

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Having provided a theoretical perspective dealing with current literature on English as MoI with English SL learners (ESL), the research framework for this study is provided.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.2.1 Methodology

Due to the nature of this study and as exemplified by various authors (Babbie & Mouton, 2006, p. 275; Creswell & Clark, 2007, p. 5; Knafl, Pettengill, Bevis, & Kirschhoff, 1988; Patton, 2002; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998), a methodological triangulation of both qualitative and quantitative paradigm, which are inextricably intertwined (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, & Delpont, 2005) was adopted. The purpose of a triangulated mixed methods design was to “simultaneously collect both quantitative and qualitative data, merge the data, and use the results to understand a research problem” (Creswell, 2008, p. 557). Furthermore, according to Babbie (1998, p. 298) there exists the inherent danger in qualitative research of ‘selective perception’ where the researcher observes only “things that support your theoretical conclusions”. However, Babbie (1998, p. 298) suggests that this may be partially avoided by augmenting your qualitative observations with quantitative ones. It is understood that there are no clear window into the inner life of an individual where subtle variations in ongoing human experience occur, can be grasped. Any gaze into their social construct, is “filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 12). There can be no objective observations. Respondents are seldom able to give full explanations of their actions, all they can offer are accounts about what they did and why. As a consequence, qualitative researchers “deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive methods, always seeking better ways to make more understandable the worlds of experience that have been studied” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 12). Triangulation of methodologies enhances the accuracy or credibility of the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2006, p. 275; Creswell, 2008, p. 266; Seliger & Shohamy, 1989, p. 123; Sorantakos, 1993, p. 168).

Granted, some authors (Lincoln & Cuba, 1985; Smith & Heshusius, 1986) express the view that combination of both methodologies is highly problematic; but there exists sufficient justification for the blend of both paradigms. De Vos, et. al, (2005, p. 359) quoting Creswell is explicit that researchers should “identify a single research paradigm for the overall design of research”. It is argued that use of both paradigms adequately and accurately will be time consuming and very costly thus extending studies beyond the designated time limits (De Vos, et. al, 2005). However, the overall advantage of combined paradigm is overwhelming and some of the short-comings will be circumvented by clearly delimiting this study to focus within its given parameters. This necessarily means that “you have to set distinct boundaries” (Nelleke, 2004, p. 23) to maintain focus on a small area that is to be investigated in-depth. Qualitative and quantitative methods of research were used in this study because different methods were warranted at different stages of the research to gain a more holistic view of the setting.

Qualitative research defined as an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem in their natural settings, (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2; Leedy, 1997, p. 105) therefore, is concerned with understanding human behaviour in terms of the meanings people bring to them from the actor’s own frame of reference (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2; Nunan, 1992, p. 4). Nunan also considers qualitative methodology as being “descriptive and inductive” (1992, p. 4) where researchers “begin with general questions in mind about the phenomenon they are studying or with more specific questions and with a special focus” (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989, p. 117). Furthermore, qualitative research method has as its goal “to discover phenomena such as patterns of second language behaviour not previously described and to understand these phenomena from the perspective of participants in the activity” (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989, p. 120). The task of a qualitative researcher thus, is to “capture what people say and do as a product of how they interpret the complexity of their world, to understand events from the viewpoints of the participants” (Burns, 1997, p. 12). Therefore qualitative research, drawing on “multiple realities and socially constructed meanings that exist within every context” ” (Burns, 1997, p. 12) can “reveal subtleties and complexities that could go undetected through the use of more standardized measures” (Burns, 1997, p. 14). Burns advances a further advantage of qualitative descriptions as

their “descriptive, narrative style” could benefit the practitioner, the educator, who may lack the relevant knowledge of “sophisticated measurement technique” (1997, p. 14).

Quantitative approaches on the other hand, deals with “an inquiry into a social or human problem, based on a theory composed of variables, measured with numbers and analysed with statistical procedures, in order to determine whether the predictive generalizations of the theory hold true” (Leedy, 1997, pp. 104 - 105).

Where subscription is to the view that the “social world is like the natural world – being hard, external and objective” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2001, p. 7), scientific investigation being directed at analysing relationships and regularities between selected factors in that world, would constitute a quantitative paradigm. However, if the researcher prefaces the study of social reality stressing the “importance of the subjective experience of individuals in the creation of the social world, then the search for understanding focuses upon different issues and approaches them in different ways” (Cohen et al., 2001, p. 7). When the principal concern of the research is an understanding of how “the individual creates, modifies and interprets the world in which he or she finds himself or herself”, the approach now takes on “a qualitative as well as quantitative aspect” (Cohen et al., 2001, p. 7). This emphasizes the inextricable intertwinement of social reality with the natural world so much so that approaches that are convergent with the thinking that should a phenomenon, being investigated in social sciences, be so enmeshed that a single approach cannot succeed in encompassing human beings in their full complexity (Mouton & Marais, 1990), it necessitates researchers having to use both approaches (De Vos, et. al, 2005). Thus “qualitative and quantitative approaches represent complementary components of the research process” (Leedy, 1997, p. 105). Whilst some social science researchers may describe these approaches as incompatible, others see “virtue in a variety of approaches. Different approaches allow us to know and understand different things about the world” (Glensne & Peshkin cited in Leedy, 1997, p. 105). Therefore, by “adopting the point of view of convergence and complementarity we may eventually be in a position to understand more about human nature and social reality” (De Vos et al., 2005, p. 360).

The inseparability of quantitative and qualitative methods was captured most richly by Campbell cited in De Vos et. al, (2005, p. 364) who argued

“strongly that quantitative method cannot exist without qualitative knowledge of research conventions, of theories, of operationalisation, of analysis, and of creative cognitive ways of drawing conclusions and making generalisations. And it is impossible to express qualitative perspectives, methods, perceptions, and conclusions without communications that are at least partially amenable to quantitative representation and, therefore, quantitative analysis. Words, for example, can be counted, and language patterns studied quantitatively”

The compatible fusion of qualitative and quantitative methods in a single research study converges with the assertion of pragmatism which should serve to increase the concrete and practical methodological options available to researchers (Patton, 2002). It is further posited by Patton (2002) that pragmatism means judging the quality of the study by its purpose, resources available, and procedures followed and the end results within the given context for a specific audience. Being pragmatic; “means that one is allowed to use methodological appropriateness as the primary criterion for judging methodological quality, recognising that different methods are appropriate for different situations” (De Vos, et. al, 2005 p. 359). In subscribing to the tenets of a mixed-model pragmatist paradigm; both the qualitative and quantitative approaches were adopted in different phases of the research process (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

Thus, in an attempt to excavate a more holistic picture of a given phenomenon, data, observer, theory and methodological triangulation (De Vos et. al, 2005) was considered appropriate. Triangulation in qualitative research is “the convergence of multiple perspectives that can provide greater confidence that what is being targeted is being accurately captured” (Padgett, 1998, p. 32). Therefore the best approach in achieving a total picture of phenomenon studied is to mix quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods (Posavac & Carey, 1989, p. 242).

3.2.2 Ethnography

Within this mixed-model paradigm and utilising a phenomenological inquiry, this research undertook a snap shot case study using ethnographic study methods. According to Nunan (1992, p. 55) ethnography involves the “study of the culture/characteristics of a group in a real-world rather than laboratory setting”, whilst Babbie and Mouton (2006, p. 279) describe it “as the data of cultural anthropology that is derived from the direct observation of behaviour in a particular society”. A key part

of this method according to Altheide and Johnson is to see first-hand what occurs; failing which, ethnographers would ask subjects and other for their recollections, points of view, and interpretations (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 487).

With the main objective of ethnography being “to write objective accounts of lived experiences (De Vos, et. al, 2005, p. 271) it involves “interpretation, analysis and explanations – not just descriptions” (Nunan, 1992, p. 57) which presents a “holistic cultural portrait of the group” (De Vos, et. al, 2005, p. 271). Ethnography is most succinctly described as:

“The essential core of this activity aims to understand another way of life from the native point of view ...Field work, then, involves the disciplined study of what the world is like to people who have learned to see, hear, speak, think and act in ways that are different. Rather than studying people, ethnography means learning from people”. (Spradley, 1979, p. 3).

However, one needs to be circumspect about “the problems associated with describing foreign cultures from the point of view of the ethnographer’s own culture” (Babbie & Mouton, 2006, p. 280). Fouchè in De Vos et al., (2005, p. 271) citing Mark warns “that ethnography is inevitably coloured by the ethnographer’s point of view, biases, methods and experiences”. Fouchè in De Vos et al., (2005, p. 271) further warns that ethnographic fieldwork is “a minefield riddled with potential moral and ethical pitfalls That involves both coping with multiple negotiations and continually dealing with ethical dilemmas”. Thus, whilst “such pitfalls can, as a rule, not be identified beforehand” (De Vos et al., 2005, p. 271) ethical issues (discussed later) must be addressed prior to actual data collection commences.

