruction. This can be facilitated in many ways.

Learners that come from backgrounds that put them at a disadvantage should be expected to attend structured language support lessons that will enable them to consolidate and enhance their

knowledge of English. These lessons would also need to focus on the culture of language within an English language context. Learners would need to develop the necessary knowledge to enable them to link their understanding to English academic texts (Pretorius, 2002). This can be done in a number of ways. One such way could be a pull out system where learners are taken out of some of their formal lessons and during this time learners are provided with language support to help them with the transition between the two languages. Learners need to be provided with a mediation-based support system, which allows learners to bridge their knowledge from their L1 to the L2 that they are learning in which can be facilitated by the school. This can be facilitated by using strategies that have the potential of enhancing their skills, such as remediation programs eg. whole language programs, reading intervention programs etc. De La Luz Reyes (1992) paper explains how her experience of educating her learners through a Whole Language process of teaching allowed her learners to develop a meaningful understanding of the language rather than a focus on the form of the language. This could also be facilitated by peer tutoring, educators or any other relevant parties. Thus, promoting a more authentic understanding of the English language, while allowing the learners' to enhance their relationships with other cultures and languages. However, the challenge in facilitating such intervention strategies is that there are a lack of resources and available staff to provide and facilitate such strategies.

In this study there were limitations that were identified and if corrected could have enhanced the usefulness of the results obtained. All research has their own set of weaknesses and limitations (Breakwell, Hammond, Schaw, 2003). Each of the limitations that were identified will be discussed in detail.

Further consideration also needed to be taken of the learners' exposure to books. This information would have been useful both in terms of English and or vernacular literature if they were L2 learners. The number of books that were read may have been a confounding variable in their language competence and their interpretation of academic books. It would have also been valuable to identify the learners accessibility to books, that is did they have access to libraries etc. In establishing accessibility to books the researcher could have considered whether access to books was a confounding variable or if it was the accessibility to books that were suitable to their level of competency. This is also compounded by the limited accessibility to books written in vernacular languages.

The other variable that should have been considered was the level of education and the current occupation of their parents/ caregivers. This variable may have provided valuable information in considering other factors that may impact on a learner's ability to develop their competency in English. The above details could have provided insight into understanding whether parents with higher education provide improved language intervention to their children. Also this information could potentially help to understand if the perception and value of language and reading, contributes to learners overall competence in reading and academic success.

The above limitations need to be considered in further studies to enhance the value of the research. In considering the above limitations a more in depth analysis of the information can be facilitated. A key component of this study was based on Cummins theory of language acquisition, which states that learners acquire academic language skills over a period of 5- 10 years. A key component to developing the significance of Cummins theory is to assess a sample of learners who had the

opportunity to attain their CALP in their L1 before having to study in their L2 and to research the improved academic relationship by attempting to assess which areas of the L1 contribute to success in their L2.

If the results of this study are to be considered it may be of greater significance to research the same topic within a different framework. A key consideration and shift in focus needs to be in the learners overall competence in reading. It is suggested that firstly a pre test is done where learners reading capabilities are measured. Thereafter an intervention programme needs to be conducted focussing on the development of comprehension and decoding skills. Following which a post test needs to be conducted. Then the learners' academic performance needs to be compared, to ascertain the impact that improved reading skills have on academic performance. However, this process should be conducted over a period of time in order to facilitate that the learners concerned have the necessary time to internalise the skills that they have learned.

A further limitation of this study was that the researcher did not test non verbal abilities to ensure that the L1 and L2 sample were equivalent. This may have enabled the researcher to understand the results in greater details. Further while the researcher tried to establish equivalence between L1 and L2 groups by using learners from the same S.E.S catchment area of the school. There may have been differences that the researcher did not collect information about. These may have affected the researchers' results and may have accounted for the L1 and L2 differences.

The area of reading and its impact on academic performance deserves a great deal more attention. This is also an area of significant importance to the South African context (Stein & Janks, 2007).

5.2 Conclusion

This study provides valuable information about the gaps that learners are experiencing in their academic performance. Further, this study provides insight into what the possible causes are for poor academic success. This research also confirms an understanding of the usefulness of the SDRT test in determining reading performance in relation to academic performance. Academic success is largely linked to reading competence. This study confirms the significant relationship between reading competence and academic performance. It also establishes the value of L1 competence in developing and excelling in any L2. This study also shows that both L2 learners are not realising their full potential because of their language status and their language experience. Overall there appears to be no reason for the differences except that they do not seem to have the same language competence as their L1 language counterparts. Of further value is that schools and learners need to be alerted to the strong relationship that exists between reading and academic competence.

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Appendix

Appendix 1

CONSENT FORM

I the parent/guardian of _____ allow consent for my child's Stanford test results, his/her biographical information that I have also filled in on the attached form, together with my child's mid and final year grade eight exam results, to be used in a study conducted by Kathy Krishnan, a Masters student in the Department of Specialised Education at the University of Witwatersrand. The study is an exploration of some of the issues that Language learners experience at Secondary School level. The aim of the research is to understand if the learner's academic achievement is linked to the different aspects of reading in English.

All information gathered in this study will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

I hereby give consent for my child's Stanford Test results, his/her biographical information, and my child's mid and final year exam results to be used in the above study. I understand that if I choose not to sign this form my child or I will not be penalised in any way.

Name of parent/ guardian: _____

Date: _____

Address: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix 2

ASSENT FORM

I _____ understand that this is an assent form that will allow my Stanford test results, my biographical information and my mid and final year exam results to be used in a study conducted by Kathy Krishnan a Masters student in the Department of Specialised Education at the University of Witwatersrand. The study is an exploration into issues that Second Language learners experience at Secondary School level. The aim of the research is to understand if the learners' academic achievement is linked to the different aspects of reading.

All information gathered in this study will be treated with the strictest confidentiality.

I _____ hereby give assent for my Stanford test results, my biographical information and my mid and final year results to be used in the above study. I understand that if I choose not to sign this form I will in no way be penalised for it.

Name : _____

Date : _____

Grade : _____

Signature : _____

Appendix 3

BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: _____

AGE: _____

GENDER: _____

HOME LANGUAGE/S: _____

PLEASE FILL IN THE NECESSARY INFORMATION IN THE TABLE PROVIDED.

GRADE	SCHOOL	LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION	OF
Grade One			
Grade Two			
Grade Three			
Grade Four			
Grade Five			
Grade Six			
Grade Seven			

Do you speak in English to? (Please tick the appropriate box)

	Sometimes	Often	Never
Your Family			
Your Friends			

Thank you for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire. Your help is much appreciated.