

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN MOTHER TONGUE TEACHING AND LEARNING
IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE: A CASE STUDY OF THE MAN'OMBE CIRCUIT,
LIMPOPO PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA

By

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DECLARATION

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Title: The parental role in mother tongue teaching in the Foundation Phase

- I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.
- I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that its originality within the accepted requirements for originality.
- I also declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at UNISA for another qualification or at any other higher educational institution.

Signature: Kubayi H.A

Date

DEDICATION

- I dedicate this study to Almighty God, for granting me the wisdom, strength, and grace to persevere through this challenging but rewarding journey.
- To my beloved children, Ammu and Maanda, thank you for shaping who I am and reminding me of the power of hope and faith.
- I also honour the memory of my late father, Mr. Mavhaise Chief Jackson Kubayi, and express heartfelt gratitude to my mother, Mrs. Miluva Risisa Kubayi, for nurturing my love for education from a young age.
- Lastly, to my siblings, your encouragement has been a constant source of motivation in pursuing my goals.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of parents in supporting the teaching and learning of the mother tongue in the Foundation Phase within the Man'ombe Circuit, Mopani District, Limpopo Province, South Africa. The primary aim was to investigate how parental involvement influences the development of learners' language skills in their home language and how it impacts their academic performance. Through a qualitative research approach, the study employed interviews and surveys with parents, teachers, and school administrators to gather data on parental practices, challenges, and perceptions regarding mother tongue instruction.

The findings indicate that active parental involvement, such as storytelling, reading, and conversing in the home language, is essential for reinforcing classroom learning. However, barriers like limited resources, a lack of awareness about mother tongue education, and communication challenges between parents and teachers were identified. The study emphasizes the need for improved collaboration between schools and parents, better access to culturally relevant teaching materials, and professional development for teachers to engage parents effectively.

The study concludes by recommending that parents adopt more proactive strategies to support their children's language development at home and that educators and policymakers work together to create an environment that fosters mother tongue education. Future research is suggested to focus on the use of technology to support home-language learning and on the long-term impact of parental involvement on academic achievement.

KEYWORDS/PHRASES: parental role, learning, inclusive education, Foundation Phase, mother tongue, teaching, challenges, learners

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations and acronyms were used in the thesis:

AET	The African Educational Trust
BEA	Bilingual Education Act
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
DoBE	Department of Basic Education
ELP	English language proficiency
FP	Foundation Phase
GPE	The Global Partnership for Education
L1	First Language / Mother Tongue / Home Language
LABE	Literacy and Adult Basic Education
LiEP	Language in Education Policy
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
MKOs	More knowledgeable others
MTE	Mother Tongue Education
NEPA	National Education Policy Act
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development
PPDP	Professional Parental Development Programs
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
SA	South Africa
SALP	South African Language Policy
LIE	Limpopo Institute of Education
US	United States

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CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

South African primary school educators continue to face challenges in involving parents in the teaching and learning of the mother tongue (Mabaso-Nkuna, Mabasa & Valoyi, 2024). Notable progress has been achieved through national language-in-education policies, which mandate mother tongue instruction in the Foundation Phase and encourage the development of localized teaching materials. These initiatives have laid a strong foundation for inclusive learning environments that celebrate linguistic diversity. Learners who begin schooling in their home language have shown improved literacy, stronger cultural identity, and greater ease in acquiring a second language such as English (Mashige, Cekiso & Meyiwa, 2019).

Despite these advances, parental participation remains limited. Many parents feel marginalized due to socio-economic constraints, lack of time, and restricted access to school meetings, which deprives them of the knowledge and skills needed to support policy implementation at home (Nishanthi, 2020; Katukula & progress and teacher practices, this study focuses specifically on how parents contribute or fail to contribute to reinforcing classroom instruction at home. By examining parental practices, challenges, and perceptions, the study seeks to identify the extent to which parental involvement enhances learners' competency in their mother tongue and supports broader academic achievement. The gap addressed here lies in the disconnect between policy progress and parental engagement, a critical dimension for sustaining inclusive, effective mother tongue education.

South African primary school educators continue to face challenges in involving parents in the teaching and learning of the mother tongue (Mabaso-Nkuna,

Mabasa & Valoyi, 2024). While notable progress has been achieved through the implementation of native language policies such as the inclusion of mother tongue instruction in the Foundation Phase curriculum and the development of localized teaching materials parental participation remains limited. Many parents feel marginalized due to their inability to attend school meetings, which restricts their access to vital information, knowledge, and skills needed to adapt these policies to their children's learning needs (Nishanthi, 2020).

Further, systemic issues such as insufficient teacher training, limited curriculum development, inadequate implementation strategies, weak community and parental involvement, and resource deficiencies have been highlighted as barriers (Lin & Spaulding, 2022). Although the Department of Education in Limpopo Province, together with non-governmental organizations, has initiated programs to strengthen mother tongue education, these efforts have not fully addressed the disconnect between schools and families.

Nyambe, 2021). Systemic barriers, including insufficient teacher training, weak curriculum development, inadequate implementation strategies, and resource deficiencies, further hinder effective collaboration between schools and families (Lin & Spaulding, 2022). While the Department of Education in Limpopo Province and non-governmental organizations have initiated programs to strengthen mother tongue education, these efforts have not fully bridged the gap between policy and parental engagement. This study, therefore, investigates the parental role in mother tongue teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase within the Man'ombe Circuit, Mopani District, Limpopo Province. Unlike prior research that has largely emphasized policy.

1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Although South Africa has made progress in promoting mother tongue instruction through policy frameworks and localized curriculum initiatives, parental

involvement in supporting these efforts remains inconsistent. Research shows that while learners benefit academically and socially when taught in their home language, systemic barriers, such as limited resources, insufficient teacher training, and weak school–parent collaboration, continue to undermine the effectiveness of these policies.

This study is positioned within the Man’ombe Circuit, Mopani District, where the researcher recognizes both the potential of mother tongue education to foster inclusive learning and the persistent gap in parental engagement. The rationale rests on the view that parental involvement is not merely supportive but integral to sustaining learners’ language development and bridging policy with practice. By focusing on parents’ roles, practices, and challenges, the study seeks to illuminate how their participation can enhance mother tongue competency and, by extension, learners’ overall academic achievement.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Existing studies demonstrate that parental engagement in mother tongue instruction during the Foundation Phase benefits learners academically, socially, and emotionally (Halimah & Margaretha, 2020; Davis-Kean, Tighe & Waters, 2021). Evidence shows that parental support enhances language competency, improves school attitudes, and strengthens proficiency in both the home language and additional languages (Katukula & Nyambe, 2021). However, research also highlights persistent barriers: socio-economic constraints, limited parental education, and lack of time or resources, which often result in low parental involvement and poor learner outcomes (Wildmon, Anthony & Kamau, 2023).

While progress has been made in policy development and recognition of the importance of mother tongue education, most studies have focused on teacher challenges, curriculum limitations, or broad systemic issues. Less attention has been given to the specific role of parents in reinforcing classroom instruction at home and how their practices directly shape learners’ language development and

academic success. This gap is particularly evident in rural contexts such as the Man'ombe Circuit, Mopani District, where parental engagement remains underexplored despite its potential to strengthen inclusive learning environments. The researcher positions this study as an effort to problematise the disconnect between policy progress and parental involvement.

1.4 LITERATURE / SCHOLARSHIP REVIEW

To understand how other scholars had theorized and conceptualized challenges related to the role parents played in teaching and learning the mother tongue in the Foundation Phase, a range of literature sources was examined in this section. The findings and recommendations obtained were included in the review of literature, and the relevant literature supported the framework of the current study.

This study focused on the parental role in mother tongue teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase in the Man'ombe Circuit of the Mopani District, Limpopo Province, South Africa. Teachers faced difficulties due to the lack of parental involvement in mother tongue teaching and learning. The review included information on the challenges teachers encountered in this context.

1.4.1 Theoretical framework

This study is grounded in Lev Vygotsky's social constructivist theory, which emphasizes that learning is a socially mediated process shaped by interaction, language, and culture (Vygotsky, 1986, cited in Ghaedi et al., 2020). According to this perspective, knowledge is not passively received but actively constructed through collaboration with more knowledgeable others, such as parents and teachers, who provide scaffolding to support learners' development.

The theory highlights four essential elements relevant to this study (Mthombeni & Ogunnubi, 2021)

- **Learning as a social process** – collaboration and communication are central to knowledge acquisition
- **Knowledge construction** – learners actively build understanding based on prior experiences.
- **Active learning** – engagement and exploration foster deeper comprehension.
- **Language and discourse** – language serves as the medium for thought, learning, and cultural identity.

Applying these principles to the Foundation Phase, parental involvement becomes critical. Parents provide linguistic input, cultural context, and emotional support that reinforce classroom instruction. Teachers, in turn, create inclusive environments where scaffolding and learner-centered practices enable children to integrate home-based experiences with formal learning. This alignment between parental engagement and teacher facilitation is particularly important in mother tongue instruction, where language development is closely tied to identity formation and academic success.

The relevance of Vygotsky's framework lies in its ability to explain how parental involvement functions as a form of scaffolding that strengthens learners' cognitive and linguistic growth. By situating parental roles within a constructivist paradigm, this study underscores the view that mother tongue education is most effective when schools and families collaborate to support learners' holistic development.

1.5 THE AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

By conducting this research, the researcher wants to achieve the following:

1.5.1 Main research objective

To investigate the function of parents in the foundation phase classrooms of mother language instruction and education in the Man'ombe Circuit, Mopani District, Limpopo Province.

1.5.2 Sub-research objectives

- To examine the advantages of mother tongue instruction in Foundation Phase classrooms for literacy development.
- To investigate how mother tongue instruction is implemented in Foundation Phase classrooms and its potential to expand literacy.
- To explore how parents' involvement supports learners' performance in mother tongue teaching and learning during the Foundation Phase.

1.5.3 The main research question

How does parental involvement influence the teaching and learning of the mother tongue in the Foundation Phase within the Man'ombe Circuit, Mopani District, Limpopo Province, South Africa?

1.5.4 Sub research questions

- In what ways does mother tongue instruction contribute to literacy development among Foundation Phase learners?
- How does learning in the mother tongue during the Foundation Phase influence learners' acquisition of English and other languages?
- How does parental involvement support and enhance learners' performance in mother tongue teaching and learning during the Foundation Phase?

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

1.6.1 Introduction

The research procedure outlines the systematic approach used to gather, analyze, and interpret data to address the study's central problem. This study adopts a qualitative research design, which is appropriate for exploring the nuanced experiences, perceptions, and practices of parents and educators in the Foundation Phase. The methodology ensures that the research questions focused on parental involvement in mother tongue teaching and learning are addressed with accuracy, reliability, and contextual sensitivity.

Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews and surveys with parents, teachers, and school administrators in the Man'ombe Circuit, Mopani District. These instruments are designed to elicit participants' perspectives on:

- The benefits of mother tongue instruction for literacy and academic development.
- How parental involvement supports or hinders learners' performance.
- The challenges parents face in engaging with mother tongue education.

The analysis will employ thematic coding, guided by Vygotsky's social constructivist framework, to identify recurring patterns in parental practices and their impact on learners' language development. This approach ensures that the voices of participants directly inform the findings, while also linking them to the broader theoretical lens.

By focusing on parental support, the procedure is designed to establish what parents are currently doing, what challenges they encounter, and how their involvement can be strengthened to enhance mother tongue instruction in the Foundation Phase. This alignment ensures that the research process remains coherent, purposeful, and directly connected to the study's objectives.

1.6.2 Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, which is most suitable for exploring the lived experiences, perceptions, and practices of parents and educators in relation to mother tongue instruction in the Foundation Phase. Qualitative research emphasizes meaning-making and seeks to understand phenomena in their natural settings, allowing the researcher to capture rich, descriptive data that cannot be reduced to numerical analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). Within this paradigm, the study employs a phenomenological design to investigate how participants experience and interpret parental involvement in mother tongue teaching and learning. Phenomenology is particularly relevant here because it focuses on uncovering the essence of participants' experiences, thereby providing insight into how parental support shapes learners' language development and academic performance (Maree, 2025).

Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews and surveys with parents, teachers, and school administrators in the Man'ombe Circuit, Mopani District. These instruments are designed to elicit participants' perspectives on the benefits of mother tongue instruction, the challenges of implementation, and the role of parental involvement in reinforcing classroom learning. Thematic analysis will be applied to identify recurring patterns and meanings, guided by Vygotsky's social constructivist framework, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction and scaffolding in learning. By grounding the methodology in established qualitative research principles, the study ensures rigor, credibility, and alignment with its objectives of examining parental support in mother tongue education.

1.6.3 Research approach

The term "research approach" encompasses the methods for gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data, including broad assumptions and procedures (Sukmawati, 2023). This scholarship employed a qualitative style, as defined by Creswell (2021), which involves gaining insight into a particular social or human issue by developing a complex, integrated picture through words, reflecting comprehensive participant viewpoints, and taking place within a real-world environment. Qualitative academics aim to comprehend the context of the study, used to discourse queries about experience, meaning, and perspective, classically from the participant's viewpoint (Pandey & Pandey, 2021).

1.6.4 Research design

Pandey and Pandey (2021), Khatri (2020), and Creswell (2021) define the term research design as the process, rationale, or overall plan that outlines how research should be carried out. This study employed a phenomenological research approach, which allows the researcher to convey people's lived experiences from their perspective (Morgan, 2022). This design is representative and helps the researcher obtain the participants' perspectives, making it suitable for exploring and examining how parents contribute to their children's education in varied Foundation Phase classes.

This study employs a qualitative research approach, which is appropriate for exploring the lived experiences and perceptions of parents and educators regarding mother tongue instruction in the Foundation Phase. Qualitative research seeks to understand meaning in context and emphasizes depth over breadth, making it suitable for investigating how parental involvement influences learners' language development and academic outcomes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). Within this paradigm, the study adopts a phenomenological design, which focuses on uncovering the essence of

participants' experiences. Phenomenology is particularly relevant here because it allows the researcher to capture how parents and teachers interpret and make sense of their roles in supporting mother tongue education, thereby aligning directly with the study's objectives (Maree, 2025).

Data will be generated through semi-structured interviews and surveys with parents, teachers, and school administrators in the Man'ombe Circuit, Mopani District. These instruments are designed to elicit rich descriptions of parental practices, challenges, and perceptions, as well as educators' experiences in implementing mother tongue instruction. The analysis will follow a thematic approach, identifying recurring patterns and meanings that reflect the influence of parental involvement on learners' outcomes. By grounding the methodology in established qualitative research principles, the study ensures rigor, credibility, and coherence, while maintaining a clear focus on parental support as the central phenomenon under investigation.

1.6.5 Population

Purposive sampling is a commonly employed methodology that is selected when the objective is to produce new insights and get a comprehensive comprehension of a certain subject (Pandey & Pandey, 2021). To pick the instances that are likely to contain detailed content pertinent to the study, a purposeful sampling method was used in this investigation. The study was conducted in the Man'ombe Circuit of Mopani District, located approximately 120–130 kilometers northeast of Polokwane, where the Limpopo Department of Education head office is situated. The circuit's rural context provides a valuable setting for examining parental involvement in mother tongue instruction, as it reflects both the opportunities and challenges of implementing inclusive education policies outside urban centers. The geographic distance from the provincial head office underscores the importance of local parental support in sustaining effective teaching and learning practices in the Foundation Phase. 724 teachers are working in the 36 primary

schools in the Man'ombe Circuit of the Mopani District in Limpopo Province; 298 of them are men and 426 are women.