3.2.3 Case study

Since phenomenological studies attempt to “understand people’s perception, perspectives and understanding of a particular situation” (De Vos, et. al, 2005, p. 264) a snap shot case study provided an opportunity to view contexts that are unique and dynamic and “report the complex dynamic and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships and other factors as a unique instance” (Cohen et al., 2001, p. 181). “A case study is an in-depth exploration of a bounded system” (Creswell, 2008, p. 272; De Vos, et. al, 2005) collecting detailed information involving multiple sources of data

collection procedures that are rich in context (Creswell, 2008; De Vos, et. al, 2005; Leedy, 1997). According to Leedy and Ormrod (2001, p. 114 & 149), a case study involves an in-depth data gathering process relative “to a single individual, program, or event for the purposes of learning more about an unknown or poorly understood situation”.

Case studies can yield “valuable scientific information when they take place in settings where many variables are measured at the post-test; contextual knowledge is already rich (Babbie & Mouton, 2006, p. 280).

The study is bounded by time, place or some physical boundaries (Creswell, 2008; Leedy, 1997; Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). According to Hitchcock and Hughes (in Cohen et al., 2001, p. 182) case studies

- Are set in temporal, geographical, organisational, institutional and other contexts that enable boundaries to be drawn around the case;
- Can be defined with reference to characteristics defined by individuals and groups involved; and
- Can be defined by participant’s roles and functions in the case.

Furthermore a phenomenological approach views the world from a human consciousness point, attempting to understand and interpret the meaning that subjects give to their everyday lives, therefore a snap shot case study was appropriate as it provided “a unique example of real people in real situations, which enables readers to have clear understanding of ideas” (Cohen et al., 2001, p. 181). A case study is “especially suitable for learning more about a little known or poorly understood situation” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001, p. 149). This is “important as case studies provide fine grain details that provide powerful human-scale data from which decisions regarding development strategies can be made where theory can be infused with practice” (Dorasamy, 2005, p. 39).

Thus, a snap-shot case study, having the following hallmarks as enumerated by Cohen et al., (2001, p. 182) made it appropriate for this study:

- It is concerned with a rich and vivid description of events relevant to the case.
- It blends a description of events with the analysis of them.
- It highlights specific events that are relevant to the case.

- The researcher is integrally involved in the case.

3.2.4 Phenomenology

In order to fully appreciate and understand the impact of English as MoI on the academic performance of English Second Language (ESL) learners, particularly isiZulu learners, a phenomenological approach was considered appropriate. The rationality concerned with understanding draws its knowledge sources from the interpretive sciences, particularly phenomenology, which relies on interpretation and description in order to disclose meaning in everyday life (Hultgren, 1982, p. 8). Phenomenological studies, therefore aim at discovering subjects' experiences, to understand people's perception, perspectives and how they make sense of a particular situation (Babbie, 1998, p. 281; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2; De Vos et al., 2005, p. 264). Vandenberg (1997, p. 10) describes phenomenology, as the description of phenomenon in the lived-world or the description of movements of consciousness that enable us to become aware of phenomena, or both of these together. Social sciences, according to Schutz, cited in Denzin & Lincoln (1994), should focus on the ways the life world (the taken-for-granted experiential world) is produced and experienced by others. Social phenomenology therefore aims for the interpretation and explanation of human action and thought "through descriptions of the foundational structures of the reality" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 263).

This approach provided the researcher an avenue to generate a synopsis of how human beings construct and give meaning to experiences of a phenomenon, topic or concept. (Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 204). Although phenomenologists differ among themselves on certain issues, there is general consensus that phenomenology holds subjective consciousness as important, with consciousness actively constituting the objects of experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 263), bestowing meaning and that by a certain kind of reflection on consciousness, we gain direct knowledge (Cohen et al., 2001, p. 23). This means that human beings are engaged in continuous interpreting, creating and giving meaning to, justifying and rationalizing their actions, thus constructing and changing the everyday interpretations of their worlds (Babbie & Mouton, 2006, p. 28). According to Gurwitsch (in Lee & Mandelbaum, 1969, p. 27), consciousness involves mental faculties, such as convergence, concordance and

agreement between these operations and their yieldings which make us accept the objects as really existing.

Schutz, cited in Holstein and Gubrium suggests that the central medium for the typifications of human consciousness is language which, thereby gives meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 263). This provides “a methodological orientation for a phenomenology of social life concerned with the relation between language use and the objects of experience” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 263). Thus objects of one’s reality are catalytic to meanings of a word following a correspondence theory of meaning. Within this framework, Schutz in Holstein and Gubrium proposes that “the essential task of language is to convey information, to describe reality” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 263). Words, viewed as a system of typifications, can therefore be seen as “constitutive building blocks of everyday reality” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 263). Holstein and Gubrium citing Schutz suggests that “social phenomenology rests on the tenet that social interaction constructs as much as conveys meaning” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 263). Schutz, cited in Holstein and Gubrium, realized that people use a ‘stock of knowledge’ gathered over time, called commonsense knowledge, to objectify social forms (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 263). These stocks of knowledge, producing a familiar world, and acting as verifiers, help members make meaning of experiences. This stock of knowledge helps build communities through intersubjective understanding, and help co-ordinate actions. This familiarity is “because of the typified manner by which knowledge is articulated” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 263).

Schutz quoted in Holstein and Gubrium, the taken-for-granted stance of language use and typifications, creates the assumption that others experience the world basically the same way we do (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 263). These assumptions therefore lead to the fallacious belief that we “can therefore understand one another in dealings in and with the world” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 263). We thus take our subjectivity for granted, overlooking its constitutive character, presuming that we intersubjectively share the same reality, which seems to perpetuate itself.

Thus, Schutz (1964) quoted in Holstein and Gubrium, stressing the constitutive nature of consciousness, argue that social scientists should focus on the ways experiential world is produced and experienced by members (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 263). It is

to the notion of experience that the philosophic traditions of phenomenology can be called upon to inform. Consequently, phenomenology as philosophy and as method should have as its primary objectives the direct investigation and description of phenomena as consciously experienced. A characteristic feature of phenomenological method is the “process of inquiry whereby assumptions regarding the concept of person, nature of learning, and views of knowledge are constantly pushed to the surface, whereby they can be examined reflectively and clarified” (Hultgren, 1982, pp. 7-8).

Hultgren (1982, p. 8) citing Van Manen summarizes this approach as follows:

The challenge for phenomenology is to make available, through a reflective use of method and description, “opportunities for seeing” through the surface structure of everyday life the ground structures of common educational phenomena and experiences The phenomenological analysis of “seeing” can only succeed in the basis of a rich experience on a variety of situations. It requires a repeated “back to the things themselves,” a good selection and exemplary cases and their variations, and “ascent” . . . from simpler experiences to the pure phenomena.

Cohen et al., (2001, p. 24) agrees with the above assertion by citing Schutz who suggested that

The origins of meaning he thus sought in the ‘stream of consciousness’ – basically an unbroken stream of lived experiences which have no meaning in themselves. One can only impute meaning to them retrospectively, by the process of turning back on oneself and looking at what has been going on. In other words, meaning can be accounted for in this way by the concept of reflexivity.

Whilst consciousness is a fundamental concept to phenomenology, it is not limited to mere innerness or introspection as some critics have claimed. Greene (1973) refers to consciousness as “experienced context,” wherein each person’s life experience is as a result of multiple ways in which the individual comes in touch with the world. Life world is central to phenomenologist’s thinking, and great emphasis is placed on each person’s biographical situation. Greene (1978, p. 2) contends that people feel more grounded in their own personal histories of their lived lives because of their consciousness of their evolving experiences which she succinctly captured as “To be in touch with our landscapes is to be conscious of our evolving experiences, to be aware of the ways in which we encounter our world”. Essential to the concept of experiences are not only ways of knowing the world but ways of being-in-the-world. Heidegger

addresses the fundamental philosophic question of “what is the meaning of being, and as such, provides an ontological grounding for educational experiences (Hultgren, 1982, p. 5). To Heidegger the ‘the source of meaning is not found in a relationship of knowing but in a relationship of being. Knowing is only a special way of our being-in-the-world” (Hultgren, 1982, p. 6). Phenomenologists “argue that the detached “objectivity” of experimental research cannot adequately explain the complexity of social life” (Mertens, 1998, p. 62) whereas being-in requires participation in the world rather than the spectator stance of looking at the world” (Hultgren, 1982, p. 6). This therefore requires that the researcher gets close to the subject and views the world from the perspective of the insider (Babbie & Mouton, 2006, p. 33).

In phenomenology, the subjective point of view serves as guarantee that the “world of social reality will not be replaced by a fictional non-existing world constructed by the scientific observer (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 263). Since phenomenological studies attempt to understand “the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it” (Mertens, 1998, p. 11), it should be clear that the investigation of lived experience is a central precept of this approach, which includes the investigated and the investigator. “Real understanding is not possible through viewing persons as objects” (Hultgren, 1982, p. 8) as it is through experiences itself that meaning and understandings are uncovered.

Hultgren, (1982, p. 8) citing various authors (Mehan, 1975, Palmer, 1969 and Vandenberg 1971) argue that in pursuit of fallacious research objectivity, the researcher is extricated from “being-in”, leading to a “deficient mode of existence”. By extrapolation then it can be deduced that a full understanding of what is human is not possible because of the methodological choice to omit being there. Since research is a mode of being, the researcher enters the subject’s ‘life world’ or ‘life setting’ and places himself in the shoes of the subject (De Vos et al., 2005, p. 270), educating understanding and interpreting the meaning that subjects give to their everyday lives (Creswell, 1998) through being human and interactions with others in lived experiences.

It is argued that the human world comprises various provinces of meaning varying in degrees of “consciousness, spontaneity, bracketing, sociality, self-experience and

temporality” (Vandenberg, 1997, p. 7) that views the every day life-world as the primary reality. In order to look beyond the details of everyday mundanity to the essences underlying them, Husserl (cited in Cohen et al., 2001, p. 24) exhorts researchers to “put the world in brackets” so that “social action that takes place within the natural attitude” (Schutz in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 263). A phenomenological process of bracketing “consciously avoids the use of theoretical, explanatory constructs, setting aside one’s taken-for-granted orientation to it” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 263) and frees researchers from their usual ways of perceiving the world. This process facilitates descriptions “in an unprejudiced manner phenomenon as they occur in the lived-world” (Vandenberg, 1997, p. 7).

The observer, by shedding off the layers of ontological judgements and prejudices, is able to innocently focus on how members of the life world produce the “recognizable, intelligible forms they treat as real” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 263). It would prudent then to reassign from the researcher, the objectified third-person perspective, to the first-person involvement so as to allow my ‘being there’ and being part of the unfolding inquiry of lived experience. (Hultgren, 1982, p. 12). Mooney (1975, p. 176) cited by Hultgren (1982) suggests that research is a personal venture which, aside from its social benefits, contributes to one’s self-realisation. In pursuit of self-realisation, the researcher integrates with the process of data collection whereby “the researcher goes into the field” (De Vos, et. al, 2005, p. 264). This is mainly done by means of naturalistic methods of study, analysing the conversations and interaction that researchers have with subjects. Data are systematically collected and meanings, themes and general descriptions of the experience analysed within a specific context” (De Vos, et. al, 2005, p. 270). However, being circumspect about interpretations clouded by the ethnographer’s own cultural biases (Babbie & Mouton, 2006, p. 280; De Vos, et. al, 2005, p. 271) leading to potential moral and ethical pitfalls, it is suggested that qualitative researchers should make comprehensive observations at the outset and then winnow out any elements that originated in their own worldview rather than in the world-view of the people being observed and/or interviewed (Babbie, 1998, p. 281). Eventually, the researcher, analysing data within a specific context, should reduce the experiences to a central meaning or the essence of the experience, depicting essentially a description of the experiences studied (De Vos, et. al, 2005, p. 270) as the product.

Thus, through a phenomenological orientation, an interpretive enterprise was undertaken to explicate, make visible and understandable the actions and perceptions of educators and learners in the curriculum process on what impact English, as MoI, has on the academic performance of ESL learners where objects and experiences are subjectively and meaningfully constituted, in their mother tongues– e.g. isiZulu, and communicated in the world of everyday life.

Gambu's assertion (1999) that nothing will be revealed unless thorough investigation is conducted could amount to nothing. This is because "underlying modes of rationality inherent in educational theory & practice must be related to philosophies of knowledge rooted in paradigms other than the dominant empirical science tradition" (Hultgren, 1982, pp. 3-4). It would appear that the existing technological mentality has reduced the interest in philosophical reflection concerning means and ends in education. This fixation on means and ends in the education milieu with conopunia has led to a very myopic view that deprives modes of rationality based on critique and understanding. "The philosophic traditions of critical science and interpretive science are significant in this regard" (Hultgren, 1982). The basic tenet of critical science is therefore to expose oppressive and dominating views/practices in order to "reconstruct existing views and practices to perceive what they really are" (Hultgren, 1982, p. 2). In this case the critique concerns the use of English as MoI in most schools in South Africa despite the majority of learners/educators being English Second Language learners and who seem to fare badly in a system that favours English.

Within the context of an interpretive framework, academic performance is seen as the study of educational experiences, concerned with making visible and understandable the actions and perceptions of educators and learners in the academic milieu. However, in subscribing to the first-person involvement so as to allow my 'being there' and being part of the unfolding inquiry of lived experience of subjects, from a phenomenological orientation, raises the question of inherent risks of the dichotomy of the Orient and the Occident or the concept of the "other".

Said's (2003) dichotomy between the Orient and Occident has created a division between these two groups, so much so that the concept of the "other" has emerged (Biseth, 2006). This concept of the "Other" has been created primarily by academics

from the West (the Occident), of people from the Orient. Analogous to the Orient-Occident dichotomy, is what Fine calls the 'Self and Other' (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, pp. 70 - 81). Fine argues that the concepts of "Self and Other are knottily entangled. This relationship, as lived between researcher and informants, is typically obscured in social science texts, protecting privilege, securing distance, and laminating the contradictions" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 72). According to Fine (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994), the qualitative researcher, despite denials, is always caught tenuously at the hyphen, the junction between the researcher and the subject. It is argued that should the researcher opt to simply write *about* those 'Othered', then we deny the hyphen. However, should researchers slip into a "contradictory discourse of individualism, personalogic theorizing, and decontextualization, we inscribe the Other" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 72). Should researchers opt to engage in social struggles with those who have been exploited and subjugated, it is claimed that researchers work the hyphen, revealing more about the researchers and paradoxically accentuating the structures of 'Othering'. This concept of working the hyphen is a cogent and appropriate point to the context of this study, as it set out to explore the impact of English as MoI with ESL learners whose history has been steeped in apartheid based dehumanisation, debasing its language, cultures, etc. The researcher being an intruder, based on the racial, geographical and socio-economic divide, entered the life space of a community that has suffered the indignity of being 'children of lesser God'. The researcher's capacity, being an outsider, to elicit rich, thick descriptions on their interpretations of reality, only to be reported on clinically and divorced from their scrutiny, is challenged. It is to the comments of "I'm tired of hearing you speak for me. Only I can speak for myself. I'll speak for my people, and these issues" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 80) that challenges the ethnographic researcher, especially within the context of this study where the risk of romanticizing of narratives and the concomitant retreat from analysis lurks.

Fine (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) suggests that working the hyphen means the researchers' intertwinement with the context and informants. It implores researchers to see how these relations get us "better data, limit what we feel free to say, expand our minds and constrict our mouths, engage us in intimacy and seduce us into complicity, make us quick to interpret and hesitant to write" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 72). This implies that a collaborative relationship should be formed between the researchers and

subjects for discussion of the parameters of the research to elicit and report as closely as possible the reality as it is.

However, this dichotomy is not necessarily restricted to the ‘Orient-Occident’, ‘Selves-Others’ tension only, but could apply equally to other consternation. Accordingly, in Biseth’s paper (2006) the use of the “other” has been contextualized to mean the researcher rather than the respondents. Said’s writing (Biseth, 2006) also suggested a power imbalance being present as it is the Occident who defined the characteristics of the “Other”. This power imbalance plays it self out in most research, as is the case with this study, where the researcher, in entering the subject’s ‘life world’ or ‘life setting’ and placing himself in the shoes of the subject, can be seen to be an intruder into territory imbued with its own cultural, socio-economic and socio-political issues that impact heavily on the performance of ESL learners. According to the writings of Fine in Denzin & Lincoln (1994), ‘Self’ means the researcher whilst ‘Others’ means the subjects compared to Said’s ‘Occident’ suggests that the researcher whilst the “Other” takes on the connotation of an “Outsider” meaning the subjects; which seems to have taken prominence within the scope of social science research. This definition of the ‘Other’ referring to the subjects shall be maintained for the purposes of this study. Thus the concept of the ‘Other’ carries the connotation of “lack any redeeming community traditions collective voice of historical weight – and is reduced to the imagery of the colonizer” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 73).

The works of qualitative researchers invariably become victim to the concept of ‘Othering’ when we knowingly or not decide to work the hyphen. This is captured most succinctly by Fine (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 74) who wrote

But when we look, get involved, demur, analyze, interpret, probe, speak, remain silent, walk away, organize for outrage, or sanitize our stories, and when we construct our texts in or on their words, we decide how to nuance our relations with/for/despite those who have been deemed Others. When we write essays about subjugated Others as if *they* were a homogeneous mass ..., free-floating and severed from contexts of oppression, and as if we were neutral transmitters of voices and stories, we tilt toward a narrative strategy that reproduces Othering on despite, or even “for.”