1.6.6 Sampling

This study employed a selection of participants who could provide meaningful insights into parental involvement in mother tongue instruction. The sample comprised fifteen participants, including Foundation Phase teachers, parents, and Heads of Department (HODs), drawn from five primary schools within the Man'ombe Circuit, Mopani District. These participants were chosen because they are directly involved in or influence the teaching and learning of the mother tongue in the Foundation Phase and therefore hold valuable perspectives relevant to the research question (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The schools were selected to ensure contextual diversity within the circuit, representing different socio-economic and community settings, rather than through randomization. This approach aligns with the phenomenological design, which prioritizes depth of understanding over representativeness. Including HODs was justified because they oversee curriculum implementation and teacher support and thus provide critical insights into institutional practices that shape parental involvement. Parents and teachers, meanwhile, were included as they are the primary actors in reinforcing mother tongue learning both at home and in classrooms.

Circuit	Schools	Departmental Heads	Teachers	Parents	Total
Man'ombe Circuit	A	1	1	1	3
	B	1	1	1	3
	C	1	1	1	3
	D	1	1	1	3

	E	1	1	1	3
TOTAL		5	5	5	15

Table 1.1: The sample of the study

1.6.7 Data collection instruments

The study employed semi-structured interviews, surveys, and document review to generate data that directly addressed the research questions. Semi-structured interviews were justified because they allowed participants, parents, teachers, and Heads of Department, to share their lived experiences and perspectives in depth, consistent with the phenomenological design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). This instrument provided flexibility to probe further into issues of parental involvement, challenges, and perceptions, thereby capturing rich qualitative data.

This instrument provided descriptive insights into participants' views on parental support and mother tongue instruction, strengthening the credibility of the findings through triangulation. Document review (such as school policy documents and departmental guidelines) was included to contextualize the data and verify consistency between the findings of the study, enabling the researcher to capture both depth and breadth of parental involvement in mother tongue teaching and learning.

1.6.7.1 Semi-structured interview

Interviews, as described by Morgan (2022), allow the researcher to collect in-depth information by asking participants open-ended and/or closed questions. This method is versatile, enabling the researcher to explore the significance of the responses more thoroughly and gather rich data.

1.6.7.2 Document analysis

Document analysis involves examining public and private records to gather information (Morgan, 2022). In this study, documents such as school development plans, minutes, school policies, rules and regulations, furthermore departmental brochures will be analyzed to acquire experiences into the parental role in educating and learning the first language.

1.6.7.3 Observations

Sukmawati (2023) points out that observation involves the investigator taking arena proceedings on individuals' behaviors, exercises in the examination area. This method was chosen for its appropriateness in analyzing specific attitudes and behaviors in a natural setting.

1.6.7.4 Audio recording

Audio recording enhances the storage of interview data, preserving the participant's voice and original material for later verification (Sukmawati, 2023). This method is used to ensure accurate transcription and data integrity.

1.6.8 Data analysis and interpretation

Data generated from the semi structured interviews and surveys was analyzed using thematic analysis, which is well suited for qualitative studies that seek to identify patterns of meaning across participants' experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). The process began with transcription and familiarization, where the researcher carefully reviewed the interview transcripts and survey responses to gain an overall sense of the data.

Next, coding was applied to categorize significant statements and responses into meaningful units. These codes were then clustered into themes that reflected

recurring ideas about parental involvement, challenges, and the perceived benefits of mother tongue instruction. The researcher employed constant comparison to refine themes, ensuring that they accurately represented participants' perspectives. To enhance trustworthiness, member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary interpretations with selected participants, while an audit trail documented analytic decisions throughout the process.

1.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Guaranteeing the dependability and legitimacy (validity and reliability) of the review is fundamental for precise ends and translations. This study established reliability through credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Creswell, & Baez, 2020).

1.7.1 Credibility

Motulsky (2021) emphasises the importance of credibility in research, stating that it involves ensuring the findings are plausible and trustworthy from the research subjects' perspective.

1.7.1.1 Investing significant time in the field (extended engagement)

Babbie (2020) suggests that researchers should stay in the field until all information is gathered, acquiring an in-depth comprehension of the point as well as the perspectives and cultures of the participants. This fosters rapport and trust, allowing for the collection of rich data until data saturation in the field.

1.7.1.2 Use of heterogeneous sample

According to Babbie (2020), any sample with a variable composition is considered heterogeneous. The heterogeneous sample for this study included both male and female participants as well as younger and older individuals.

1.7.1.3 Use of thick description

A detailed explanation is a detailed explanation of a research phenomenon, providing in-depth justifications for participants' experiences and the context in which they occur (Creswell & Báez, 2020). This helps guarantee the validity and reliability of the study, as it helps convey real-world circumstances and the surrounding contexts.

1.7.1.4 Robotized recording of information.

The specialist guaranteed the legitimacy of the research by recording interviews utilizing a recording device to give precise and complete data.

1.7.1.5 Participant feedback or member validation.

The Motulsky's (2021) statement mandates that member checking is a crucial procedure in research, ensuring participants confirm each other's identities in casual contexts. This study conducted on-the-spot part checks during meetings and information assortment, focusing on participants' word accuracy and accuracy in recording their responses using a tape recorder. This ensures the study's trustworthiness.

1.7.1.6 Promotion of honesty

All research participants had the option to decline requests to take part in the study, as this increased the study's legitimacy. This procedure guaranteed that only individuals who were truly willing to participate and ready to voluntarily provide data were included in the data collection

1.7.2 Transferability

Adaptability, as defined by Allen (2022), refers to the suitability of subjective findings in various settings. The scientist supports adaptability by clearly framing the research setting and basic assumptions, allowing others to determine if the findings apply to different settings.

1.7.3 Dependability

Dependability ensures consistent and replicable research findings (Byerly, 2021). This was achieved through efficient and dependable techniques for data collection, analysis, and presentation.

1.7.4 Conformability

Conformability involves verifying that findings accurately reflect the study topic, rather than the researcher's biases (Muzari, Shava & Shonhiwa, 2022). This was ensured through multiple data-checking approaches and a data audit to assess the likelihood of bias or distortion.

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study investigates the role of parents in supporting mother tongue instruction and learning in the Foundation Phase within the framework of inclusive education. The research seeks to generate insights that will inform the Department of Basic Education (DoBE) about the importance of equipping teachers with inclusive pedagogical training and fostering stronger collaboration with families. By examining parental involvement, the study aims to highlight how home school partnerships can enhance learners' language development, strengthen cultural identity, and improve academic outcomes. To ensure the credibility and reliability of this research, the study was guided by established qualitative research principles.

Credibility was achieved through prolonged engagement with participants, triangulation of data sources (parents, teachers, and Heads of Department), and member checking, where participants were invited to validate the accuracy of the interpretations. Dependability was strengthened by maintaining a clear audit trail of the research process, including documentation of decisions made during data

collection and analysis, following the methodological guidelines of Creswell & Creswell (2018) and Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2018).

Confirmability was ensured by grounding all findings in participants' narratives and avoiding researcher bias through reflexivity, where the researcher consistently reflected on their positionality and influence on the study. Transferability was addressed by providing thick descriptions of the research context, the Man'ombe Circuit in Limpopo Province, so that readers can assess the applicability of findings to similar educational settings. By applying these strategies, the study established trustworthiness and demonstrated rigor in investigating parental involvement in mother tongue instruction within the framework of inclusive education.

1.9 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1.9.1 Overcoming limitations

The study faced constraints such as participant availability, interview scheduling conflicts, and potential participant reluctance. These were addressed by rescheduling interviews and ensuring participants were well-informed and comfortable with the research process.

1.9.2 Delimitations

The research was limited to five selected schools in the Man'ombe Circuit, Limpopo Province, South Africa. The findings may not have been indicative of all primary schools in the Mopani District; however, they provided insights into the role of parents in teaching and learning the native language at the Foundation Phase level.

1.10 CODE OF ETHICS

Ethical considerations, as guided by Suri (2020), informed the research process, ensuring proper conduct and interactions between the researcher and participants. Ethical issues addressed included obtaining authorization to gather data, informed consent, voluntary participation, research integrity, confidentiality, and anonymity.

1.10.1 Authorization to gather data

To conduct this study, formal approval was first sought from the university's Research Ethics Committee, under whose auspices it was carried out. Following that, approval was obtained from the Mopani District office and the principals of the schools themselves. The distribution of admissions to the schools was done through the proper channels of communication. Before beginning the investigation, the investigator obtained approval from the principals of the chosen schools.

1.10.2 Informed consent and voluntary involvement.

Josephson & Smale (2021), stated that knowledgeable agreement is crucial for research participants, as it enables them to comprehend the study's procedures and protocols. It includes giving a letter of assent, making sense of the point of the review, expected dangers, and certifications of secrecy. Members ought to have the option to get clarification on some pressing issues and be familiar with the information before deciding to participate. The principle of voluntary participation ensures that no one is coerced into participating, making sure that participants understand the study's procedures and any possible risks

1.10.3 Research integrity

The guarantee that the data they provided would only be used for the goals of this study was offered to participants. The respondents were able to participate freely and courageously in the inquiry, thanks to this promise.

1.10.4 Confidentiality and anonymity

The phrases "anonymity" and "confidentiality" guarantee that any information that could be used to identify research participants is kept hidden, protecting their privacy (Dougherty, 2021). It is not appropriate for the researcher to use the names of the institutions or the participants they were affiliated with to protect their privacy. The researcher used false names for the institutions and the subjects as a result. Private information, transcripts, and audiotapes were all stored in a guarded safe by the researcher. Identification of the places and participants on paper would also be impossible. After the study was complete, the Department of Elementary Education (DoEE) would have access to its results.

1.11 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

1.11.1 Mother tongue

Hojiyeva (2023), ensures that the primary language, frequently called the essential language, local language, or L1, is significant for scholarly improvement as it supports the growing experience. The principal language that an individual secures is their first language. It upholds the youngster's mental, moral, and profound turn of events. In this review, "native language" alludes to the language that learners fundamentally use for communication at home to improve their etymological and communication capacities. A youngster would ordinarily communicate in this language with their family at home.

1.11.2 Teaching

Teaching is described in this research as the act of giving instructions to learners in a learning environment when the instructor imparts knowledge and skills and instructs or involves them in the learning process. Munna and Kalam (2021) underline that the meaning of helping is commitment with students to upgrade their comprehension and use of thoughts, information, and procedures; this includes choosing an appropriate curriculum and conducting assessments to help students decide whether to advance to the next grade or not.

1.11.3 Mother tongue teaching

Mother language teaching, which is commonly defined as using the learner's mother tongue as the medium of instruction or the subject of teaching, is considered to be an essential component of education, particularly in the early years or Foundation Phase. (Hojiyeva, 2023). In this study, teaching in the mother tongue pertains to using Xitsonga as the medium of instruction to help young children take pride in learning in their native language, their identity and ancestry, because this language also aids learners in passing down a society's culture and values over the following generation.

1.11.4 Foundation phase

The foundational stage spanned from grades R to 3, where basic learning strategies, etiquette, and ethics were cultivated (Mashige, Cekiso & Meyiwa, 2019). During this stage, teachers oversaw the foundational education of children aged five to nine years old. This was the phase where formal schooling was established. This study indicated that the Foundation Phase was the first level of formal education in South Africa, as it was crucial in building students' foundations. The subjects in the phase included a person's native tongue, Math, First Additional Language, and Life Skills Education."

1.11.5 Educator

According to the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 (SASA), an educator was anyone who was in charge of the formal or informal education of any child or adult at any level of education and in any type of educational institution, such as a teacher, lecturer, parent, or youth counselor (El Miedany & ElMiedany, 2019). The term “educator” encompasses anyone who assists in delivering educational services, including assistant or support services provided by or within an educational office, as per ACT No. 27 of 1998, the National Education Policy Act (NEPA) (Loughran & Menter, 2019). This covered any personnel working in any kind of educational setting who were responsible for instructing, training, or teaching others. A primary school teacher was referred to as an “educator” in this study.

1.11.6 Barriers to learning

Obstacles to education, according to Sánchez, de Haro-Rodríguez, & Martínez (2019), refer to issues that arise in the learning environment, the educational system, or the learner themselves that prohibit the needs of both the system and the learner from receiving support. When such demands are not met, teaching and learning are hindered; this is judged using the evaluation criteria set forth by an educational mandate.

1.11.7 Inclusive education

Any student is welcome to take part in inclusive education in a classroom context, regardless of their abilities or limits (Graham, 2020). This educational approach welcomes the variety of students and then accommodates individual requirements in the same learning space (Dignath, Rimm-Kaufman, van Ewijk & Kunter, 2022). Making accommodation for children who have learning difficulties in the ordinary classroom with their peers who are seen as normal is the definition of inclusive education as it applies to this study.

1.12 CHAPTER OUTLINE

The study comprised five chapters organized as follows.

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background to the Study: This chapter acts as an introduction, offering an overview of the topic, summarizing the research, including a synopsis and background information, an issue statement, the aims and objectives of the study, research questions, significance, and a plan for the chapter.

Chapter 2: Literature review: The foundational section of this chapter provides an explanation of key concepts and an initial review of the pertinent literature regarding the role parents play in teaching and learning to use the mother tongue as the primary language of instruction in various educational settings.

Chapter 3: Research Ethics and Design: This chapter outlines the methodology used in the study, detailing the research design, population and sample, data collection methods and tools, data processing, and data analysis. Moreover, it remembers a conversation for the moral contemplations and dependability of the review.

Chapter 4: Presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data: Chapter 4 will present the interpretation and analysis of the data. Participants' responses will be displayed and discussed in this chapter using tables, charts, and other visual aids, accompanied by a detailed examination and explanation.

Chapter 5: Conclusion: This last section gives an outline of the whole exploration project, including the determinations or results, a rundown of the discoveries, and a recap of every part. All in all, it will introduce the review's commitments and proposals for future examinations.

1.13 SUMMARY

In conclusion, this chapter presented an overview of the study by outlining the background and rationale for investigating the parental role in mother tongue teaching and learning in the foundation phase. It highlighted the persistent challenges surrounding parental involvement and the declining use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction. The problem statement, research questions, and objectives were clearly articulated to guide the study toward addressing these gaps. Furthermore, the significance of the study was discussed in relation to its potential contribution to improved parental engagement, effective mother tongue instruction, and early literacy development.

The next chapter reviewed relevant literature and theoretical perspectives that underpin the study, thereby providing a conceptual framework for understanding the parental role in supporting mother tongue teaching and learning in the foundation phase.

1.14 DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH PLAN AND TIMELINE

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
2023												
Drafting a research proposal												
2024												
Submission to supervisor												
Initial study												
Data collection												

Report writing												
Final submission of the document												

Table 1.2 : Research plan and timeline

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter covered the background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, literature review, theoretical framework, research design and methodology, clarification of concepts, limitations of the study, ethical considerations, significance of the study, chapter outline, and conclusion. This chapter focuses on the theoretical framework, global perspectives on mother tongue education, the South African context of mother tongue education, parental involvement in mother tongue learning, the implementation and support of mother tongue education, the advantages of using the mother tongue in education, and its impact on English language proficiency at the foundation phase.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The present study is underpinned by Lev Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory, which emphasizes that learning is a socially mediated process shaped by interaction, language, and culture (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). According to Vygotsky, knowledge is actively constructed through collaboration with more knowledgeable others, such as parents and teachers, who provide scaffolding to support learners' development. Therefore, the theory was developed by Lev Vygotsky (1934), which emphasizes that learning is a socially mediated process in which individuals construct knowledge through interaction with others and their cultural environment.