Stemming from the foregoing discussion, Renato Rosaldo quoted in Fine (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 74), argues that there are no innocent ethnographers as the “eye of

ethnography [often connects with] the I of imperialism”. Thus qualitative researchers will continually grapple with the ethical decisions about how deeply to work with/for/despite those cast as Others, and how seamlessly to represent the hyphen. It is to this apprehension that qualitative researchers must be guarded about the problems of describing foreign cultures from the ethnographer’s own coloured point of view.

3.3 *SAMPLING*

“Sampling is the process of selecting observations” (Babbie, 1998, p. 192) or “taking a portion of a population” (De Vos, et. al, 2005, p. 203) that is considered representative of that population. A target sample, according to Creswell (2008, p. 152) is “a group of individuals ... with some common defining characteristic that the researcher can identify and study”. Within this target population, researchers will, due to various factors, choose a sample. Specific sampling techniques allow the researcher to determine and/or control the likelihood of specific individuals being included or excluded in the study. The most basic consideration in sampling is “size and representativeness” (De Vos, et. al, 2005, p. 82). Sample is considered representative if the aggregate characteristics of the sample closely approximates the same characteristics as the population relevant to the research in question (Babbie, 1998, p. 200 & De Vos, et. al, 2005, p. 196).

The target population for this study were non-language subject educators teaching ESL learners and ESL isiZulu speaking learners using English as MoI, at FET band, secondary level in KwaZulu-Natal. Therefore, due to the focus of this study, all learners whose home language (mother tongue) was not isiZulu, were purposively and automatically excluded from the sample. Accordingly, only schools with a majority of isiZulu learners using English as MoI were included in the sample. Again, in KwaZulu-Natal, this constituted a very large number of schools to be included in the sample. However, time, human and financial resource constraints restricted this research to a purposive sample of 3 schools in the FET band in the eThekweni region, spanning from Avoca to Ndwedwe in KZN (see map – [Appendix J](#) for the geographical location of schools). Due to the heterogeneity of the target population and the focus of this study; which was the academic performance of ESL speakers using English as MoI, specifically isiZulu speaking learners, a non-probability purposive sampling technique

was considered appropriate in identifying only grade 12 isiZulu speaking learners. Having identified the sample to be grade 12 isiZulu speaking learners, a simple random sampling technique using the table of random numbers (see Appendix G), was used in identifying the 25 grade 12 learners per school, being considered representative, to whom the questionnaires were administered. Babbie (1998, p. 195) agrees that “sometimes it’s appropriate for you to select your sample on the basis of your own knowledge of the population, its elements, and the nature of your research aims: in short, based on your judgement and the purpose of the study”.

For the focused-group interview, a non-probability convenience sampling technique was used in identifying the five (5) volunteer educators per school, teaching non-language subjects were included in the sample for a semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix D).

3.4 PILOTING OF RESEARCH

Authors such as De Vos, et. al, (2005) suggest that the researcher undertakes a small scale investigation or “arrange one or two scouting forays to assess possible problems and risks” (Cohen et al., 2001, p. 56) referred to as pilot, to serve as a valuable avenue to gaining practical knowledge of and insight into the research area. Furthermore, Silverman, cited in Cohen et al., (2001, p. 121) makes the telling comment that the “reliability of interviews can be enhanced by careful piloting”. Babbie & Mouton (2006) find compelling the need for pilot in cases where more than one cultural or language group is included in the study. Accordingly, “a pilot must have been conducted to ensure that the observational categories themselves are appropriate, exhaustive ...effectively operationalize the purpose of research” (Cohen et al., 2001, p.129).

Therefore, during the pilot phase, the researcher exposed the research frame to establish fitness of purpose or validity in terms of its goals, resources, research population, “general level of response to be expected” (Cohen et al., 2001, p. 263) and procedures for data collection, etc. According to Strydom in De Vos et. al, (2005, p. 195) “the instrument need to be edited after each test in order to achieve the required degree of reliability”.

It is envisaged that the pilot alerts “a prospective researcher to possible unforeseen problems which may emerge during the main investigation (De Vos, et. al, 2005, p. 208) and prepares the researcher for possible errors that may occur. The pilot helped determine competence in individuals within the sample to complete questionnaires (Creswell, 2008) but more importantly to help identify mistakes or ambiguous question phrased by the researcher, “one that cannot be answered” (Babbie & Mouton, 2006, p. 244). A pilot test conducted in two schools, therefore provided feedback from a small number of individuals (not included in the final sample) that informed the researcher to modify or change instruments or contents of instruments to enhance validity of the research process (Creswell, 2008). Whilst a pilot study may initially prove costly in terms of time, it may ultimately prove cost-effective by letting you know, “after only a small investment on your part, which approaches will and will not be effective in helping you solve your overall research problem” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001, p. 116).

3.5 ETHICAL ISSUES

Whilst data collection is central for the successful completion of the research in general, it must adhere to ethical issues of social research. Subscribing to the tenets of ethics is paramount as “social research often, ... represents an intrusion into peoples lives” requiring respondents to “reveal personal information ... to strangers” (Babbie & Mouton, 2006, p. 521). Therefore, data collection was preceded by the researcher having obtained “permission from several individuals and groups” (Creswell, 2008, p. 157). In the context of this research therefore, ethical clearance was obtained from Durban University of Technology prior to the commencement of data collection (see [Appendix A](#)). Furthermore, permission of the KZN Department of Education was sought through the district official, (see [Appendix B](#)). A letter of information outlining the research topic, purpose, etc and consent was read, dated and signed by all participants (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001, p. 108) (see [Appendix C](#)). Furthermore, since learners were also involved in this research, principals’ (who is the legal custodians of learners) informed consent was sought (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001, p. 108) through the same letter (see [Appendix C](#)).

Research having an ethical-moral dimension, requires that the researcher maintains a moral and professional obligation to be guided by ethics, even when the researched are unaware about ethics (Neuman, 2011). Basic tenets of ethics in research devolves this responsibility to the researcher to protect the participants from any harm which is why issues of no harm to participants, voluntary participation, right to withdraw, privacy, anonymity and confidentiality were addressed in the letter to participants to ensure that participants were comfortable in being respondents in this research. Anonymity ensures that the participants remain unknown, whilst confidentiality means that the researcher is able to identify a respondent and his/her response but essentially promises not to make the connection known to the publicly (Babbie, 1995, p. 451; Cohen et al., 2001, p. 62) but the researcher holds it in confidence or keeps it from the public. Respondents of interviews and questionnaires were requested to fill in their names and sign consent letters for quality control in data collection and verification purposes. However, all identifying information were removed as soon as it was no longer necessary and replaced with identification numbers in a master file linking numbers to names thus permitting for later correction of missing or contradictory information (Babbie, 1995, pp. 451-452; Cohen et al., 2005, p. 63; Leedy & Ormrod, 2001, p. 108). Furthermore, interviewees were also assured that the transcription were undertaken by the researcher only and was made available only to the supervisor when requested. Furthermore, in order to ensure anonymity, all interviewees were given pseudonyms and the names of the schools were also changed. Once necessary permission and consent was obtained, data collection followed.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION

Data from questionnaires were, using simple and grouped frequency distribution tables, coded and captured using excel spreadsheets. Interviews and observations were categorised into themes and then coded using frequency distribution tables. Using univariate and bivariate analysis, data were analysed and presented in graphical representations in the form of graphs and charts. These data were thereafter interpreted to draw conclusions.

3.6.1 Data collection methods

This study espoused a methodological triangulation of data collection instruments which included interviews with 5 educators per school from the 3 schools, three (3) lesson observations per school, ground observations of learners' interaction among each other and completed questionnaires by grade 12 learners. Cohen et al., (2001, p. 113) and Babbie and Mouton (2006, p. 275) define a methodological triangulation as using the same method on different occasions or different methods on the same object of study. Creswell (2008, p. 266) defines triangulation as the process of "corroborating evidence from different ... types of data ... methods of data collection". When "different methods of data collection yield substantially the same results" (Cohen et al., 2001, p. 112) it leads to greater confidence of the findings as "they get a fix on its true location" (De Vos, et. al, 2002, p. 341). It was also considered prudent to triangulate as an "exclusive reliance on one method ... may bias or distort the researcher's picture of the particular share of reality she is investigating" (Cohen et al., 2001, p. 112). Triangulation of data collection methods was considered appropriate as the strength of one method made up for the shortcomings of others (Cohen et al., 2001). The rationale for triangulation was informed by Cohen et al., (2001) and Erlandson and Neuman in De Vos, et. al, 2002, p. 341) where:

...the researcher seeks out several different types of sources that can provide insights about the same events or relationships ... and by observing something from different angles or viewpoints; they get a fix on its true location.