The theory underscores the critical role of language, social interaction, and cultural context in cognitive development, introducing foundational concepts such as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding. It is adopted in this study because it offers a coherent framework for understanding how learning and

knowledge are co-constructed through social collaboration within inclusive educational settings.

Within the context of inclusive and multilingual classrooms, Social Constructivism theory holds the significance of collaborative interaction among teachers, learners, and parents, emphasizing language as both a medium of communication and a vehicle for cognitive development. Recent studies confirm that scaffolding, peer collaboration, and dialogue enhance learners' participation and conceptual understanding in inclusive contexts (Chikasha & Mudzielwana, 2023; Dlamini & Khosa, 2024; *Frontiers in Education*, 2022). Hence, the theory supports this study's emphasis on social interaction, cultural mediation, and collaborative learning as essential components of effective mother-tongue instruction and inclusion in the foundation phase.

This study is grounded in Lev Vygotsky's Social Constructivism Theory (1934), which emphasizes that learning occurs through social interaction and collaboration within a cultural context. The theory is particularly relevant to the teaching and learning of the mother tongue in the foundation phase, where parents, teachers, and peers play an essential role in the child's cognitive and language development. The following section discusses the key elements of the theory and their application to this study

2.2.1 Elements of Social Constructivism Theory (Lev Vygotsky, 1934)

- **Social Interaction**

Vygotsky (1934) posited that learning is a social process that occurs through interaction with others. Children acquire new knowledge and language skills by engaging with parents, teachers, and peers. In the context of this study, parental involvement in the home and school environment serves as a vital form of social interaction that supports the development of mother tongue literacy. Recent studies affirm that social interaction between parents and

learners enhances language acquisition and comprehension (Mpofu & Maree, 2020; Mokoena, 2022).

- **Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)**

The ZPD represents the gap between what a child can do independently and what can be achieved with assistance from a more experienced person (Vygotsky, 1978). Effective teaching and parental support occur within this zone. In mother tongue learning, parents can provide guidance by reading with the child, explaining vocabulary, and offering feedback. According to recent findings, learners perform better when parents scaffold learning within their ZPD (Nkosi, 2021; Chikasha & Mudzielwana, 2023).

- **Scaffolding**

Scaffolding refers to the temporary support provided by adults or peers to help learners master a new concept (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). Once understanding is achieved, the support is gradually withdrawn. Within the mother tongue context, scaffolding might involve parents modeling correct pronunciation or sentence construction during daily communication. Studies highlight that parental scaffolding fosters confidence and enhances learners' comprehension in early literacy (Mabaso, 2019; Thwala & Msimanga, 2022).

- **Language as a Tool for Learning**

Vygotsky emphasized that language is not merely a means of communication but a primary tool for thought and cognitive development. Language mediates learning and enables children to internalize new knowledge. In the context of this study, the mother tongue provides the cognitive foundation upon which further learning is built. Scholars have confirmed that children who learn in their home language demonstrate stronger reasoning and academic performance (Alexander, 2018; Heugh, 2021).

- **Cultural Context**

Learning is shaped by the cultural environment and social practices in which children grow (Vygotsky, 1934). The use of the mother tongue in the foundation phase reflects the cultural identity, values, and traditions of learners. Parental involvement in preserving and using the home language transmits cultural knowledge and promotes a sense of belonging. Research indicates that children learn best when instruction aligns with their cultural and linguistic background (Moloi, 2020; Madondo, 2022).

- **More Knowledgeable Other (MKO)**

The concept of the “More Knowledgeable Other” refers to anyone with greater understanding or experience who assists the learner’s development (Vygotsky, 1978). In this study, the MKO could be a parent, teacher, or older sibling who supports the child’s mother tongue learning. The MKO provides necessary feedback, correction, and encouragement, which accelerates the learner’s progress (Mudzielwana, 2019; Lekalakala-Mokgele, 2023).

- **Collaborative Learning**

Collaborative learning involves learners working together to construct meaning through dialogue and shared experiences. It encourages mutual understanding and problem-solving. Within the home and school settings, group storytelling, songs, and reading sessions in the mother tongue exemplify collaborative learning. Recent studies suggest that such cooperative activities promote language retention and social skills (Mhlongo, 2018; Dlamini & Khosa, 2024).

The researcher’s position in the above study is clearly constructivist and context sensitive, grounded in Vygotsky’s Social Constructivism Theory. By adopting this lens, the researcher emphasizes that learning is not an isolated cognitive act but a socially mediated process shaped by interaction with parents, teachers, peers, and the broader cultural environment.

Specifically, the researcher positions parental involvement as a critical scaffold in the Foundation Phase, where children's mother tongue serves as both a cultural anchor and a cognitive tool. The stance is that parents are not peripheral but central actors in co-constructing knowledge alongside educators. This position highlights:

- Social interaction as the foundation of literacy development.
- Parental scaffolding within the Zone of Proximal Development as essential for early language acquisition.
- Language and culture as inseparable, with the mother tongue providing identity and cognitive grounding.
- Collaboration between home and school as the mechanism through which inclusive education becomes effective.

In summary, the researcher's position is that parental support is indispensable for effective mother tongue instruction in inclusive Foundation Phase classrooms. The study is framed to demonstrate that without parental involvement, the goals of inclusive education and early literacy in South Africa cannot be fully realized.

2.2.2 Theory of Social Constructivism

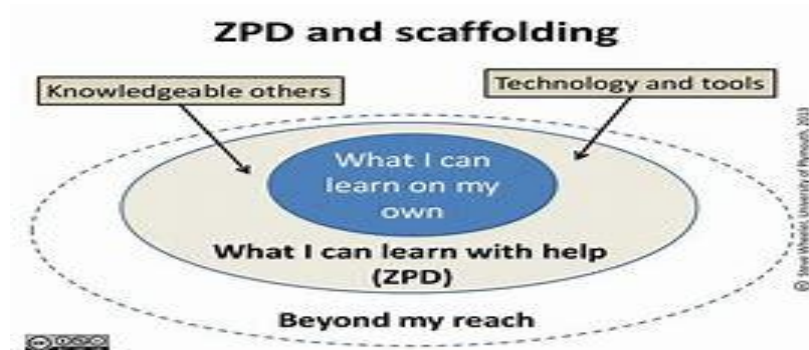


Figure 2.1. Social Constructivism theory

2.2.2.1 Application of Social Constructivism Theory to the Study

The theoretical foundation of this research is rooted in the concept of social constructivism. This theory, developed by Lev Vygotsky in 1986, aligns with many of Piaget's ideas on how children learn but places greater emphasis on the social aspects of learning (Ghaedi, Gholtash, Hashemi, & Mashinchi, 2020). Social constructivism is applied in educational research because it underscores the collaborative nature of learning, highlighting the importance of interpersonal interactions and discussions in the learning process. Closely linked to cognitive constructivism, this theory incorporates peer and societal engagement as essential components of knowledge acquisition.

Applying social constructivism to the study of parental involvement in mother tongue teaching and learning at the foundation phase is advantageous for several reasons. The theory suggests that learning takes place in social settings, is facilitated by interactions with others, and relies on available resources (Misra, 2020). This perspective emphasizes the crucial role of language, culture, and social relationships in shaping and acquiring knowledge. Within the context of mother tongue education, Afolabi, (2023), pointed out that social constructivism reinforces the idea that students' home languages and cultural backgrounds serve as valuable knowledge sources, and teachers can leverage these elements to enhance their teaching strategies and create more effective learning experiences.

Additionally, social constructivism emphasizes the importance of social interactions in understanding both the social and physical environment, as well as the teacher's role in guiding learning experiences. This is particularly relevant in mother tongue education, as it underscores the value of social engagement in learning and highlights the influence of linguistic and cultural factors in knowledge construction (Dunham, Well & White, 2022; Misra, 2020). Furthermore, the theory promotes collaborative learning, which is especially beneficial in the teaching and learning of mother tongues. Given the role of parents in this process, social

constructivism underscores the significance of social connections between learners and their caregivers, peers, and teachers in fostering intellectual development.

In summary, adopting a social constructivist perspective in studying parental involvement in mother tongue education at the foundation phase is highly beneficial. This approach acknowledges the role of language, cultural context, and social interactions in knowledge construction and acquisition while emphasizing the teacher's role in facilitating learning (Mthombeni & Ogunnubi, 2021). These elements are essential in mother tongue education. Social constructivism provides insights into how knowledge is formed and acquired through social and cultural influences. According to Ghaedi et al. (2020), social constructivism asserts that learners generate knowledge through their interactions with their environment and social engagements, particularly during the foundation phase of mother tongue instruction. This theoretical framework is therefore employed to explore the role of parents in this educational process.

Social constructivism acknowledges the influence of cultural and community experiences on learners' knowledge and understanding (Bozoki, 2020). Educators and parents can utilise these experiences to provide children with a more meaningful and relevant education. In the foundation phase, the application of social constructivism can enhance parental involvement in mother tongue teaching and learning by fostering a collaborative environment among teachers, parents, and learners (Ghaedi, Gholtash, Hashemi & Mashinchi, 2020). This can be achieved through initiatives such as parent-teacher meetings, workshops, and shared learning activities that actively engage parents in their children's language development.

Ghaedi et al. (2020) assert that social constructivism also highlights the role of tools, symbols, and language in shaping individuals' perceptions and understanding of the world. Given this, social constructivism aligns well with the

objectives of this study, as it underscores the importance of language and culture in cognitive development, and it posits that learning occurs when learners actively construct knowledge through inquiry and exploration. Researchers regard social constructivism as a significant framework for human development, illustrating how language and culture play a crucial role in shaping intellectual growth and worldview.

This perspective is further reinforced by John Dewey's sociocultural theory, which suggests that constructivist learning encourages learners to apply real-world methods to acquire knowledge, reflect on their learning, and engage in discussions within the classroom (Waks, 2024). Social constructivism asserts that children's understanding is shaped by their interactions with the physical world and discussions about culturally meaningful and relevant experiences. Misra (2020) describes academic achievement, or potential growth, as the highest level of development a student can attain with guidance from peers or teachers. He views education as a social process involving interactions with family, friends, peers, and historical figures.

According to social constructivism, learning is driven by communication, collaboration, and the effective use of information, all of which contribute to achieving learning goals. Therefore, this study concurs with the idea by saying that social learning enhances cognitive development and that interpersonal interactions play a crucial role in shaping an individual's personality throughout their life. In essence, children can complete complex tasks with the support of adults or peer groups. Two key concepts central to understanding human development, scaffolding and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), were the focus of this study's exploration.

➤ **Scaffolding**

Within the framework of social constructivism, scaffolding is defined as a structured process of supporting learners in acquiring new knowledge and

skills (Xi & Lantolf, 2021). While terms such as assistance, guidance, and help are often associated with scaffolding, it is important to recognize that scaffolding extends beyond general support. It is a deliberate pedagogical strategy that aligns with the learner's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), ensuring that the assistance provided is both targeted and temporary (Puntambekar, 2022). Effective scaffolding instills confidence, enabling learners to gradually assume independence as they internalize new concepts and skills. Once mastery is achieved, the support is systematically withdrawn, allowing learners to perform tasks autonomously. In this way, scaffolding functions as a dynamic instructional approach that bridges learners' current abilities with their potential development, reinforcing both competence and self-efficacy.

➤ **The zone of proximal development (ZPD)**

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) refers to the range of tasks that a learner can complete with guidance or collaboration before becoming capable of accomplishing them independently. Puntambekar (2022) and Waks, (2024), describe ZPD as "the distance between the actual level of development, as indicated by independent problem-solving, and the potential level of development, as demonstrated through problem-solving with the assistance of an adult or more knowledgeable peers." Originally introduced in Lev Vygotsky's later works between 1932 and 1934, ZPD is defined as "the gap between a learner's current level of independent problem-solving ability and their potential level, which can be reached with support from an experienced individual" (Vygotsky, 1986).

The ZPD represents the difference between what a student can achieve alone and what they can accomplish with the support of a skilled mentor. Xi and Lantolf (2021) explain that ZPD highlights the gap between an individual's current difficulties and their potential capabilities, which are developed through problem-solving with the guidance of parents or peer groups. This approach

enhances learning by having a knowledgeable individual assist a student with a task that is slightly beyond their current level of competence. The type and amount of support provided can be adjusted based on the learner's needs and gradually reduced as they become more proficient. For effective learning to take place, it is crucial to identify each learner's specific ZPD stage. Depending on their skill level, learners may fall into one of three categories.

- **Tasks learners cannot do, even with assistance**

Tasks that are beyond a learner's ability, even with help, fall outside of their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). If a task is too difficult for the learner, the expert may reduce the difficulty or identify more suitable tasks that align better with the learner's current abilities.

- **Tasks learners can do with assistance**

Learners who are close to mastering a skill within their ZPD can complete tasks with expert guidance. These learners still require support to fully grasp the concepts and skills needed to perform the task independently. An expert may use various methods to help the learner understand and master the necessary skills.

- **Tasks learners can do without assistance**

At this stage, the learner has acquired the required skills and can complete tasks independently. The learner can now perform the task without external help. After this stage, the expert can increase the difficulty level of the tasks to identify the learner's next ZPD and continue fostering their development.

2.2.2.2 Application of the social constructivism theory to this study.

The Department of Education has integrated the concepts of scaffolding and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) to support learners in their educational journey. The ZPD refers to the gap between what a learner can accomplish

independently and what they can achieve with the help of parents during teaching and learning their mother tongue in the Foundation Phase. In this context, the ZPD can guide the support and instruction provided by educators and parents, particularly in the early educational stages. One benefit of utilizing the ZPD in this study is that it can enhance the development of learners' mother tongues, which is their first language for speaking and understanding. Puntambekar (2022) argues that learning in the mother tongue can improve educational quality, foster inclusion, and promote diversity.

In the foundation phase, the role of parents and teachers, using the ZPD, is to scaffold the learner's acquisition of their mother tongue. Educators, whether in school or at home, should adopt the role of a dialogic partner, stepping down from their usual roles to help learners achieve their language-learning goals. Falguera (2022), views scaffolding, in this study, as a problem-based learning strategy designed to explore the role of parents in teaching and learning the mother tongue.

Hojiyeva (2023) explains that scaffolding involves matching a learner's needs and abilities with the appropriate level of guidance and support. It is the assistance provided by a teacher, parent, or more experienced peer to help a student work within their ZPD. In mother-tongue instruction, educators can use scaffolding, alongside parental support, to improve learners' language skills by providing the necessary tools to understand and apply new grammar, syntax, and vocabulary. This can be achieved through methods such as modeling, questioning, and providing feedback.

Scaffolding during the foundation phase of mother-tongue education can aid parents in various ways. It can help children learn to read and write more quickly by connecting them with words and sounds they are familiar with. It can also boost academic and cognitive development by allowing children to express their thoughts and questions in their mother tongue without language barriers.

Additionally, it enables children to connect with their cultural and personal identity by using their mother tongue to relate to their heritage, values, and traditions.