Finally, triangulation also served as the "critical test by virtue of its comprehensiveness for competing theories" (De Vos et al., 2002, p. 342). Triangulation is generally considered "one of the best ways to enhance validity and reliability in qualitative research" (Babbie & Mouton, 2006, p. 275). In subscribing to the canons of trustworthiness of research findings and in a quest to obtain valid and reliable data, the researcher must ensure "that the measurement procedures and the measurement instruments to be used have acceptable levels of reliability, validity and objectivity (De Vos, et. al, 2005, p. 160, Mertens, 1998). Delpont in De Vos et al., (2005, p. 160) argues that validity has two aspects viz:

- (a) "that the instrument actually measures the concept in question" and

(b) “that the concept is measured accurately”.

Assurance of validity would entail the measuring device providing an adequate or representative sample of items that represent the concept or instances of the phenomenon being measured (De Vos et al., 2005, p 161). Reliability deals with the “measuring instrument’s ability to yield consistent numerical results each time it is applied” (De Vos et al., 2005, p. 163). Objectivity is defined by Olesen as the relationship between the researcher and the researched (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 166) and the ability of the researcher to report subjects’ responses without bias.

The three standards; reliability, validity and objectivity, judges the quality of quantitative research whereas the parallel criteria for qualitative “data are dependability, credibility, and confirmability” (Mertens, 1998, p. 287) or “applicability, consistency and neutrality” (De Vos et al., 2005, p. 346). Cohen et al., (2001, p. 105) contends that in “qualitative data validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved ... the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher”. Reliability, the possibility of replication, resonates within a quantitative paradigm whereas its equivalent in qualitative paradigm is “the uniqueness and idiosyncrasy of situations, such that the study cannot be replicated – that is their strength rather than their weakness” (Cohen et al., 2001, p. 119). Cohen et al., (2001, p. 106) argues that researchers, due to their inextricable entwinement with the world they research, cannot be completely objective and offers ‘fidelity’ where “researcher to be as honest as possible to the self-reporting of the researched” to enhance objectivity and validity.

Therefore, through the processes of triangulation of data collection and analysis, the findings of this research, whilst having a limited degree of generalisability to the greater population, subscribed to standards of dependability, credibility and confirmability to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings.

Data were collected from 3 subgroups in the chosen sample. Questionnaires were administered to 25 grade 12 learners from three schools, whilst 5 non-language subject educators from the same schools were interviewed. The third source of data was from classroom observation of lessons taught and general learner interaction during breaks at

school. By using a combination of data collection procedures, the researcher was able to “more easily validate and cross-check findings” (De Vos, et. al, 2005, p. 314). Thus, through use of multiple measures of the same phenomenon, the capacity to collect as much relevant information as possible was substantially enhanced since weaknesses of one instrument may be overcome by the strengths of the other (Babbie & Mouton, 2006, p. 275; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2001, p. 113; Creswell, 2008, p. 557; Sorantakos, 1993, p. 168). This approach contributed to content validity as, through triangulation, instruments used fairly and comprehensively covered the domain being researched (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2001, p. 109).

3.6.2 Data collection instruments

Seliger and Shohamy make a cogent point that “By using a variety of procedures and by obtaining data from a variety of sources the researcher often obtains rich and comprehensive data. Such data usually provide an expanded and global picture of the phenomenon, as each source provides additional data” (1989, p. 160). This approach allows for data being collected inventively by “data collection procedures tailored to the situation and played off against each other” (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989, p. 160). Further, it is Cohen’s contention that “the more the methods contrast with each other, the greater the researcher’s confidence” (Cohen et al., 2001, p. 112).

Fine, in Denzin & Lincoln, states that ironically, by stipulating the binary opposition of the Other and Self or Occident and Orient tensions, “one detours away from investigation what is ‘between’ (1994, p. 72). “Unearthing the blurred boundaries ‘between’ ... constitutes a critical task of qualitative researchers” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 72). Fine, citing Martin and Mohanty in Denzin & Lincoln, (1994, p. 72) uses the analysis of the home as a “site for constituting Self and for expelling Others”. This implies that the researcher conducts the research and leaves not gaining the full impact of the lived experience. Spivak, cited by Fine in Denzin & Lincoln (1994, p. 75) asks that the “researchers stop trying to *know* the Other or *give voice* to the Other ... and listen, instead, to the plural voices of those Othered, as constructors and agents of knowledge”. This therefore calls for vicarious ways to experience the “other”. Therefore, it is by choice, after careful consideration that this study undertook to collect

data through the use of questionnaire, interviews and observation to gain a more holistic picture of the research topic.

a) Questionnaire

(i) Motivation and design

In second language acquisition research questionnaires are useful in collecting data on phenomenon “which are not easily observed, such as attitudes, motivation, and self-concepts” (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989, p. 172). The advantage of questionnaires is its time economy because it enjoys the capacity of being “self-administered” (Mertens, 1998, p. 314) thus least threatening to respondents. Being circumspect about the disadvantage that respondents “may lack personal investment in the study and decide not to return the instrument” (Creswell, 2008, p. 395), assistance of the school principals and educators was sought to assist in the administration and collection of completed questionnaires.

The questionnaire comprised mostly of Yes/No response, rank ordering and Likert rating scale questions. This strategy compels respondents to make a choice and is useful as a funnelling device for subsequent questions. Such questions also “do not discriminate unduly on the basis of how articulate the respondents are” (Cohen et al., 2001, p. 248). Whilst acknowledging that Likert scale questions administered to a small number of subjects does not allow for “statistically meaningful calculations” (Strauss, 2008, p. 48), participants’ responses proffer “relative intensity” (Babbie & Mouton, 2006, p. 154) of feelings on the current topic which can illuminate the reasons behind subjects’ perceptions and opinions. A Likert scale is advantageous as it combines “the opportunity for a flexible response with the ability to determine frequencies, correlations and other forms of quantitative analysis. This affords the researcher the freedom to fuse “measurement with opinion, quantity and quality” (Cohen et al., 2001, p. 253). A further advantage of Likert scale is that it is “based entirely on empirical data regarding subjects’ responses rather than subjective opinions of judges” (Burns, 1997, p. 461). A disadvantage of Likert method is that the total score has little clear meaning, since “many patterns of response to the various items may produce the same score” (Burns, 1997, p. 462). This research, though, was not concerned with a total score, but rather on “individual attitudes and practices, and

categories like childhood/teenage/adult experiences, or family/school/university experiences, or positive/negative/neutral experiences” (Strauss, 2008, p. 49).

One of the major challenges of questionnaire used in second language research is that they may not be appropriate “as subjects very often have problems reading and providing answers in L2” (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989, p. 172). There can be no assurance that subjects would properly understand and respond to the questions (1989, p. 172). In view of this, a structured questionnaire with a high degree of closed questions was designed as these were “considered to be more efficient than open ones” (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989, p. 173). However, “closed questions have limited scope in capturing the rich descriptive experiences of respondents” (Dorasamy, 2005, p. 40). Accordingly, this was counterbalanced with some open-ended questions to enable respondents to “take responsibility for and ownership of the data much more firmly” (Cohen et al., 2001, p. 255) and write free response in their own words. “It is the open-ended responses that might contain the ‘gems’ of information” that “catch the authenticity, richness, depth of response, honesty and candour” (Cohen et al., 2001, p. 255), which otherwise might not have been caught in the questionnaire. Nevertheless, to minimise the drop rate, the actual number of open-ended questions was limited since Maharaj (1991, p. 44) quoted by Dorasamy (2005, p. 40) claims, “such questions invariably elicit a great deal of repetition and irrelevant materials which takes a long time to sift through”.

In order to prevent respondents from becoming disconcerted by shifting from one topic to the next and back, questions were grouped into different categories and logically sequenced with section headings (Babbie & Mouton, 2006, p. 243; Cohen et al., 2001, p. 259; Dorasamy, 2005, p. 40). This indicated the “overall logic and coherence of the questionnaire to the respondents enabling them to ‘find their way’ through the questionnaire” (Cohen et al., 2001, p. 259). Often, due to several questions having the same set of answer categories being posed, and in order to avoid confusion, the matrix question format was used in the questionnaire design. Babbie & Mouton (2006, p. 242) enumerate the following advantages of this format:

- is uses space efficiently.

- respondents will probably find it faster to complete a set of questions presented in this fashion.
- this format may increase the comparability of responses given to different questions for the respondent as well as for the researcher.

The drawback of a possibility of a “response-set” (Babbie & Mouton, 2006, p. 242) being fostered by respondents was countered by interspersing attitude questions throughout as “Such questions relieves boredom and frustration as well as providing valuable information in the process” (Cohen et al., 2001, p. 258 – 259).

Thus, the questionnaire comprised of 4 sections. Attitudinal questions on learners’ perceptions and opinions on schooling and English as MoI, which respondents “are aching to express” (Babbie & Mouton, 2006, p. 243) are contained in Section A. These questions are considered not threatening and it is considered prudent to include these “most interesting set of items” (Babbie & Mouton, 2006, p. 243) first to “lead the respondent well into the questionnaire, thereby making it more difficult to withdraw” (Burns, 1997, p. 475). This also ensures “that the respondent will continue to co-operate” (Cohen et al., 2001, p. 257). Section B, stimulating the mind and memory of the respondents, which Burns (1997, p. 475) refers to as “warm-up questions” elicits the impact of English as MoI on their academic performance and descriptive details on challenges learners face when using English as MoI. The third section, Section C, seeks suggestions on appropriate strategies for the improvement of academic performance of ESL learners whilst maintaining or improving marketability of youth within South Africa and abroad. Demographic data was requested in Section D as an easy format for the completion of the questionnaire. This was ranked last based on the understanding that placing them at the beginning “gives the questionnaire the initial appearance of a routine form, and the person receiving it may not be motivated to complete it” (Babbie & Mouton, 2006, p. 243).

(ii) Operationalisation

Questionnaire (see attached [Appendix E](#)) was administered to 75 grade 12 isiZulu speaking learners that were chosen as part of the sample population as per random numbers table (see Appendix D). The assistance of the Principals and educators were

sought in the actual administration of the questionnaires to the learners. The questionnaires were accompanied by covering letters, attached as **Appendix B & C**, which sets out the purpose of the research, the assurance of confidentiality, and other ethical issues. Respondents put completed questionnaires into A4 envelopes (provided), sealed them and deposited these into boxes provided. These boxes were collected on a stipulated date. Request for assistance from the principal and educators in the completion of the questionnaire by learners were with the express understanding that the officials, whilst encouraging learners to complete the questionnaire, should desist from assisting learners in the completion thereof. The questionnaire is an appropriate method in this research as it is considered least time consuming because it enjoys the capacity to be administered without the researcher. Most importantly, questionnaires are also the least threatening to respondents, especially learners.

However, only 60 out of 75 questionnaires were completed and returned, yielding a return rate of 80%. The return rate of 80% of the completed questionnaires is considered excellent and therefore may be used for scientific deductions. Most authors on quantitative research agree that a return rate of 50 % is already scientifically acceptable (WHO). This also implies that generalisations may be made for a bigger population. However, in light of the fact that this research was of limited scope and the linguistic and racial heterogeneity of the population in SA, the researcher maintained focus only on the isiZulu learners in KZN and did not nor envisages engaging in larger generalisations regarding the whole population.

b) Interviews

(i) Motivation and design

Interviews serve as an additional means of gathering information by providing access to what is “inside a person’s head” (Cohen et al., 2001, p. 268) to make it possible to measure what a person knows. Interviews also allows for clarification and common understanding of meanings that provide “an opportunity to capture the deeper interpretations of issues” (Dorasamy, 2005, p. 42) by educators using English as MoI with ESL learners. The focus of interviews was to investigate whether educators’ perceptions on English as MoI with ESL learners correlates with the learners’

perceptions and the demands for academic performance. It was also used to solicit information on how educators' competence in the use of English as MoI impacted on the academic performance of ESL learners. Interviews provide fertile grounds to capture the rich diversity of experiences of educators discussing "their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view" (Cohen et al., 2001, p. 267). Also, access to events that cannot be observed directly, as with happenings in the past is facilitated through interviews (Burns, 1997, p. 332). This can be ferreted through "probe for information and obtain data that often have not been foreseen" (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989, p. 166). By allowing the respondent maximum freedom of expression, "ample and often unexpected information emerges" (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989, p. 167). Whilst interviews present the interviewee "with broad freedom of expression and elaboration" (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989, p. 167), Greeff in De Vos et al., (2005, p. 294), citing Field and Morse (1994, p. 66) warn that it is "important to minimise the dross rate, or the amount of irrelevant information in the interview". Greeff recommends the best strategy for "minimising the dross rate is to prepare several open-ended questions before the interview" (De Vos et al., 2005, p. 294) suggesting semi-structured interview process consisting of "specific and defined questions determined beforehand" (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989, p. 167). Thus the interview schedule (see [Appendix D](#)) focused on answering the research questions to avoid "superfluous information" and "data overload" that might have compromised the "efficiency and power" of the researcher's analysis (Huysamen, 2001, p. 89 in Govender, 2011, p. 97).

Focus group, semi-structured interviews, being useful "when the time to collect information is limited" (Creswell, 2008, p. 226) is more flexible (Burns, 1997, p. 330; De Vos et al., 2005, p. 296; Seliger & Shohamy, 1989, p. 166) provide direction to the interview (De Vos, et.al., 2005, p. 296; Seliger & Shohamy, 1989, p. 167). Focus group interviews, enabling the collection of data from a "shared understanding" perspective, is advantageous "when the interaction among interviewees will likely yield the best information and when interviewees are similar to and cooperative with each other" (Creswell, 2008, p. 226). Another advantage of focus group interview according to Strauss (2008, p. 50) is that "one subject's experience stimulated the memory of the other subject". Strauss (2008, p. 50) citing Arksey (1996) states that joint interviewing "produces more complete data as interviewees fill each other's gaps and memory

lapses”. Given that the educators interviewed in this study included predominantly African educators, who are English second language speakers, focus group interviews allowed the “subject with stronger communication skills was able to aid the weaker in expressing himself in the foreign language, English” (Strauss, 2008, p. 50).

(ii) Operationalisation

Since the idea of interviews is to garner further information on the same topic but from a different sub-set of the sample population, 5 educators from each of the three schools, using English as MoI with ESL learners in the FET band at schools, who are accountable for the academic performance of learners in these schools, were interviewed. As interviews may prove time-consuming, educators from each school were subjected to a focus-group semi-structured interview that was scheduled for and held after school hours in a quiet classroom at school. The permission of respondents was sought for all interviews to be tape-recorded (see [Appendix C](#)). Furthermore, as suggested in De Vos et al., (2002) and with the express permission of the interviewees, observational notes on non-verbal expressions such as gestures, facial expressions and general body language together with paraverbal impressions such as intonation and tone of voice (Henning, Van Rensburg, & Smit, 2004, p. 73) were also made during the interviews. These additional notes provided indications to the researcher on whether participants’ were comfortable or not on the questions posed. This process helped in the data analysis process.

Through interviews, it was also intended to seek educators’ submission on emerging trends on language policy and its impact on the academic performance of ESL learners.

c) Observation

(i) Motivation and design

Vidich & Lyman, quoting Norman Denzin (1989) advise ethnographers that “they must first immerse themselves in the lives of their subjects and, after achieving a deep understanding of these through rigorous effort, produce a contextualized reproduction

and interpretation of the stories told by the subjects” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 42). This entails qualitative observation occurring “in naturalistic setting without using pre-determined categories of measurement or response” (Mertens, 1998, p. 317). Observation as a strategy presents opportunities “to gather ‘live’ data from ‘live’ situations” (Cohen et al., 2001 p. 305). This research is therefore “interested in observing people’s behaviours as they naturally occur in terms that appear to be meaningful to the people involved” (Mertens, 1998, p. 317) to establish their communicative levels in the use of English conversationally. Observations further enable the researcher to

Understand the context of programmes ... to see things that might otherwise be unconsciously missed, to discover things that participants might not freely talk about ... to move beyond perception-based data (Cohen et al., 2001 p. 305)

“Participant observation will be used to interact with the participants while collecting data from them” (Mertens, 1998, p. 317).

(ii) Operationalisation

As a member of the teacher development directorate in the KZN Department of Education, mandated with the professional development of educators, getting to sit-in during lessons proved insightful. This endeavour was to gain first-hand insight into the actual use of English as MoI with ESL learners in the classroom. This elucidated the level of English usage by both the educators and learners in their daily interaction with the curriculum.

Furthermore, with the permission of the principal (see [Appendix C](#)), the researcher was immersed with learners during breaks to observe, as unobtrusively as possible; the communicative dialogues of inter-group and intra-group of learners. The observation was merely to “listen, instead, to the plural voices of those Othered” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 75). Its exposé, triangulated with the data from the other two data collection instruments, helps unearth “the blurred boundaries ‘between’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 72) to “reproduce a contextualized reproduction and interpretation of the stories told by the subjects” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 42).

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis entailed seeking patterns of responses and determining causal connections of responses to provide solid descriptive narratives of respondents' perspectives on English as MoI and its impact on the academic performance of ESL learners. The heuristic objective of discovering patterns or relationships of English as MoI and its impact on academic performance to SL learners, acted as compass to the collection of data which needed to be reduced to an intelligible and interpretable form from which conclusions can be drawn (Seliger and Shohamy, 1989, p. 29 and De Vos et al., 2005, p. 28). The data collected for analysis in this research consisted of:

- The questionnaire responses
- The tape-recordings of interviews and field notes
- Observation notes on classroom interactions among learners and with educators and ground observations of learner interactions.

In order to understand how various factors interfaced with learner performance, a mixed method approach using a snap shot case study, and ethnographic study methods was utilized to study the characteristics of a group in a real-world (Nunan, 1992, p. 55). According to Creswell and Clark (2007, p. 168), mixed methods research involves “the collection, analysis, and mixing of both quantitative and qualitative data ... This approach assumes that both types of data will result in a better understanding of the research problem than one data type alone could produce”.