However, for this to be effective, parents need to communicate effectively with both their children and teachers, as well as possess sufficient fluency and knowledge of their mother tongue. Parents must invest time and effort in supporting their children with homework, assignments, and projects, and ensure access to learning materials in their mother tongue. The success of this process also depends on the availability of quality learning resources and the support of both the community and the school.

In the context of this study, social constructivism theory suggests that parents and teachers can help learners to realize their potential, value their linguistic and cultural diversity, and gain confidence in learning and teaching their mother tongue. Workshops and awareness campaigns have been established to equip parents and teachers with the necessary skills to support learners during mother-tongue instruction in the foundation phase.

In conclusion, social constructivism theory is an important framework in the study of learning as it emphasizes collaboration, interaction, and cultural influences in the learning process. Vygotsky's theory asserts that each child's learning is unique, with the acquisition of knowledge and skills varying from individual to individual (Mthombeni & Ogunnubi, 2021). The goal of education is to internalize culture and social relationships through social learning. This chapter's literature review aims to investigate and raise awareness of how parents use their parenting strategies to improve their children's performance in Foundation Phase mother-tongue teaching and learning in Man'ombe Circuit, Mopani District, Limpopo Province, South Africa.

2.2.2.3 Criticisms of Social Constructivism Theory

Despite its valuable insights into learning as a social process, Vygotsky's Social Constructivism Theory has been critiqued on several grounds. One common criticism is that the theory places excessive emphasis on social interaction while underestimating individual cognitive processes. Critics argue that learners also construct understanding through personal reflection and independent exploration, not solely through social engagement (Lourenço, 2016; Chaiklin, 2018). In the context of mother tongue learning, some aspects of language acquisition, such as internalization and creativity, may not always rely on external social mediation.

Another criticism concerns the vagueness and difficulty in measuring the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Scholars have noted that determining the precise boundaries of what a learner can achieve independently versus with guidance is challenging in practical classroom settings (Daniels, 2020; Veresov & Fleer, 2021). This limitation makes it difficult for educators to design consistent interventions within the ZPD, particularly in large or diverse classrooms.

Furthermore, the concept of scaffolding, though derived from Vygotsky's ideas, has been criticized for being too dependent on the teacher or "More Knowledgeable Other" (MKO). This emphasis can unintentionally create a hierarchical dynamic in which learners are viewed as passive recipients rather than active contributors to their own learning (Moll, 2019). In mother tongue teaching, this could limit learner autonomy and creativity if parents or teachers dominate learning interactions.

A further critique lies in the theory's limited attention to cultural diversity and power relations. While Vygotsky recognised the role of culture, he did not fully address how socioeconomic inequalities, or linguistic hierarchies can shape learning opportunities (Engelbrecht, 2023). In multilingual and postcolonial contexts such

as South Africa, these factors significantly influence how learners experience mother tongue instruction.

Lastly, some scholars argue that Social Constructivism provides limited guidance on assessment. Because learning is viewed as dynamic and context-dependent, it becomes difficult to design standardized assessments that accurately reflect learners' progress (Woolfolk, 2020). Despite these criticisms, Social Constructivism remains highly relevant for this study because it provides a strong framework for understanding how parents and educators collaboratively support learners' cognitive and linguistic development. Its emphasis on interaction, cultural mediation, and scaffolding continues to inform inclusive and culturally responsive teaching practices.

While Social Constructivism has its limitations, its emphasis on interaction, collaboration, and cultural context aligns strongly with this study's focus on parental involvement in mother tongue teaching and learning. The theory thus remains an appropriate and insightful framework for examining how parents and educators co-construct meaningful learning experiences in the foundation phase.

2.3 AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE MOTHER TONGUE IN EDUCATION

An international perspective on mother tongue education highlights the varied approaches to incorporating a child's first language into the learning process. Across the world, the importance of mother tongue instruction is widely acknowledged for its significant role in fostering cognitive and linguistic development (Mendecka, 2023). This view is strongly supported by global research, which demonstrates that learning in the mother tongue enhances comprehension, critical thinking, and overall academic performance, as learners are better able to engage with content in a familiar language.

Furthermore, reports indicate that mother tongue-based bilingual education improves learners' academic achievement, self-confidence, and cultural identity, while also facilitating the acquisition of additional languages. Similarly, Cummins (2000) and UNESCO (2003) emphasise that the mother tongue serves as a foundational tool for cognitive development and literacy, enabling effective transfer of skills to other languages and subjects.

He further asserted that many educational policies and strategies globally emphasize the use of native languages in education to preserve cultural heritage, enhance inclusivity, and boost academic achievement. Evidence from international studies also indicates that mother tongue-based education contributes to improved school participation, reduced dropout rates, and greater equity in education systems, particularly in multilingual and low-income contexts. While research on this topic in Africa is limited, studies from countries such as Botswana, Tanzania, Kenya, the United States, and India provide valuable insights into its impact.

2.3.1 Botswana

Botswana, like many other African nations, is a multilingual country with a diverse linguistic landscape. With approximately 28 languages spoken across the country, Setswana serves as the national language and is the most widely spoken (Letsholo-Tafila & Ramaeba, 2022). The role of mother tongue education has been a topic of discussion, as policymakers and educators seek to balance the use of indigenous languages with the global prominence of English. Chebanne (2022), pointed out that, as the official language, English is predominantly used in formal education, government, and business sectors. Over time, efforts have been made to integrate indigenous languages, particularly Setswana, into the education system alongside English. Following independence, Botswana initially implemented an English-medium instruction policy from the beginning of formal schooling, based on the belief that English was essential for national progress and

economic development. However, this approach created challenges, particularly for children in rural areas who began school with limited exposure to English, making it difficult for them to keep up with their studies (Letsholo-Tafila, & Ramaeba, 2022).

Gabanamotse-Mogara, Ramotlabaki, & Chebanne (2023), guarantee that, recognizing the importance of mother tongue instruction, the government has acknowledged its benefits, particularly in early education. Research indicates that children learn more effectively when taught in their first language, as it enhances their comprehension and self-expression. Mother tongue instruction plays a vital role in cognitive development, allowing children to link new information to their existing linguistic and cultural knowledge. Botswana's education policy supports the use of learners' home languages in the early years of schooling to facilitate effective teaching and learning (Chebanne, 2022). Setswana is commonly used as the medium of instruction in preschool and grade 1, enabling young learners to develop a strong educational foundation in a familiar language before transitioning to English in later grades.

Despite these efforts, several challenges persist. A major issue is the shortage of educational resources in indigenous languages, particularly in remote and rural areas, where most learning materials, including textbooks, are available primarily in English (Letsholo-Tafila & Ramaeba, 2022). Additionally, striking a balance between Setswana and English in an increasingly globalized world remains complex. Proficiency in English is essential for future employment and international engagement, but children may struggle to acquire a second language effectively without a solid grounding in their mother tongue.

In conclusion, this study highlights that mother tongue teaching and learning in Botswana offer both significant advantages and challenges. Using Setswana as the medium of instruction in the early years has proven beneficial for young learners, supporting cognitive development, improving comprehension of

concepts, and reinforcing cultural identity. By learning in their native language, learners can relate new information to their existing linguistic and cultural frameworks, enhancing their overall learning experience. However, the shift to English as the language of instruction in higher grades presents difficulties, especially for learners from rural areas who may have limited exposure to English outside the classroom. The prevalence of English in Botswana's education system remains a challenge, as learners are required to achieve proficiency in both English and Setswana, which can sometimes impact their academic performance.

2.3.2 Tanzania

In Tanzania, the role of mother tongue in education has been a topic of ongoing debate and policy development. Historically, according to Mwanza (2020), Swahili has served as the primary language of instruction in primary schools, while English is used in secondary schools and universities. This bilingual policy aims to provide accessible education while ensuring proficiency in English, which is considered crucial for higher education and global communication. However, this language policy has faced criticism for potentially impeding students' academic performance. Research by Adamson, McCowan and Unterhalter (2020), suggests that many learners struggle when transitioning from Swahili to English in higher grades, which can lead to difficulties in understanding complex subjects and negatively impact overall educational outcomes. Additionally, the use of English in higher education has created challenges such as language barriers and reduced participation, particularly among students from rural areas where Swahili is predominantly spoken.

To address these issues, some scholars advocate for incorporating mother tongue education at the lower levels of schooling. They argue that teaching in learners' home languages can improve comprehension, enhance learning outcomes, and strengthen cultural identity. This approach aligns with global perspectives on the importance of mother tongue instruction in early education, according to Mwanza,

(2020). This study highlights several difficulties in implementing mother tongue education in Tanzania. A significant challenge is the lack of resources, such as textbooks and qualified teachers, to support the use of the mother tongue in the education system.

In conclusion, Tanzania's language-in-education policies have evolved to incorporate both Swahili and English, seeking to balance accessibility with the need for English proficiency in higher education and global communication. However, challenges persist, particularly in the transition from Swahili to English in higher grades, which can affect academic success. Research supports that using learners' home languages in instruction can improve comprehension, learning outcomes, and cultural identity. Integrating mother tongue instruction, particularly in the early years, could enhance academic performance and create a more inclusive learning environment. Successfully implementing such changes requires careful consideration of linguistic diversity, available resources, and the broader educational context.

2.3.3 Kenya

The Language-in-Education Policy (LiEP) in Kenya mandates the use of mother tongue instruction in pre-primary and lower primary levels, generally from nursery to Grade 3. This approach aims to enhance understanding and learning by teaching children in a language they are familiar with. Trujillo (2020), attests that in Kenya, the use of mother tongue in education is guided by the Language in Education Policy (LiEP), which requires that mother tongue be used as the medium of instruction in pre-primary and lower primary education. This policy aims to improve comprehension and learning outcomes by using learners' native languages during the early years of schooling.

Kuppens, Ibrahim and Langer (2020) have shown that mother tongue instruction greatly improves literacy rates, especially in rural areas, with children who learn in

their first language in the early grades developing stronger foundational literacy skills than those taught in English from the outset. However, implementing mother tongue education presents challenges according to Leighton (2022); hence, in urban areas, Kiswahili is often used as the language of instruction, creating inconsistencies in language use across different regions. Moreover, there is a need for adequate teacher training and resources to effectively teach in the various indigenous languages.

Despite these benefits, several challenges hinder the successful implementation of Mother Tongue Education (MTE) in Kenya. Negative perceptions of using indigenous languages in education persist, according to Wawire, Piper, & Liang, (2021), and external factors such as the dominance of global languages create further obstacles. To support MTE, initiatives like the African Storybook project provide freely available picture storybooks in various African languages. These resources are vital for developing children's literacy skills and are adaptable to different cultural and linguistic contexts (Leighton, 2022).

In conclusion, while Kenya's policy framework supports mother tongue instruction in early education, practical challenges prevent its full realization. Continued efforts by educational organizations and communities are needed to overcome these barriers and promote the effective use of indigenous languages in teaching (Trujillo, 2020). Addressing these challenges, ensuring consistency across regions, and providing the necessary resources and training for educators can improve educational outcomes and help preserve linguistic diversity in Kenya. Mother Tongue Education (MTE) involves using the learner's first language, ensuring that learning progresses from known concepts to new ones, encouraging active participation, and improving academic performance and retention.

2.3.4 USA (United States of America)

In the United States (US), the role of mother tongue in education is primarily addressed through bilingual education programs, designed to support learners who speak languages other than English at home. Chebanne, (2022), stated that bilingual education has been part of the American educational system since before the nation was formed, with early examples dating back to the 17th century when Polish settlers in Virginia initiated bilingual teaching. The Bilingual Education Act (BEA) of 1968 marked a significant turning point. Kuppens, Ibrahim and Langer (2020) further pointed out that it also provides federal funding to support educational programs that teach students in languages other than English, acknowledging the importance of students' native languages for their educational growth.

Wawire, Piper, & Liang, (2021), demonstrated that learners who speak and write in multiple languages possess cognitive advantages over their monolingual peers. Learning additional languages from an early age improves communication skills and promotes higher literacy levels. They show that bilingual education, particularly when it incorporates learners' mother tongues, enhances educational outcomes and helps address achievement gaps. Furthermore, mother tongue-based education plays a crucial role in preserving indigenous languages. For example, the New Kituwah Academy in North Carolina offers a Cherokee English immersion program aimed at revitalizing the Cherokee language among younger generations (Trujillo, 2020).

The findings of this study show that in the U.S., mother tongue instruction is essential to ensuring equal opportunities for all children, regardless of their socio-economic background, ethnicity, or geographic location. It can lead to improved academic performance, stronger language proficiency, and increased motivation to learn. While the United States does not have a nationwide policy mandating mother tongue instruction, there is a growing movement to recognize and integrate

learners' native languages into education through bilingual programs. These initiatives seek to improve educational outcomes while celebrating the cultural and linguistic diversity of the student population.

2.3.5 India

Language plays a pivotal role in education, influencing cognitive development, cultural identity, and social integration. In India, a country with over 1,600 languages and dialects, the role of the mother tongue in education has been a topic of extensive debate (Nishanthi, 2020). Kumar, Nukapangu and Hassan (2021) emphasised that the significance of mother tongue-based education in India has been highlighted by prominent figures like Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore, who advocated for learning in one's native language. After independence, Kuppens, Ibrahim and Langer (2020) posited that the Three-Language Formula (1968) was introduced to promote regional languages, Hindi, and English. The National Education Policy Act (NEPA) 2020 further emphasized this by recommending mother tongue instruction until Grade 5, with a preference for continuing up to Grade 8 and beyond. According to the Right to Education Act, 2009, Section 29(f) of Chapter V, the child's mother tongue should be used as the medium of instruction when possible.

The NEPA 2020 also encourages teaching in regional and Indian languages at the school and postsecondary levels. Sultana and Fang (2024) note that the use of the mother tongue in education is increasingly seen as beneficial in India due to its advantages, such as improved retention, language proficiency, and better test scores. The NEPA underlines the need for mother tongue instruction, especially in the foundational years. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also emphasized its importance, describing it as a step towards social justice for Indian children. The NEPA 2020 advocates for mother tongue education up to Class 5 and beyond, wherever feasible, as emphasized by Nishanthi (2020).

Mother tongue-based education is crucial for improving learning outcomes and preserving linguistic heritage in India. Despite the challenges, a balanced approach that includes regional languages, Hindi, and English can create a more inclusive and effective education system (Sultana & Fang, 2024). The success of mother tongue education relies on continued policy support, resource development, and societal acceptance. The Indian school curriculum now incorporates mother tongue instruction in early education, acknowledging that the language in which a person feels most comfortable is their mother tongue, even if they speak other languages. For learners, this has led to better opportunities and improved learning outcomes. Nishanthi (2020) believes that teaching in the mother tongue strengthens learners' identities and connects education to India's rich cultural heritage. Although mother tongue-based education offers many benefits, it requires new educational materials, teacher training, and additional funding for effective implementation. This study concludes that promoting mother tongue education in India helps learners to access better knowledge in a language that is integral to their identity and cultural heritage. Learning in one's native language enhances communication skills, making it easier to understand complex concepts. This approach not only improves academic performance but also has a positive impact on students' personal and professional lives.

2.4 THE SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE ON MOTHER TONGUE EDUCATION

South Africa (SA) is a multilingual country with 11 official languages, including Xhosa, Zulu, Ndebele, Swati, Tswana, Sotho, Pedi, Venda, Tsonga, English, and Afrikaans. These languages gained official recognition and status in the educational language policy after the end of apartheid in 1994, when the new government implemented a multilingual language policy. The role of the mother tongue in education has been a key issue, influenced by historical, political, and socio-economic factors (Meda, 2020). Although policies support mother tongue instruction, challenges remain in their implementation.

Kuppens, Ibrahim and Langer (2020) declared that during the apartheid era, the language policy did not officially recognize the indigenous languages spoken by most of the population. However, post-apartheid, the South African Constitution (1996) and the Language-in-Education Policy (1997) acknowledged the importance of mother tongue education. The policy promotes additive bilingualism, where learners begin learning in their mother tongue and gradually transition to English or Afrikaans. Wawire, Piper and Liang (2021) concur with the statement by indicating that the Department of Basic Education (DBE) recommends mother tongue instruction until at least Grade 3, after which English becomes the primary medium of instruction. A key goal of the language policy is to establish an equitable multilingual environment for all government sectors, promoting the fair use of the nine official languages and ensuring access to government services, knowledge, and information. According to the 1996 Education Act and the Department of Education (2002), learners in Grades 1 to 3 should be taught in their mother tongue, with English being taught as a language subject.

The South African Constitution guarantees learners the right to education in their preferred language. Meda, (2020) has asserted that, according to the Department of Education (2002) also allowed to decide which language their children should learn. He further indicated that learners perform better when taught in their mother tongue, and learning a second language becomes easier if they are proficient in their first language. However, a study by Sithole (2023) in the Man'ombe Circuit schools in Limpopo found that some parents had negative attitudes towards using Xitsonga as the language of instruction. They believed that Xitsonga would not help their children secure employment, and they considered learning English more beneficial for their children's future. These parents supported their children learning English as the primary language.

In the Man'ombe Circuit, this study focused on understanding the role of parents in mother tongue teaching and learning in the foundation phase. Findings suggest that educators in the foundation phase should receive in-service training to enhance their skills in mother-tongue instruction, including gaining proficiency in emerging African languages and improving their teaching methods. Successful implementation of mother-tongue education will require the support of various stakeholders, including principals, teachers, government officials, school governing bodies, and, most importantly, parents and learners. For the policy to succeed, parents must recognize the value of mother-tongue education and understand how it benefits both their children and the nation.

2.5 THE ROLE PLAYED BY PARENTS IN MOTHER TONGUE EDUCATION

Professor Jim Cummins, from the University of Toronto, Canada, has conducted extensive research on the pivotal role of the mother tongue in children's cognitive, linguistic, and academic development. His studies highlight the crucial role of parents speaking to their children in their native language. Cummins' research shows that children who become proficient in two or more languages develop a deeper understanding of sentence structure and expression, which enhances their overall language skills (Liando and Tatipang, 2022). Smitherman and Alim, (2021), claimed that parental involvement is a key factor in children's education, particularly in mother tongue instruction. It significantly improves academic performance and contributes to inclusive, high-quality learning. Parents have a substantial influence on their children's language development through their communication, providing guidance, encouragement, and serving as role models.

Sithole (2023) attested that in the Foundation Phase (Grades R–3), where children build their basic literacy and cognitive skills, parents play an essential role in the success of mother tongue education. Their support helps in language development, learning outcomes, and the preservation of cultural identity. In the South African context, where multilingualism is a defining characteristic of the

education system, parental involvement in mother tongue education plays a crucial role in promoting effective learning and in laying a strong foundation for learners' future academic success. Parents' roles in helping their children to learn a new language are crucial; hence, it is important for them to understand those languages not just about identity but also communication (Idris, Hussain & Ahmad, 2020). Smitherman and Alim (2021) stress that children with a strong mother tongue foundation tend to read more proficiently in the school language. When parents engage with their children, sharing stories or having conversations that reinforce vocabulary and concepts, it prepares children to learn the language of their new environment and succeed academically.

In Uganda, Ssentanda and Asiimwe (2023) introduced an innovative program that demonstrates how parental involvement in early childhood education and mother tongue instruction strengthens children's outcomes in primary school, boosts adult literacy, and places parents at the heart of their development. Parental and community attitudes toward the language of instruction often reflect their expectations for their children's education. The goal of this study is to investigate the role of parents in teaching and learning the mother tongue at the foundation stage in the Man'ombe Circuit of Limpopo Province. In conclusion, the success of children's education heavily relies on parental involvement in mother-tongue education. By regularly promoting the use of the mother tongue at home, parents help their children to develop a deeper understanding of language and communication. Active parental participation not only leads to better academic performance and positive attitudes toward school but also helps children form stronger personal, social, and cultural identities, contributing to their overall development into successful adults.

2.6 SUPPORT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE USE OF MOTHER TONGUE EDUCATION

Mother tongue education in the Foundation Phase is vital for a child's cognitive growth, literacy development, and academic achievement. In multilingual countries like South Africa, effectively supporting and implementing mother tongue instruction requires collaboration among the government, educators, parents, and communities (Meda, 2020). Although policies advocate for the use of indigenous languages in early education, challenges such as resource shortages and societal attitudes towards English often complicate successful implementation. Kuppens, Ibrahim and Langer (2020) show that supporters of mother tongue education in South Africa argue that learning in a child's native language is the most effective way to begin education, while critics point to the difficulties of making this a reality. Promoting respect and understanding, along with preserving the rich cultural and traditional heritage embedded in South Africa's languages, relies on the support and effective implementation of mother tongue education, this statement emphasized by (Liando & Tatipang, 2022). To improve the quality of education, language policies must prioritise mother-tongue learning. Wawire, Piper and Liang (2021) articulated that several policy options can encourage and implement this approach in South Africa, such as:

- The first option for policy is to keep things as they are, teach in the various mother tongues of Africa, introduce English, and switch to English starting in Grade 4. In terms of resources for educators and students, this is the most widely advocated course of action.
- Following the language policy, the second policy option would be to postpone switching to English as the primary language of instruction until Grade 6. Adding to the first option is this one. In a similar vein, reading material development would be required.

- Moving African languages past Grade 6 and bolstering the groundwork for tertiary education in African languages would constitute a third avenue for policy consideration. To create an atmosphere where African languages are utilized as more than just a means of bridging the English language gap, which would entail intensifying the teaching and learning of African languages.

Implementation follows policy development and involves bringing plans to life through analysis, installation, configuration, testing, and user training (Savage & Gallagher, 2023). South Africa's language policy, which acknowledges 11 official languages, aims to rectify the linguistic injustices of the apartheid era and gives students the freedom to choose the language of their education. Section 29(2) of the Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) guarantees the right to education in an official language of choice, provided it is reasonably practicable. This reflects the government's recognition of the value of mother-tongue education.

Piller, & Gerber, (2021), state that since 1994, South Africa has discussed introducing mother-tongue education, with the practice of using the mother tongue until Grade 3 followed by a transition to English. In 2022, Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga announced that all provinces would begin teaching in students' mother tongue. Pilot programs in the Eastern Cape have been successful, prompting similar initiatives across the country. Schools are now allowed to continue using mother tongue instruction until Grade 6 under the Language in Education Policy. However, challenges persist due to South Africa's diverse linguistic landscape. Efforts to teach learners' mother tongues have encountered difficulties in curriculum development, language development, learning materials, and the need for well-trained educators.

- **Language development**

Heilage et al. (2020) note that the written versions of South Africa's official indigenous languages are not yet fully developed for use as teaching tools,

even at the foundational education level. To address this, there is a need to standardize, update, and spread the standardized written forms of these languages. This can be achieved through the creation of modern dictionaries, expanding vocabulary, eliminating dialectal differences, revising spelling and orthographic rules, and codifying grammar based on current practices within speech communities (Shepherd, 2020).

- **Curriculum development**

According to Yang, Weipeng and Li (2022), a curriculum is the cornerstone of any educational institution. This implies that curriculum development is a deliberate and systematic process designed to achieve specific educational objectives, meaning that schools cannot operate without it. Currently, African languages are the only subjects taught in indigenous languages, while all other curricula are offered solely in Afrikaans and English. To address this issue, the first step should be to translate the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) into indigenous languages.

- **Educational resources and materials**

A key aspect of education is the use of appropriate learning resources in the early stages of mother tongue instruction. For children to develop an interest and enthusiasm for reading and learning, the resources must be accessible and engaging (Heilage et al., 2020). When new ideas are presented using content that children are familiar with in their lessons and reading materials, it boosts their confidence and helps them become more skilled learners. Some examples of available resources include primers for teaching basic literacy, alphabet charts, teaching aids, dictionaries, pedagogical grammar, and local cultural literature.

- **Train and deploy mother-tongue teachers.**

Khanyile and Awung (2023) revealed that for mother-tongue education to be effective, teachers must be familiar with the language and culture of the children they are teaching. Some educators may struggle with teaching in a "dominant" language if they are not fluent in it. Others may belong to minority language groups and face exclusion from the educational process due to the lack of resources in their native language. Mabaso-Nkuna, Mabasa and Valoyi (2024) and highlighted that teachers should receive training in multilingual education and the importance of using the mother tongue for teaching. When a teacher attempts to instruct a learner with limited proficiency in the language of instruction, it may result in a recurring cycle of misunderstanding that spans generations. This occurs because the teacher themselves may not have attained full linguistic competence or pedagogical mastery from their own educators, thereby perpetuating instructional gaps over time.

This study aims to raise awareness and explore how parents use parenting strategies to enhance their children's performance in Foundation Phase mother tongue education in Man'ombe Circuit, Mopani District, Limpopo Province, South Africa. The study concluded that language and thought are closely interconnected, as language plays a crucial role in our ability to think and conceptualize.

According to Yang, Weipeng, and Li (2022), they discovered that an effective support and implementation of mother tongue education in the Foundation Phase requires robust policies, teacher training, quality resources, and active community involvement. Although challenges exist, investing in mother tongue education can lead to improved learning outcomes, lower dropout rates, and the preservation of linguistic heritage. A balanced, multilingual approach ensures that learners develop strong literacy skills in their native language while gradually becoming proficient in English and other languages. All stakeholders in education, including principals, teachers, government representatives, school governing bodies,

parents, and learners, should collaborate to support and implement mother tongue education in the early grades.

Khanyile and Awung (2023) supported the idea of Heilage et al., (2020), by asserting that learning in one's native language offers numerous benefits, such as enhanced sociocultural development, better academic performance, reduced repetition, and lower dropout rates. Learners who are fluent in the language of instruction are better able to generate and communicate new knowledge, as well as engage with the learning process by asking and answering questions and offering suggestions.

2.7 THE BENEFITS OF MOTHER TONGUE USAGE IN EDUCATION

According to Hurwitz and Kambel (2020), the mother tongue, or native language, is the first language a child learns and grows up speaking. Studies by Mngometulu (2023) and Makwinja (2020), point out that consistently show that learning in one's first language promotes cognitive development, academic success, and a strong cultural identity. In multilingual nations like South Africa and India, mother tongue education is vital for fostering inclusivity and improving learning outcomes. For children to effectively link their home and school experiences, teachers must communicate with them in their native language. Since the mother tongue plays a key role in a child's intellectual, cultural, and personal development, the Language Friendly School Initiative (2020) highlighted the numerous benefits of using the mother tongue in education. Here are a few of the key benefits:

- **Better connection with culture**

Language is crucial for preserving culture, as it is deeply intertwined with a person's cultural identity and heritage. It reflects the history, values, customs, and traditions of a particular community or region (Huda & Haaenilah, 2024). Children who maintain and use their mother tongue are better able to remain connected to their origins and maintain a strong sense

of self. Furthermore, it fosters respect and understanding among children, equips them with the necessary skills to engage fully in society, and contributes to safeguarding the rich cultural and traditional legacies embedded in all languages worldwide.

- **Cognitive and Academic Development**

Wildmon, Anthony & Kamau (2023), stated that learning in one's native language improves academic performance and cognitive development. Children who are taught in their mother tongue usually have a stronger language foundation, which boosts their overall learning ability. A solid grounding in the mother tongue fosters a more positive attitude toward education and leads to a better understanding of the curriculum (Shepherd, 2020). Additionally, fluency in a native language makes it easier to learn new languages. When children are read to in their mother tongue from an early age, it also strengthens their literacy skills in other languages.

- **Parental Involvement**

According to Mseko (2021), parental involvement in the educational process can result in higher parental involvement in school activities and better support for their children's learning, especially when it comes to mother tongue education. They can assist with homework and take part in school events.

- **Development of personal, social, and cultural identity**

The mother tongue plays a key role in shaping cultural and personal identity. It helps individuals understand themselves, their surroundings, and their history, which forms the foundation of their identity. From the moment a person first hears their native language in the womb, it subtly influences their thoughts and emotions, shaping their perspectives (Ndllela, 2021). This connection strengthens ties between family, society, culture, and identity. A solid grasp of one's social roots and personal character fosters

self-acceptance. Additionally, by preserving different languages within society, one's cultural identity is nurtured, impacting various aspects of their life.

- **Stronger family bonds**

Learning in one's mother tongue greatly contributes to personal development and fosters stronger family connections. It facilitates communication and sharing of experiences among family members, which in turn strengthens familial bonds. Furthermore, Mngometule (2023) indicated that mother-tongue education promotes respect and understanding within families, helps preserve cultural heritage, and enhances academic achievement. This form of education plays a crucial role in promoting inclusivity and high-quality learning, while also providing students with a clearer sense of their identity and place in the world.

- **Improved communication skills**

Proficiency in one's mother tongue enhances communication skills within families, communities, and local settings. Learners who speak in their native language can express themselves more clearly, accurately, and passionately, which is especially important for complex topics, emotions, and relationships (Tilovova, 2023). Early interactions between parents and children play a pivotal role in the development of communication skills, which are essential for academic success and active engagement in the learning process. According to Ndlela (2021), parental practices such as conversations and storytelling significantly enhance children's vocabulary acquisition and conceptual understanding. In this way, mother tongue education provides a strong foundation for learning and strengthens communication abilities in the early years.

Therefore, one of the advantages of using the mother tongue in education, according to this study, is parental involvement in their children's learning. Mother

tongue serves as a medium for cultural preservation, expressiveness, inclusivity, cognitive development, and self-determination, in addition to being a means of communication (Ssentanda and Asiimwe, 2023). A more varied, connected, and vibrant global society is a result of the value placed on mother tongues.

2.8 HOW MOTHER TONGUE TEACHING AND LEARNING INFLUENCE THE PERFORMANCE OF ENGLISH AT THE FOUNDATION PHASE.

Education experts have shown significant interest in the impact of mother-tongue instruction on foundational English skills. They widely agree that mother tongue instruction in the foundation phase significantly impacts a child's ability to learn and perform in English. Research in linguistics, cognitive development, and education highlights the role of the first language in shaping literacy, comprehension, and overall academic success. Some studies suggest that teaching learners in their native language can enhance academic performance. For example, studies conducted by Shepherd (2020), Khanyile and Awung (2023) and Mseko (2021) found that teaching primary school learners in their mother tongue improved their literacy. Similarly, a (2020) study by Sorenson, Duncan and Paradis, highlighted the benefits of mother-tongue education, including aiding the learning of second or foreign languages and improving educational efficiency. Wildmon, Anthony and Kamau (2023), argue that a child's grammar learned through their mother tongue helps them rapidly grasp word meanings and differentiate between words in various languages.