Before actual data analysis was undertaken, a preliminary exploratory analysis of data was pursued through immersion into data in its entirety “to obtain a general sense of the data, memoing ideas ... considering whether you need more data” (Creswell, 2008, p. 250).

Quantitative data from the questionnaire were analysed using the Predictive Analytic Software (PASW) version 18.0 and the grouped frequency distribution table. Descriptive statistics describes the organising and summarising of quantitative data. Tabular presentation helps to reduce data to “an intelligible and interpretable form”; providing foundations for more sophisticated analysis” (De Vos et al., 2005, p. 218 –

222). Given the risk that a relatively small percentage of respondents may choose the two extreme responses to Likert scale or rank order questions, the two ends of the range of variations may be combined or collapsed (Babbie & Mouton, 2006, pp. 428 - 429). This is necessary to avoid distorted interpretation of data.

From these tabular data, the following graphical representations were prepared using Statgraphics Centurion 15.1 (2006) and Microsoft Excel 2003:

- Bar charts, being either horizontal or vertical bars, with various levels of complexity, (Willemse, 2009, pp. 29-34)
- Pie charts. Widely used as divisions between people/groups/spending (Willemse, 2009, pp. 34-35)
- Cross-tabulations: Data resulting from observations made on two different related categorical variables (bivariate) can be summarised using a table, known as a two way frequency table or contingency table (Willemse, 2009, p. 28).
- Linear regression:- Linear correlation is an associated degree of measure between two interval variables. The level and the direction of any relationship between the perception and expectation variables are therefore described by the correlation coefficient calculated by correlating the two means of the variables. The Pearson's r-value gives an indication as to the strength of the relationship between the variables. The closer values are to ± 1 , the stronger the relationship (both positive and negative). The closer the value is to 0, the weaker the relationship (Lind, Marchal, & Mason, 2004, pp. 457-460).

These graphic presentations help us to “comprehend the essential features of frequency distribution” & helps with comparative analysis as well (De Vos et al., 2005, p. 227). Furthermore, this aided in making decisions about hypothesized states of the world, which therefore inherently implied drawing inferences from qualitative data collected and analyzed. In qualitative research one seeks to “tell someone else's story” (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, & Delport, 2003, p. 318), which is why the “researcher should be attentive to words and phrases in respondents' own vocabularies that capture the meaning of what they do or say” (Poggenpoel in Strydom, Fouché, Poggenpoel, & Schurink, 1998, p. 337). In drawing inferences on the causes and effects of English as MoI on the academic performance of ESL learners; acknowledging that one's behaviour is “the product of your personal willpower or the product of forces and

factors in the world that you cannot control and may not even recognize?” (Babbie, 1995, p. 64); the deterministic model, as enumerated by Babbie (1995, pp. 64-67) was used.

According to the deterministic model, people’s actions are as a result of something they did not, themselves control or choose” (Babbie, 1995, p. 65). People’s actions, it is claimed, are propelled by forces such as childhood experiences, inherited religious affiliations, customs and traditions and “similar factors they neither controlled nor were even aware of” (Babbie, 1995, p. 65). In the context of this study, as expatiated later under thematic discussions in chapter 4, use of English as MoI was beyond the control of learners so were the other factors such as teacher competence, parents’ aspirations, culture and traditions and their economic aspirations. In other words, factors affecting learners’ academic performance are caused by factors other than learners’ free choice. “It is further assumed that those factors can be discovered and perhaps modified” (Babbie, 1995, p. 65). Of course, dissident view holds that learners wilfully chose English as MoI (given such choices in SASA). The problem with this view, according to Babbie (1995, p. 65), is that “reasons have reasons”. Why did learners choose English as MoI against their mother tongue? Responses to this question are contained in the thematic discussions that follow in chapter 4. The ultimate aim of this study is that the academic performance of ESL learners “can be traced back through a long and complex chain” (Babbie, 1995, p. 65) that explains the impact of English as MoI on the academic performance of ESL learners.

The deterministic model was typically based on a probabilistic causal model whereby the researcher, based on empirical evidence supporting the idiographic model of explanation, ascribed certain factors as contributing factors to the impact of English as MoI on the academic performance of ESL learners. However, where compelling considerations were identified that impacted on the academic performance of ESL learners and without need for exhaustive enumeration, the nomothetic model of explanation was also favoured (Babbie, 1995, pp. 66-67). “The goal of the nomothetic model of explanation is to provide the greatest amount of explanation with the fewest number of causal variable to uncover general patterns of cause and effect” (Babbie, 1995, p. 67). The basic simplicity of this model “calls for a balancing of a high degree of explanation with a small number of considerations being specified” (Babbie, 1995, p.

68). The task of the observer therefore, according to Hazelrigg (2009), is to infer what that reality must be. Observations provided first-hand opportunities to see what happened in schools with the additional avenue of researcher probing subjects and others for their recollections, points of view, and interpretations (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 487). Inference is defined as a process of arriving at a conclusion (Hazelrigg, 2009). The central question was qualitative in nature and therefore necessitated open-ended questions in the questionnaire, observations and interviews to address these. Thus, throughout the processes of observation, interviews and analysis of open-ended questions in the questionnaire, and whilst acknowledging the inescapable fallibility of inferences, inferences of meanings were automatically drawn of what was observed. However, assiduous and self-conscious practices of adherence to scientific research dictum: “values of empiricism, experimentalism, scepticism and publicity and through classification and measurement” (Hazelrigg, 2009, pp. 65-68) and repeated multiple observation and triangulation of data methods, were employed in drawing of conclusions. The aim of this rigorous process was to proffer information “with enough discriminating power to give confidence that our methodical operations ... are consistently and sufficiently supported” (Hazelrigg, 2009, p. 69). This was important as the aim was to “produce information that discriminates with increasing specificity the kinds and of quantities of ‘things’ that populate our realities of experiences” (Hazelrigg, 2009, p. 68).

Since this study was not interested in variables only, but also the relationships that may exist between variables, both univariate and bivariate analysis was also considered most appropriate for descriptive statistics. Univariate analysis is concerned with measures of central tendency and measures of dispersion. The most appropriate measure of central tendency for interval data is the mean and the most appropriate measure of dispersion for interval data is the standard deviation. Bivariate analysis concerns the measurement of two variables at a time (Lind, Marchal, & Mason, 2004, p. 6). Descriptive statistics is useful as it summarises results for an experiment, thereby also allowing for more constructive research after more detailed analysis. Descriptive data analysis aims to describe the data the investigating the distribution of scores on each variable, and by determining whether the scores on different variables are related to each other. Babbie and Mouton (2006, p. 427) maintain that bivariate and multivariate analysis are concerned primarily with explanations. In bivariate analysis, according to Babbie

(1998, p. 378 – 383), Babbie and Mouton (2006, p. 430 – 433) and De Vos et al., (2005, p. 238) the researcher is interested in:

- Whether relationships between two variables really exist?
- If so, in what direction does it lie – positive or negative?
- If it exists, how strong is that positive or negative relationship?

The qualitative approach usually will not include numerical analysis (description using numbers may be difficult). Solving problems is likely to require the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches (Willemse, 2009, p. 6). Therefore, the analysis and interpretation of quantitative data were infused with qualitative data to present a report that depict the rich, thick and diverse agents at play when using English as MoI and its impact on the academic performance of ESL learners. This process of data triangulation for a holistic analysis and interpretation helps the process to maintain credibility, accuracy, representation and authority of the research.

Qualitative data from interviews, observations and open-ended questions in the questionnaires, were analyzed using the emic and the etic approach in getting rich and thick descriptions based on “categories of meanings of people being studied” and other phenomena from researcher’s own concepts and relevant literature review (Poggenpoel in Strydom et al., 1998). All qualitative data were, through a process of analytic induction, subjected to a system of coding to sort data and to uncover underlying meanings in the text to bring both the “central and peripheral referents to the researcher’s attention” (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, Poggenpoel, & Schurink, 1998, p. 341). Creswell (2008, p. 251) describes coding, as a process of “segmenting and labelling text to form descriptions and broad themes in the data” that allows for data filtration into image segments, examination for overlap, redundancy and “to collapse these codes into broad themes”. Babbie and Mouton (2006, p. 412) proposes that coding is assigning numerical value to qualitative data. In addition, Babbie and Mouton (2006) argue that conducting quantitative analysis of data obtained qualitatively, forces one to engage in coding, e.g. open-ended questions which are non-numerical responses, must be coded before analysis. Coding, on the basis of overall judgement, will be on the latent content of the qualitative data, i.e. “its underlying meaning” (Babbie & Mouton, 2006, p. 388). This process acts as a sieve to “select

specific data to use and disregard other data that do not provide evidence” (Creswell, 2008, p. 251).