However, other researchers note that relying too heavily on mother-tongue instruction can lead to overdependence on the language, making it harder for learners to acquire English. Additionally, using the mother tongue might limit learners' interaction and exposure to English, which can hinder language development. Mseko (2021) argues that learners must have strong language skills at an advanced developmental stage to succeed academically and compete in the educational system.

In African contexts, where learners predominantly speak African languages at home, in their communities, and in classrooms, this reliance on mother-tongue communication can pose challenges for learning English. Since learners use English only in the classroom, their English language proficiency (ELP) remains very limited, resulting in difficulties understanding the language, struggling academically, and engaging with class activities (Heilage et al., 2020). Learners often face challenges with spelling, reading comprehension, and other literacy skills. Ssentanda and Asiimwe (2023) also point out that learners with low English language proficiency who use English as the medium of instruction often experience negative effects, such as poor academic achievement, lack of academic progress, low self-esteem, and emotional insecurity.

This study aims to investigate parental engagement in mother language teaching and learning in foundation phase primary schools in the Man'ombe Circuit of Limpopo Province, Mopani District. Thus, the data suggest that mother-tongue instruction in the foundation phase can have both positive and negative effects on learners' performance in English and overall academic success. The benefits encompass increased enrolment rates, enhanced academic achievement, strengthened parent–teacher communication, extended school retention, reduced grade repetition, and improved cognitive development among multilingual learners when compared to their monolingual counterparts.

However, there are also disadvantages to mother-tongue education. Some researchers argue that it could hinder the learning of additional languages, which are important for future job prospects, and make it more challenging for learners to communicate, listen, and take notes in English. If learners are taught exclusively in their native language, they might face challenges when pursuing higher education or global job opportunities. In conclusion, while there are both advantages and disadvantages to mother-tongue instruction, a balanced approach is necessary. The decision on which language to use for teaching should

consider available resources and contextual factors. Governments, educators, and parents must collaborate to ensure students develop a strong foundation in their native language while also gaining proficiency in other languages for global engagement.

2.9 CONCLUSION

The second chapter reviewed the literature, focusing on the theoretical framework that informed the study. It also provided an overview of the background of mother tongue teaching and learning at the foundation phase, examining both international and South African perspectives on mother tongue education. The chapter explored the role of parents in supporting mother tongue education, the benefits of using the mother tongue in education, and how mother tongue teaching impacts English performance at the foundation phase. A key focus was on the effect of parent-teacher conferences, workshops, and shared learning activities that encourage active parental involvement in their children's language development in Man'ombe Circuit, Mopani District, Limpopo Province, South Africa. The next chapter will focus on the empirical research, detailing the research paradigm, design, methodology, ethical considerations, and the study's credibility and reliability.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes and discusses the research design and technique used to gather information on the role that parents play in their children's mother tongue instruction at the foundation phase of Man'ombe Circuit in Mopani District, Limpopo Province, South Africa. Other aspects covered in this chapter include sampling of the participants, a detailed description of data collection, and data analysis. There is also a discussion of ethical considerations and how to establish trustworthiness. This study employed qualitative research methodology.

3.1.1 The main research question of the study

What are the roles of parents in teaching and learning the mother tongue in the foundation phase of Man'ombe Circuit, Mopani District, Limpopo Province, South Africa?

3.1.2 Sub-research questions of the study

- What are the strategies to be used by parents to enhance the performance of the foundation phase learners in mother tongue teaching and learning of Man'ombe Circuit, Mopani District, Limpopo Province, South Africa?

- How does the mother tongue benefit learners in the Foundation Phase classrooms of Man'ombe Circuit, Mopani District, Limpopo Province, South Africa?

- How does mother tongue teaching and learning influence English at the foundation phase level of Man'ombe Circuit, Mopani District, Limpopo Province, South Africa?

3.1.3 Main aim of the study

To investigate the parental role in the teaching and learning of the mother tongue in the foundation phase classroom of Man'ombe Circuit, Mopani District, Limpopo Province, South Africa.

3.1.4 Sub-research aim of the study

- To identify and analyse the parenting strategies employed by parents in supporting mother tongue teaching and learning among Foundation Phase learners in the Man'ombe Circuit, and to evaluate their effectiveness based on learners' language proficiency, participation, and academic performance as reported by parents and teachers.
- To investigate the effectiveness of the mother tongue as a language of instruction in Foundation Phase classrooms of Man'ombe Circuit, Mopani District, Limpopo Province, South Africa.
- To determine how mother tongue teaching in the foundation phase classrooms of Man'ombe Circuit, Mopani District, Limpopo Province, South Africa, can be utilized to expand literacy.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

This paradigm was well-suited to the study as it focused on understanding the phenomenon from the participants' perspectives and examined how individuals interact within their social, historical, and cultural contexts (Pandey & Pandey,

2021). Guided by the constructivist paradigm, the study adopted a qualitative research approach, which allows for an in-depth exploration of participants' lived experiences and meanings they attach to parental involvement in their children's education.

Within this framework, the researcher was able to gain deeper insights into how participants construct and interpret their experiences regarding parental involvement in mother tongue teaching and learning. The study explored how parents apply their knowledge and skills in supporting their children's learning through their emotions, behaviours, beliefs, and intentions.

To align with the constructivist paradigm and qualitative approach, data were generated through methods such as interviews, observations, and document analysis, enabling the researcher to co-construct meaning with participants. Additionally, the researcher's background as a teacher provided valuable insight into the perspectives of educators, allowing her to interpret participants' experiences within a relevant educational context.

3.3 QUALITATIVE APPROACH

Qualitative research is an approach that enables me, as the researcher, to gain direct insight into the social world under study through active engagement with participants and by prioritising their perspectives and lived experiences (Munnangi, Lohani & Misra, 2020). Rather than assuming the existence of a single objective reality, the researcher acknowledges that multiple realities exist, shaped by individuals' interpretations of their social contexts. In this study, the researcher positioned himself/herself as an appreciative inquirer, recognising the participants' parents, as the true experts of their own experiences (Arabelen & Kaya, 2021).

In line with Turale (2020), The researcher emphasised the importance of understanding the context of the study, recognising diverse realities, and valuing

participants' voices. My study sought to explore the role of parents in the teaching and learning of the mother tongue at the foundation phase in Man'ombe Circuit, Mopani District, Limpopo Province, South Africa. Given the exploratory and context-bound nature of this inquiry, the researcher selected a qualitative research approach. As Crossman (2021) explains, qualitative research involves a systematic and interpretive examination of socially constructed environments through the analysis of narrative data, which aligns with the aims of my study.

The researcher adopted this approach because it allowed himself/herself to explore the phenomenon in its natural setting with minimal disruption to participants' daily lives, thereby ensuring that their experiences were represented authentically. This approach also enabled me to collect rich, descriptive data expressed through participants' spoken and written words, which the researcher considered essential for understanding parental involvement in mother tongue education (Turale, 2020). Furthermore, the researcher was guided by the understanding that qualitative research focuses on how individuals interpret their experiences, construct meaning, and understand their roles within specific contexts (Munnangi, Lohani & Misra, 2020). By conducting the study in a real-world setting, the researcher was able to gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of how parents support their children's mother tongue learning in the foundation phase (Crossman, 2021).

The researcher specifically chose the qualitative method because it provided participants with the opportunity to express themselves freely, share their perspectives, and relate their experiences in their own words. This enabled me to capture detailed and contextually grounded insights into the phenomenon under investigation. As supported by Arabelen and Kaya (2021), qualitative research acknowledges multiple realities and prioritises participants' viewpoints, which I found particularly relevant to this study.

It is important to note that my intention was not to generalise the findings beyond the specific participants and context of the study. Instead, I aimed to develop a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of how parents contribute to and support the teaching and learning of the mother tongue in the foundation phase within the Man'ombe Circuit. Through this approach, the researcher was able to generate meaningful insights grounded in the lived experiences of the participants, thereby addressing the research problem in a contextually relevant manner.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

Cresswell (2021) describes research design as a framework of guidelines and procedures to be followed in addressing a research problem. The primary purpose of a research design is to provide a structured framework that facilitates the systematic collection of relevant data in the most efficient manner, while minimizing time, cost, and effort. The selection of a research design in qualitative inquiry is determined by the study's objectives, the nature and scope of the research questions, as well as the researcher's competencies and the resources available to conduct the investigation. Additionally, the selected research process reflects the distinct methodologies and perspectives associated with different design approaches.

For this study, phenomenology was adopted to guide and structure the investigation. As noted by Kumatongo and Muzata (2021) and Morgan (2022), a case study involves an in-depth examination of a single entity, such as a program, institution, event, or individual within a complex setting. Henson Stewart and Bedford (2020), explain that a phenome-logical design serves as a strategic approach that enables researchers to develop a comprehensive understanding of a particular phenomenon. In this study, the case study method was used to explore

a specific instance, aiming to identify and analyze the origins of the issue and how it has been addressed (Pandey & Pandey, 2021). The primary objective of a case study is to gain an in-depth understanding of a particular subject or situation. By employing this design, the researcher was able to gain valuable insights into the perspectives of foundation phase teachers and their direct experiences in incorporating parental involvement in mother tongue teaching and learning. This aligns with Creswell and Baez (2020)'s argument that case studies aim to understand events from the participants' viewpoints.

According to Munnangi, Lohani, & Misra, (2020), case studies help readers grasp the relationships between concepts and theoretical principles. To achieve the study's objective, examining the role of parents in supporting their children's mother tongue acquisition and use it was essential to analyse and interpret the meaning participants attributed to their daily experiences. In particular, the study focused on the first-hand experiences of parents assisting their children with learning and using their mother tongue in foundation phase classrooms.

3.5 POPULATION AND SAMPLING OF THE STUDY

Arabelen, & Kaya, (2021) define sampling as "the process or technique of selecting a representative portion of the population" to determine the characteristics or parameters of the entire group. In research, the purpose of population and sampling is to make inferences about the broader population based on the data collected from the selected sample.

3.5.1 Population

A population refers to any group of individuals, objects, or events that share specific characteristics and are of interest to a researcher. It represents a broader group from which a sample is drawn. Henson, Stewart and Bedford (2020) define a population as a group of people with shared traits, while Pandey and Pandey

(2021) describe it as a collection of individuals, objects, or events that a researcher aims to study due to their common characteristics.

This study was conducted in Limpopo Province, which consists of five district municipalities, with a specific focus on the Mopani District. The research was limited to the Man'ombe Circuit, which comprises 36 primary schools. These schools employ a total of 724 teachers and have an overall student enrolment of 22,825. To determine the exact number of male and female teachers, further data analysis is required.

The Foundation Phase was selected for this study because it is considered a crucial stage in developing an interest in learning and fostering positive attitudes toward education. Struggles at this stage can have long-term effects on a child's academic journey. This population was chosen specifically because it includes educators directly involved in mother tongue instruction, who have first-hand experience with the significance of parental involvement in their children's education.

3.5.2 Sampling

Sukmawati (2023) describes sampling as the process of selecting specific individuals, groups, events, or elements to represent an entire subset. A sample refers to a portion of the population from which measurements are taken. Morgan (2022), defines sampling as the practice of selecting any subset of a population to serve as a representative sample. Morgan further emphasizes that sampling is based on the principle that a small number of observations should be reflective of the entire population under study. In this study, purposive sampling was used to select participants in alignment with the research objectives. This sampling method was chosen because it allowed the researcher to deliberately select participants and schools based on their relevance and potential to provide valuable insights (Henson Stewart & Bedford, 2020).

Khatri, (2020) researchers utilizing purposive sampling must first carefully assess the parameters of the population before selecting the sample cases. Sukmawati (2023) further explains that this process entails identifying and selecting individuals or groups with relevant knowledge or experience regarding a particular phenomenon. Therefore, departmental heads, educators, and parents from sampled schools who played a role in implementing parental involvement in teaching and learning the mother tongue in the Foundation Phase were chosen.

3.5.2.1 Selection of participants

The schools that participated were purposively selected due to their engagement in incorporating parental involvement in mother tongue teaching within foundation phase classrooms. The researcher also used purposive sampling to handpick participants within those five schools based on their experience teaching learners in the foundation phase using the mother tongue as the medium of instruction. The Man'ombe Circuit comprises 36 primary schools. Due to the large size of the circuit, the researcher selected one Foundation Phase DH, one Foundation Phase teacher, and one parent from each of five schools, resulting in a total of fifteen (15) participants, six male and nine female. Teachers were required to have at least three years of experience teaching in the foundation phase, while department heads needed a minimum of five years of experience in their leadership roles.

3.5.2.2 Profiling of the research sites

Two of the five primary schools selected for the study are in rural areas, where there is a lack of basic resources such as water, sanitation, and healthcare facilities. The remaining three schools are situated in semi-urban areas, which are marked by overcrowded housing and a high population density. However, these urban areas have better-developed road infrastructure, education, and healthcare services compared to the rural areas where the first two schools are located. All

the schools fall under the Man’ombe Circuit in the Mopani District of Limpopo Province.

PARTICIPATING SCHOOL	TYPE OF SCHOOL
School A (Sch-A)	Rural area
School B (Sch-B)	Semi-urban area
School C (Sch-C)	Semi-urban area
School D (Sch-D)	Rural area
School A (Sch-E)	Semi-urban area

Table 3.3: Profiling of research sites

3.6 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

To this study, a qualitative method of data collection was used. According to Sharma (2022), these data are referred to as primary data since they were gathered directly from the participants. Data collection involves systematic and careful gathering of information related to research sub-problems using various methods such as focus groups, interviews, participant observation, case studies, and narratives (Khoa, Hung & Hejsalem-Brahmi, 2023). To collect qualitative data, Morgan, (2022) emphasizes that the researcher must select strategies that align with the research questions. In other words, the data collection techniques play a crucial role in shaping the information that is gathered.

For this study, data were collected using tools designed for this purpose, compiled, and analyzed qualitatively after being compared to other data. The researcher employed semi-structured interviews, document analysis, observations, and audio recordings to gather the data necessary to answer the research questions.

Semi-structured interview

Document analysis

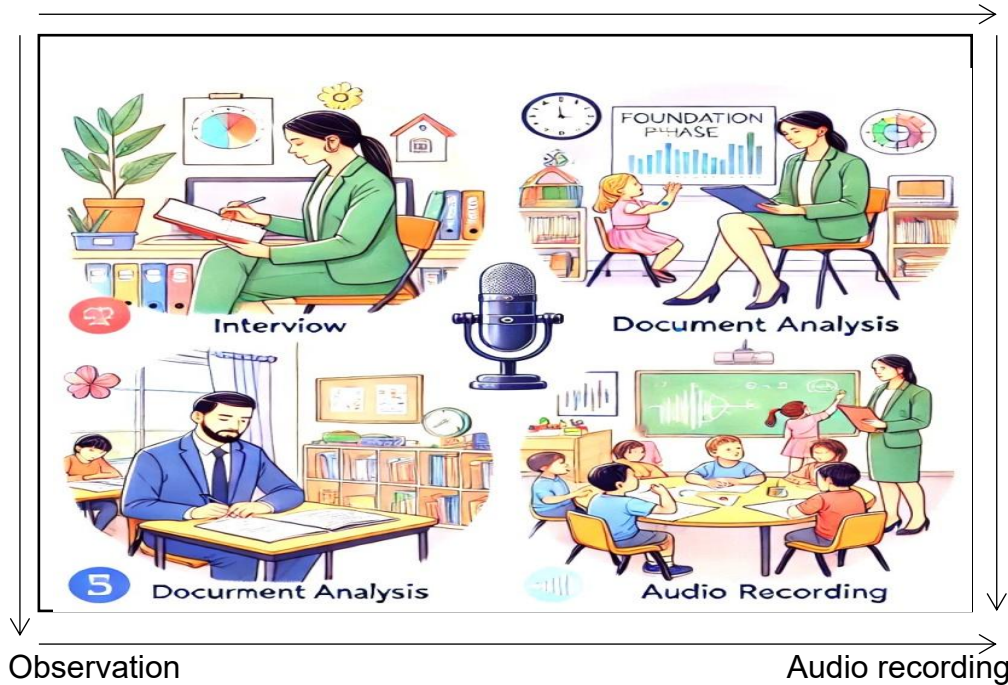


Figure 3.2: Illustration of data gathering methods

To this study, the above picture illustrates the complementary use of multiple qualitative data collection methods, interviews, document analysis, audio recordings, and observation. Each method serves a distinct function: interviews capture participants' voices and lived experiences, document analysis provides institutional and contextual evidence, audio recordings preserve accuracy and subtle communicative cues, while observation allows the researcher to witness behaviors and interactions directly. Together, they form a triangulated approach that strengthens the credibility and richness of the study. Their importance lies in how they collectively enrich narrative interpretations.

Interviews provide depth and meaning, documents anchor findings in tangible artifacts, recordings ensure authenticity, and observations reveal the realities of practice beyond verbal accounts. When integrated, these methods allow the researcher to weave a holistic, trustworthy narrative that reflects both individual perspectives and broader educational contexts. This multi-method strategy

ensures that interpretations are not only descriptive but also context-sensitive, nuanced, and aligned with the complexities of real-world educational settings.

3.6.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Interviews are widely regarded as one of the most effective ways to gain insight into participants' viewpoints. Khoa, Hung, and Hejsalem-Brahmi (2023) emphasize that in-depth interviews are particularly valuable for exploring how individuals make sense of the world and interpret significant events in their lives, especially when guided by open-ended questions. In this study, the interview schedule was employed as a primary tool for data collection. Given that interviews often yield rich, meaningful insights and participants are generally willing to share their experiences, particularly when combined with observational methods, the researcher selected this approach to strengthen the depth and credibility of the findings.

The interview questions were carefully designed to align with the study's focus: examining the role of parents in mother tongue instruction and acquisition during the Foundation Phase in the Man'ombe Circuit, Mopani District, Limpopo Province, South Africa. Wishkoski (2020) underscores that interviews are a cornerstone of qualitative research, noting that they are most effective when researchers encourage participants to share their experiences openly while maintaining control over the framing of questions. In this way, interviews in the present study not only facilitated the collection of detailed, context-sensitive data but also ensured that participants' voices were authentically represented in the narrative interpretation.

For this study, the researcher opted to use semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. These questions were designed to gain insights into the dynamics of teaching and supporting learners in each classroom setting. The use of open-ended questions enabled the researcher to obtain rich and detailed

responses, offering deeper insights into teachers' approaches to providing learner support. Interviews are also advantageous in assessing verbal human behavior, as they clarify responses.

Five department heads, five foundation phase educators, and five parents were interviewed face-to-face, with interviews conducted after school hours in the classroom. The length of each interview was determined by the participants' responses. Before collecting data, the researcher obtained written permission from the school principals to conduct research and then spoke directly with the educators to explain the study and request their participation. Consent from the teachers was obtained before the interviews took place. Participants agreed to have the interviews recorded, and the recordings were stored securely with backups on a memory stick, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity.

3.6.2 Document analysis

The researcher analyzed documents that were typically reviewed before, during, and after the observations. Document analysis is a non-interactive method that researchers gather qualitative data with minimal or no direct interaction with participants (Armstrong, 2021). Wood, Sebar and Vecchio (2020) also emphasize the value of documents as a data source in qualitative research. Similarly, Khoa, Hung, and Hejsalem-Brahmi (2023) support this view, noting that documents help validate findings obtained through other research methods, such as interviews, which were also used in this study. Heaton (2020) further explains that documents include any public or private records collected by qualitative researchers about a study site or its participants. In this study, the advantage of document analysis lies in its ability to provide access to participant language and direct quotes.

This study focused on written materials that could provide insights into how schools support parents, teachers, and learners facing challenges in learning

their mother tongue. Document analysis helped clarify and enhance understanding of the challenges teachers and parents face in assisting learners with mother tongue education. The documents examined in this study provided an accurate representation of how parental involvement in children's learning can be supported by educators, with the backing of school management and the district. The researcher was granted permission to review relevant documents, including Curriculum and Policy Documents, lesson plans and teaching materials, learners' written work and assessments, departmental circulars, teacher reports and reflections, and communication records between educators and parents.

3.6.3 Observations

As part of the research methodology, the researcher conducted classroom observations to collect data in a naturally occurring school environment. Observation, described as the process of learning about a phenomenon by watching behavior patterns (Ruslin, Mashuri, Rasak, Alhabsyi, & Syam, 2022), was undertaken through five lesson observations in each Foundation Phase class before any intervention. These sessions documented the physical setting, instructional materials, and visual displays to understand how the school environment facilitates inclusive education in mother tongue teaching and learning.

The observations provided valuable insights into instructional practices, classroom behavior, and teacher–learner interactions. They revealed how teachers supported learners facing difficulties, the strategies employed to accommodate diverse needs, and the extent of parental contributions to classroom learning. By examining teaching methods, lesson content, and feedback processes, the researcher gained a comprehensive understanding of how mother tongue instruction was implemented in practice. Such qualitative observation, as Crabtree and Miller (2022) note, is crucial for capturing the dynamics of teaching and

learning, identifying challenges, and suggesting strategies to strengthen both teacher and parental involvement in language acquisition during the Foundation Phase.

3.7.4 Audio recording

Audio recording is a widely used method in social and behavioral science research for documenting conversations, focus groups, and other research activities. In this study, audio recordings were used to enhance the storage of semi-structured interview data. The researcher employed audio recordings to ensure that all information was accurately captured during participant interviews. With these recordings, the researcher was able to preserve the participants' voices and the original content. Additionally, audio recordings allowed the researcher to gather more details and notice aspects that may have been missed while taking notes (Crabtree & Miller, 2022). By recording the interviews, the researcher could focus on listening to the participants, addressing important issues, and avoiding distractions associated with notetaking.

The use of audio recordings provided benefits such as efficient data collection, the ability to reuse the data flexibly, and opportunities to share it with other researchers exploring the role of parents in mother-tongue teaching and learning at the foundation phase. It also enabled the researcher to conduct an in-depth analysis of the data collected. According to Crabtree and Miller (2022), audio recordings help engage participants and provide a direct means for them to express their truth, and can be played back at any time to verify transcriptions. While audio recordings encourage participants to speak freely, Sukmawati (2023) warns that participants may sometimes feel apprehensive and may only offer valuable insights after the interview has concluded.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

In this study, qualitative data analysis was employed, as noted by Creswell (2021), to gain insights into participants' thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, which are often challenging to quantify. When using qualitative methods, data is gathered and analyzed to reach conclusions that reflect the theories, interests, and concepts that initiated the research. According to Crabtree and Miller (2022), this section provides a more detailed and profound understanding of the phenomenon being studied, allowing researchers to explore participants' perspectives, stories, and emotions.

After the data collection phase, the researcher proceeded with data analysis by reviewing the written transcripts, listening to the audio recordings, and transcribing the interviews. Some participants answered questions in Xitsonga, and these responses were translated into English. The researcher then carefully reviewed each transcript to understand the essence of the conversation and made notes on any thoughts that emerged during the process. The researcher labeled recurring themes and grouped them into categories, creating a list of key topics from the interviews.

Next, the researcher began to form an overall impression based on participants' responses and potential outcomes. In line with qualitative research methodology, a formal framework was developed to simplify the data and facilitate its easier interpretation. To make sense of the data, coding techniques were applied to identify and label underlying themes that were similar across the data (Peck, Short, & Olsen, 2020). The process of analyzing large volumes of data to extract meaning is referred to as data analysis. According to Creswell (2021), data analysis involves three stages: organizing the data, reducing the data through summarization and categorization, and identifying and linking patterns and themes. The data analysis methods used in this study aimed to document, record,

and report on Foundation Phase teachers' understanding of parental involvement in mother tongue teaching and learning.

In analyzing the data regarding parental support for students struggling to learn their mother tongue, the research objectives and predefined study framework were considered. Content and thematic analysis tools were employed to analyze the data. As Crabtree and Miller (2022) describe content analysis is a technique used to compile and examine text to categorize, summarise and tabulate it. The content analyzed in this study includes words, sentences, images, symbols, and concepts.

3.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Creswell and Baez (2020) emphasize the importance of trustworthiness in qualitative research, as it ensures the validity of the study's findings. The credibility of the study is crucial to confirm that the conclusions and interpretations are accurate. Adler (2022) defines trustworthiness as the extent to which the results genuinely reflect the data collected. According to Stahl and King (2020), trustworthiness refers to the extent to which the conclusions are firmly grounded in the data and the overall argument is logically and empirically well-supported. In the Mopani District of Limpopo Province, the study's findings were based on real issues faced by teachers in implementing parental involvement, without any distortion. To ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research, emphasis must be placed on key criteria such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Adler, 2022), each of which is elaborated upon in the subsequent discussion.

3.8.1 Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research is rooted in the truthfulness, accuracy, and correctness of the study's findings. Establishing trustworthiness is a critical aspect

of qualitative research, as highlighted by Stahl and King (2020). Creswell and Baez (2020) suggest that credibility can be achieved through methods such as member checking, triangulation, a clear methodology and data plan, and thorough explanations of the study's context. To ensure the study's trustworthiness, the researcher conducted a pilot study in which each participant was interviewed. Maintaining detailed documentation is another key factor in building credibility; while validity and believability are often confused, they are distinct concepts. To strengthen the study's credibility, the researcher interviewed every participant from five carefully selected schools as part of the pilot study. Additionally, follow-up questions were asked to address any new points raised by the participants, thus shedding light on the experiences of primary school teachers who faced challenges in their parental roles while teaching and learning the mother tongue.

3.8.2 Confirmability

In qualitative research, conformance refers to how accurately the data reflects the information provided by participants and how those interpretations are applied. It represents the final reliability standard that a qualitative researcher must meet (Muzari, Shava, & Shonhiwa, 2022). The goal of confirmability is to ensure that the results are primarily influenced by the participants and not by the researcher. According to Allen (2022), researchers can establish confirmability by aligning their theoretical framework, reviewing relevant literature, identifying gaps, clearly outlining their methodology and data plan, and discussing both theoretical and practical implications of their research. An audit trail, which details the data collection, processing, and interpretation procedures, is the most common method to ensure confirmability. In this study, the researcher used techniques such as document analysis, audio recordings, observations, and interviews to guarantee confidentiality. The researcher took steps to ensure that the conclusions were shaped by the thoughts and experiences of Foundation Phase teachers, rather than the researcher's personal traits and preferences. Triangulation was

emphasised to reduce the potential for investigator bias and support the credibility of the study.

3.8.3 Dependability

Byerly u(2021) defines dependability in research as the consistency, reliability, and stability of findings and interpretations throughout the course of the study. It emphasizes the researchers' ability to establish and maintain confidence in the accuracy and trustworthiness of their results. Researchers can enhance the dependability of their qualitative research by constructing a well-documented research design, which includes clear descriptions of the study's objectives, methodologies, and processes. They can also strengthen the research's credibility by promoting transparency, rigour, and validation, while addressing potential biases. One effective way to ensure dependability is through an inquiry audit by an external researcher, as suggested by Muzari, Shava, & Shonhiwa, (2022). According to Stahl and King, (2020), this method involves a researcher who was not part of the data collection or analysis process reviewing the research design, data collection methods, analysis, and conclusions to confirm that the findings are accurate and well-supported by the data. For this study, the researcher created an auditable record of the data collection process, including a detailed interview guide, observation checklist, and interview protocol based on the research questions.

3.8.4 Transferability

In qualitative research, transferability refers to the extent to which the findings can be applied to similar situations or contexts (Allen, 2022). It is also known as "translatability" and involves determining whether the research can be relevant in different settings. Transferability is closely related to external validity and generalisability, as it concerns extending the findings from one context to another for a broader and more meaningful understanding. To establish transferability,

researchers must provide evidence that the study's conclusions, conditions, time frames, and demographics can be relevant in various contexts. According to Byerly (2021), transferability encourages readers to connect the research to their own experiences and contexts, rather than making blanket generalizations.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Everyone has the inherent right to be treated with dignity and respect. As Suri, (2020) notes, researchers must honor the rights, needs, values, and preferences of participants. The researcher recognized the importance of conducting research ethically, ensuring that methods were both respectful of participants' time and convenience and scientifically valid. Safdar, Banja and Meltzer (2020) emphasise that researchers have a moral duty to safeguard the rights of participants who provide information for the study, requiring adherence to ethical guidelines when involving human subjects. This ethical approach helped ensure that the study could yield meaningful and valid results. Ethical issues in this study included obtaining permission to collect data, maintaining confidentiality, respecting participants' autonomy, and ensuring informed consent.

3.9.1 Permission to collect data

Before data collection, the researcher sought ethical approval from the university's Ethics Committee. After reviewing the application, the committee approved the research on 8 January 2025 (Appendix B). The researcher subsequently requested permission from the Limpopo Department of Education, Mopani District (Appendix C). Thereafter, permission was obtained from the District Director (Appendix D). Following the school authorities' permission (Appendix E), the researcher contacted potential participants and invited them to take part in the study. Consent forms and information sheets were also provided to participants to ensure voluntary participation and informed consent (Appendix F).

Various data collection instruments were used in this study. These included the interview schedule (Appendix G), which guided the semi-structured interviews with participants. A letter from the language editor is attached (Appendix H). Appropriate communication channels were used to distribute permission letters and research instruments to the relevant institutions.

3.9.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

Confidentiality and anonymity are essential in research, especially when dealing with sensitive participant information (Dougherly, 2021). To safeguard privacy, the researcher refrained from using the actual names of institutions or participants, instead assigning pseudonyms. All private data, including transcripts and audiotapes, was securely stored in a locked safe and would not be disclosed without the participants' explicit consent. Additionally, any documentation that could reveal the identities of participants or locations was carefully managed to prevent identification. Wood, Sebar and Vecchio (2020) argue that upon completion of the study, the Department of Elementary Education would have access to the findings.

3.9.3 Respect for individual autonomy

Wood, Sebar and Vecchio (2020) further posited that autonomy in research emphasises the importance of respecting each participant's rights. In this study, informed consent was obtained to ensure participants understood the purpose of the research. The researcher clearly explained the study's goals and informed participants that they had the right to choose whether to take part. This approach allows participants to evaluate the potential benefits and drawbacks of participation and gives them the option to withdraw at any point if they decide they no longer wish to continue, thereby respecting their autonomy (Suri, 2020).