Data so gathered were crystallized in keeping with Tashakkori’s and Teddlie’s (1998) view of crystallization which creates ever-changing images and pictures of reality. Crystallization thus deconstructs the traditional idea of validity, for now there can be no single or triangulated truth. Consequently, the processes of coding and categorisation of data entailed prolonged engagement, persistent observation and the use of triangulation techniques combined with peer debriefing and thick descriptions. It must be appreciated that in qualitative research, both processes of observations and analysis are interwoven (Babbie, 1998, p. 297), analogous to inductive logic. This inductive logic involves looking for similarities or norms of behaviour or dissimilarities of participant behaviour. If similarities are found then these are considered universals. If behaviours are essentially universal, then the question ‘why should that be the case?’ is raised. If behaviour is dissimilar or different or deviant, then again the question, ‘why?’ (Babbie, 1998, p. 297). These questions forage answers through observations and probes of participants. This contributed to the trustworthiness of this research findings and information. Hence, qualitative and quantitative data were firstly, prepared, explored, analysed, represented separately, and then secondly, the two data sets were merged, transformed and compared to examine similarities which resulted in thematic discussions (Creswell & Clark, 2007, p. 137). This approach of mixed methods allows the researcher to “report a statistical result ... and then follow it up with specific quotes or information about a theme that confirms or disconfirms the quantitative results (or the order could be reversed)” (Creswell & Clark, 2007, p. 140).

Qualitative data were classified into categories that corresponded with those in the questionnaire. Category A dealt with attitudinal questions on learners’ perceptions and opinions on schooling and English as MoI whereas category B reviewed the impact of English as MoI on their academic performance and descriptive details on challenges learners face when using English as MoI. Emergent issues through suggestions on appropriate strategies for the improvement of academic performance of ESL learners were classified as category C. Category D contained demographic data that were infused into the flow of the report throughout the interpretations and report writing.

Observational data and field notes were also subjected to a system of coding, sorting and classification into categories as identified for interview techniques.

Furthermore, the following statistical analyses, using SPSS Statistics 17.0 (Release 23 August 2008) and Statgraphics Centurion 15.1 (2006), were conducted to enhance reliability of findings:

The two most important aspects of precision are **reliability** and **validity**. Reliability refers to the reproducibility of a measurement and is “the extent to which the instrument yields consistent results when the characteristics being measured hasn’t changed” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010, p. 93). Reliability is quantified simply by taking several measurements on the same subjects. Poor reliability degrades the precision of a single measurement and reduces the ability to track changes in measurements in experimental studies. Reliability refers to the property of a measurement instrument that causes it to give similar results for similar inputs.

Validity refers to the agreement between the value of a measurement and its true value. Validity is quantified by comparing one’s measurements with values that are as close to the true values as possible. Poor validity also degrades the precision of a single measurement, and it reduces the ability to characterize relationships between variables in descriptive studies.

- **Cronbach’s Alpha:** Cronbach's alpha is a measure of reliability. More specifically, alpha is a lower bound for the true reliability of the survey. Mathematically, reliability is defined as the proportion of the variability in the responses to the survey that is the result of differences in the respondents. That is, answers to a reliable survey will differ because respondents have different opinions, not because the survey is confusing or has multiple interpretations. The computation of Cronbach's alpha is based on the number of items on the survey (k) and the ratio of the average inter-item covariance to the average item variance (SPSS). Technically speaking, Cronbach's alpha is not a statistical test - it is a coefficient of reliability (or consistency) (Introduction to SAS. UCLA: Academic Technology Services).

- **Factor Analysis:** Factor analysis attempts to identify underlying variables, or factors, that explain the pattern of correlations within a set of observed variables. Factor analysis is often used in data reduction to identify a small number of factors that explain most of the variance that is observed in a much larger number of manifest variables. Factor analysis can also be used to generate hypotheses regarding causal mechanisms or to screen variables for subsequent analysis (for example, to identify co-linearity prior to performing a linear regression analysis) (SPSS).

Factor analysis is used to discover patterns among the variations in values of several variables (Babbie, 1995, pp. 427-428). This is done essentially through the generation of artificial dimensions (factors) that correlate highly with several of the real variables and that are independent of one another. The output of a factor analysis generates [1] “observed relations among variables plus the correlations between each variable and each factor – called the factor loadings” and [2] “a series of factors with appropriate factor loadings” (Babbie, 1995, p. 429). Researcher should then “determine the meaning of a given factor”, on the basis of those variables that load highly on it, with the understanding that such factors have “no reference to the meaning of variables, only to their empirical associations” (Babbie, 1995, p. 429). Factor analysis is used to “examine the correlations among a number of variables and identify clusters of highly interrelated variables that reflect underlying themes, or factors, within the data” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001, p. 278).

With reference to the Appendix H: Certain components divided into finer components. This is explained thematically in chapter 4 in the rotated component matrix.

- **Hypotheses tests: p-values and statistical significance:** *Inferential statistical analysis* is concerned with the testing of hypothesis. The independent t-test is the most appropriate parametric test for a comparison of the means. This tests any significant difference between the two variables. Primary data was collated and analysed and comments and concluding discussions are thereafter based on the results obtained (Lind, Marchal, & Mason, 2004, pp. 348-351). Inferential statistical analysis allows the researcher to draw conclusions about populations from sample data. The most important application in the social sciences of the statistical theory around sampling distributions has been significance testing or statistical hypothesis

testing. The researcher is interested in the outcome of a study on the impact of service delivery.

- The traditional approach to reporting a result requires a statement of statistical significance. A **p-value** is generated from a **test statistic**. A significant result is indicated with " $p < 0.05$ " (Lind, Marchal, & Mason, 2004, p. 347). The choice of the value 0.05 as the level of significance is in fact totally arbitrary, but has become enshrined as a standard in statistics. All Likert scale questions were grouped together in order to compute the correlation between variables. **Appendix I** shows that marked correlations are either significant at $p < 0.01$ or at $p < 0.05$.
- **Pearson Chi-square test:** A chi-square test is any statistical hypothesis test in which the test statistic has a chi-square distribution when the null hypothesis is true, or any in which the probability distribution of the test statistic (assuming the null hypothesis is true) can be made to approximate a chi-square distribution as closely as desired by making the sample size large enough. Specifically, a chi-square test for independence evaluates statistically significant *differences* between proportions for two or more groups in a data set (Willemse, 2009).
- **T-Test:** The t-test is a parametric test and it makes the following assumptions:
 1. The level of measurement of the dependent variable must be at least interval.
 2. The dependent variable is normally distributed in the population.
 3. The variances of the samples are not significantly different (Kerr, Hall, & Kozuh, 2004, p. 61).

3.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Although the research is underpinned by universal norms and standards regarding English as MoI, the findings based on data from the chosen sample are not easily generalisable to the general South African context. In fact, Vidich and Lyman in Denzin & Lincoln (1994, p. 42), make a cogent point that “an ethnographic report will present an integrated synthesis of experience and theory. ... It builds on native interpretations and in fact simply articulates what is implicit in those interpretations”. This is encapsulated succinctly by Greene, who argues that knowledge claims “are not

universal, but rather time and place bound; are not certain but rather probabilistic and contestable” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 535).

It is also argued that knowledge is local, situated in a local culture embodying stereotypes and ideologies, race, class and gender, and are embedded in organizational sites (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 204). Furthermore, Holstein & Gubrium argue that “interpretations of lived experience ... is shaped by context that may be relatively fixed, that mediate reality production accordingly” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 270). Vidich and Lyman, express scepticism about “the possibility of making valid generalizations in an ethnographically pluralist society” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 42). This holds true within the South African context where 12 official languages are constitutionally recognized. Vaughan cited by Vidich & Lyman in Denzin & Lincoln, (1994, p. 42) regarding generalisability of ethnographic research findings, proposes an idiosyncratic approach based on “a world that is ontologically absurd but always meaningful to those who live in it”. However, this does not necessarily mean that the findings are so idiosyncratic that it has no applicability to other contexts. Quite the opposite, it is hoped that through ethnographic research, discoveries will “lead to a greater understanding of the modern world” by “understanding how this historical moment universalizes itself in the lives of interesting individuals” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 42). Tentative conclusions arrived at from this research may provide “conceptual framework for further research” (Babbie, 1998, p. 298).

Thus, whilst generalisability of findings and recommendations of this research will be restricted to this particular cluster, such information provide new or variant lenses through which other research data with similar demographics may be examined.

3.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided the framework for this research study. It outlined and provided relevant motivation for the research design, orientation, sampling, ethical consideration and data collection methods elected. The processes of piloting, administering of questionnaires, interview processes and observations were discussed. This chapter also highlighted some of the limitations of this research study. Finally, in subscribing to the

tenets of credibility, consistency, accuracy and validity of the findings, this chapter provided an in-depth review of different data analysis strategies.

Chapter four presents data in graphical form together with interpretations infused with theory on the impact of English as MoI on the academic performance of ESL learners.