3.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter provides a general overview of the research design and methodology used to undertake the study. The methodology section comprehensively addressed the research paradigm, research design, target population and sampling procedures, data collection techniques, and data analysis methods, all of which were systematically outlined and rigorously discussed in accordance with the established research protocols. Additionally, these procedures included descriptions, discussions, and explanations of the reliability and ethical standards that were upheld. The presentation, analysis, and discussion of data will be the main topics of the upcoming chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of parents in the native language teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase of the Man'ombe Circuit in the Mopani District, Limpopo Province. This chapter outlines the study's findings, aiming to address the primary research question, sub-research questions, and the study's objectives as stated in section 1.5 of Chapter 1. This study adopted a qualitative approach within the constructivist paradigm to explore the role of parents in teaching mother tongue and learning in the Foundation Phase within Man'ombe Circuit, Mopani District, and Limpopo Province. The previous chapter outlined the research design and methodology, covering aspects such as the research approach, paradigm, design, sampling techniques, population sampling, data collection, data analysis, quality criteria and ethical considerations.

This chapter focuses on presenting and interpreting the data collected through interviews, document analysis, and observations. The objective is to analyze the findings and provide answers to the research questions that guided the study. Interview responses were analysed and presented in their original form to ensure that participants' perspectives and experiences regarding the implementation of parental roles in mother tongue education are accurately conveyed.

The findings are structured according to key themes and sub-themes, supported by statements from Foundation Phase teachers and parents. Additionally, the researcher engaged with relevant literature to contextualize the findings and concluded with a summary of key insights drawn from the study.

4.2 DATA ANALYSIS APPROACH

In the qualitative research approach, data analysis occurs continuously throughout the data collection process. The collected data were interpreted to draw conclusions that reflect the core interests, theories, and ideas that initiated the study. Sukmawati (2023) describes qualitative data analysis as the process of deriving explanations, insights, or interpretations from the qualitative data gathered from participants. Similarly, Creswell (2021) characterizes qualitative data analysis as an intellectual effort to make sense of the large volume of collected data. From the researcher's perspective, qualitative data analysis involves understanding and interpreting the collected content to derive meaningful research findings. However, Creswell & Baez (2020) and Pandey and Pandey (2021) argue that data analysis serves as the evidence used in the investigative process and is inherently dependent on data collection.

This section presents the study's findings, which were gathered through interviews conducted with fifteen participants, ten educators, and 5 parents from five selected primary schools in Man'ombe Circuit, Mopani District, Limpopo Province. The data obtained through interviews, document analysis, and observations were analyzed using both content analysis and thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and insights. In this study, content analysis and thematic analysis were applied using an inductive approach rooted in a constructivist perspective. This approach was designed to explore the role of parents in mother tongue teaching and learning within the framework of inclusive education in the Foundation Phase of the Man'ombe Circuit, Mopani District, Limpopo Province. Content analysis is a research technique used to determine the presence of specific words, concepts, or themes within qualitative data. This method is applied to various text forms, including interviews, open-ended responses, and even visual materials such as images or videos.

Conversely, thematic analysis offers a purely qualitative approach, organizing data according to participants' characteristics, such as age, gender, and home language. Each method has distinct strengths and serves as a valuable tool in qualitative research (Humble & Mozelius, 2022). This analytical approach facilitated an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, ensuring their perspectives were accurately captured. The data collected in this chapter were structured around themes and sub-themes derived from interviews, document analysis, participant observation, and audio recordings, and examined through coding and decoding to enable the themes (categories) and sub-themes to emerge naturally. Before presenting and interpreting the findings, the researcher first provided background information on each participant. The participants' profiles were developed based on details obtained from the interview guide and responses given during the interviews.

Once the data had been collected, the researcher began the familiarization process by regularly listening to the audio recordings, transcribing the interviews from the tapes onto paper, and thoroughly reading through the written transcripts. Through this process, the researcher gained an overall sense of the participants' perspectives and an initial understanding of the emerging results. Following a qualitative approach, a formal system was developed to derive meaning from the collected data in a manner that was both clear and systematic. This involved coding the data and highlighting underlying ideas. Similar types of data were then grouped into categories based on related ideas and recurring themes. Furthermore, the researcher viewed data presentation as a crucial step, employing various graphical formats to visually represent the relationships among different data sets. This approach facilitated the analysis and interpretation of key findings.

4.3 PARTICIPANTS' BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Biographic details provide a foundation for understanding the research context. According to Lunga (2024), analyzing biographic data is crucial in qualitative research as it offers valuable insights into the lives and experiences of participants and allows the key attributes of the study's participants to be examined. The purpose of this analysis is to identify and interpret emerging trends in relation to the participants' biographic characteristics. This data can be collected through various methods and applied to explore a variety of research questions and objectives. In this study, biographies provide important context. The aim of gathering these biographical details is to help explain emerging trends based on demographic factors (Myende & Nhlumayo, 2022). Thus, in this analysis, the various attributes to be discussed are age, gender, years of experience in teaching/learning, highest qualification, and the grade they taught. The identification of participants is coded as follows: Sch-A, Sch-B (referring to schools 1 and 2 at the primary level), DH1FP, DH2FP (departmental heads 1 and 2 from the foundation phase), and T1FP, T2FP (teachers 1 and 2 from the foundation phase), P1, P2 represented parents who selected to be part of the study. This system ensured that their identities remained confidential and were only known to the researchers. Table 4.1 below presents the biographical information of the five schools in the Man'ombe Circuit, Mopani District, and Limpopo Province that took part in this study.

Schools	Participants	Gender	Age	Qualifications	Teaching experiences	Grade
Sch-A	DH1FP	F	46	Matric plus B.Ed. Honours Degree in inclusive	15 years	Gr 1
	T1FP	F	36	Matric plus B.Ed. Degree in Foundation Phase	12 years	Gr 2

				B.Ed. Honours Degree in ECD		
	P1	M	31			
Sch-B	DH2FP	F	52	Matric plus 3 years in teaching Diploma	23 years	Gr 3
	T2FP	F	56	Junior Primary Teachers Diploma (JPTD)	16 years	Gr 2
	P2	M	28			
Sch-C	DH3FP	M	56	Matric plus B.Ed. Degree in Foundation Phase	19 years	Gr 2
	T3FP	F	50	Matric plus Bachelor of Education Honours in Special Needs.	25 years	Gr 3
	P3	F	30			
Sch-D	DH4FP	F	39	Matric plus Junior Primary Teachers Diploma (JPTD)	11 years	Gr 1
	T4FP	M	31	Matric plus B.Ed. Degree in Foundation Phase	15 years	Gr 2
	P4	F	44			
Sch-E	DH5FP	F	40	Matric plus Junior Primary Teachers Diploma (JPTD)	30 years	Gr R
	T5FP	M	42	Matric plus B.Ed. Degree in Foundation Phase B.Ed. Honours Degree in ECD	11 years	Gr 1
	P5	F	22			

Table 4.4: Profile of the participants-Foundation Phase educators and parents

4.3.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

This study involved a purposive sample of participants selected based on their direct involvement in teaching and learning the mother tongue in the Foundation Phase. The participants included Foundation Phase teachers, their Departmental Heads, and parents from selected primary schools. Each participant was selected for their ability to provide rich, relevant, and diverse perspectives on the role of parents in the mother-tongue education process. The diversity among participants in terms of teaching experience, parental involvement, and professional responsibilities enabled the researcher to gather comprehensive qualitative data. This section provides an overview of the participants' backgrounds to contextualize their responses and contributions to the study. The first category consists of the departmental heads from five schools that participated in the study.

4.3.1.1 The first category:

Participant 1, DH1FP, is a 46-year-old female Departmental Head with a Matric qualification and a B.Ed. Honours Degree in Inclusive Education. She has 15 years of work experience and currently teaches Grade 1 in the Foundation Phase.

The second participant, DH2FP, is a 52-year-old female Departmental Head who holds a Matric qualification along with a three-year Teaching Diploma. With 23 years of experience in the field, she is currently responsible for teaching Grade 3 in the Foundation Phase.

Participant 3, DH3FP, is a 56-year-old male Departmental Head with a Matric qualification and a Bachelor of Education degree specialising in the Foundation Phase. He has accumulated 19 years of professional experience and is currently instructing Grade 2 learners within the Foundation Phase.

The fourth participant, DH4FP, is a 39-year-old female Departmental Head who possesses a Matric qualification along with a Junior Primary Teachers Diploma (JPTD). With 11 years of professional experience, she is currently entrusted with teaching Grade 1 in the Foundation Phase.

The fifth participant, DH5FP, is a 40-year-old female Departmental Head who holds a Matric qualification and a Junior Primary Teachers Diploma (JPTD). She has amassed 30 years of teaching experience and is currently responsible for instructing Grade R in the Foundation Phase.

4.3.1.2 The second category:

This category includes educators from five schools who took part in the study.

From School A, a 36-year-old female teacher (T1FP) holds a Matric certificate along with a B.Ed. degree in Foundation Phase and a B.Ed. Honours degree in Early Childhood Development (ECD). She has 12 years of teaching experience and is currently teaching Grade 2 in the Foundation Phase.

From School B, a 56-year-old female teacher (T2FP) holds a Junior Primary Teachers Diploma (JPTD). She has 16 years of teaching experience and is currently teaching Grade 2 in the Foundation Phase.

From School C, a 50-year-old female teacher (T3FP) holds a Matric certificate and a Bachelor of Education Honours degree in Special Needs. She has 25 years of teaching experience and is currently teaching Grade 3 in the Foundation Phase.

From School D, a 31-year-old male teacher (T4FP) holds a Matric certificate and a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree. degree in the Foundation Phase. He has 15 years of teaching experience and is currently teaching Grade 2 in the Foundation Phase.

The last participant in the study is from school E, a 42-year-old male teacher (T5FP) who holds a Matric certificate, a B.Ed. degree in Foundation Phase, and a B.Ed. Honours degree in Early Childhood Development (ECD). He has 11 years of teaching experience and is currently teaching Grade 1 in the Foundation Phase.

4.3.1.3 The third category:

This category includes parents who actively contribute to their children's mother tongue acquisition during the foundation phase of education. These parents come from various backgrounds, reflecting differences in educational attainment, socioeconomic status, and language proficiency. The study involves both mothers and fathers, though their levels of involvement may differ based on cultural and social factors. While some parents have formal education and engage in structured learning activities, others rely on traditional oral practices to support their children's language development. Their participation is also influenced by factors such as employment status, access to educational resources, and personal perspectives on mother tongue instruction. The selection of participants represents a range of household structures, including single-parent families, two-parent households, and guardians serving as primary caregivers. This diverse sample provides a well-rounded understanding of the parental role in teaching and learning the mother tongue at the foundation phase.

In conclusion, the combination of departmental heads, educators, and parents provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing mother tongue instruction in the foundation phase. Each group plays a distinct yet interconnected role in shaping early language acquisition, providing valuable insights into policies, classroom practices, and home-based support systems. Their diverse perspectives help identify the best practices, challenges, and areas for improvement in parental involvement and early language education.

4.4 PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

Data presentation involves organizing and displaying collected information in a clear and comprehensible way (Matos, Guenter & Chen, 2023). In this study, the data focused on the primary research question: What are the roles of parents in teaching and learning the mother tongue in the foundation phase of Man'ombe Circuit, Mopani District, Limpopo Province, South Africa? The researcher employed thematic analysis to examine the data gathered from teachers and parents.

Four themes were developed, namely: The parental role in the teaching and learning of the mother tongue in FP, Teaching strategies to enhance the performance of the FP learners HL classroom, The effectiveness of the mother tongue as a language of instruction on learning abilities of FP classrooms, and How mother tongue teaching in the FP classrooms can be utilized to expand literacy. The findings of the qualitative thematic analysis are visually represented as illustrated in Figure 4.1. The identified themes provided a coherent framework that enabled the researcher to comprehensively address the research questions underpinning the study. The results and analysis of data are presented and discussed according to the identified themes of the experiences of the teachers in the parental role in the teaching and learning of the mother tongue at the Foundation Phase of Man'ombe Circuit, Mopani District, Limpopo Province, South Africa.

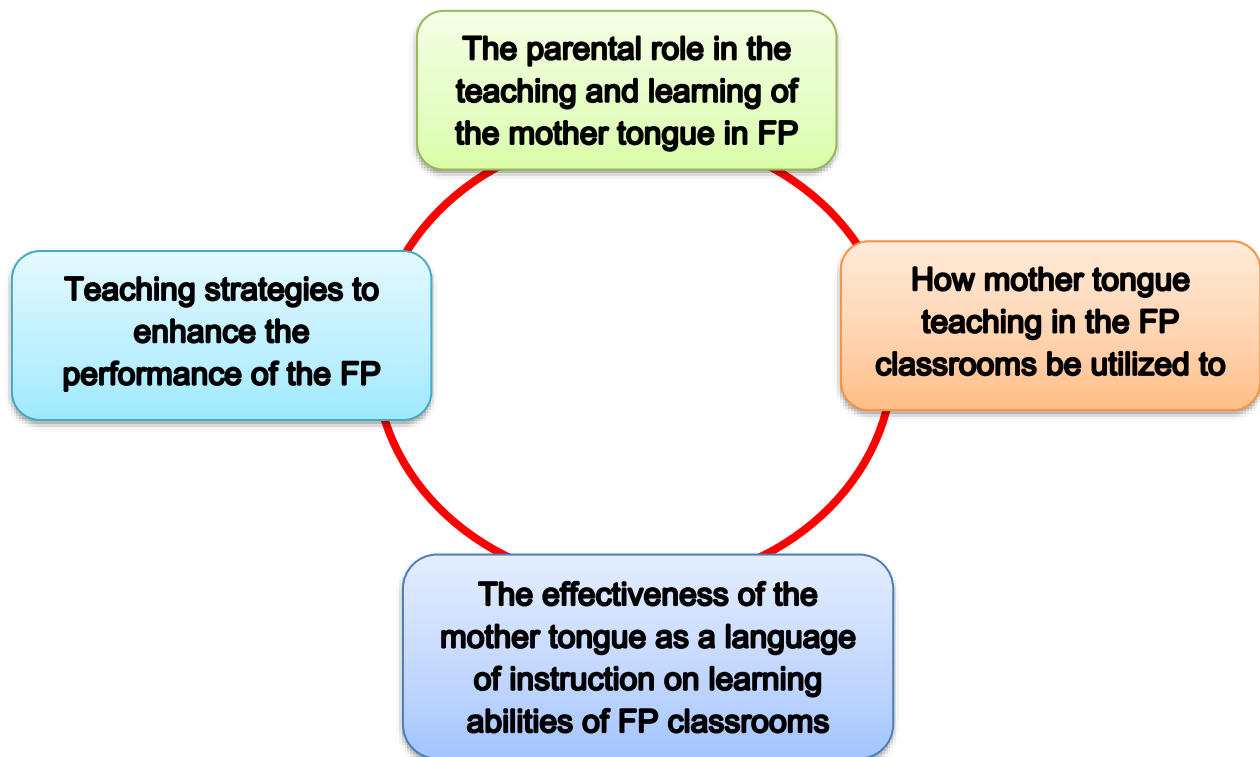


Figure 4.3: Themes that emerged

After the theme was developed, the subtheme naturally emerged, offering deeper insight into the essential factors shaping parental involvement in mother tongue teaching and learning. Sub-themes function to further elaborate or divide the main themes, shedding light on various aspects of parental roles and their influence on early childhood education. Identifying and analysing these subthemes allows for a more organized examination of the elements that support language development in the foundation phase. This section explores the relevance of these subthemes in connection with the study's objectives, theoretical foundation, and existing research.



Figure 4.4: Sub-themes that emerged

4.4.1 Theme: 1 The parental role in the teaching and learning of the mother tongue in the Foundation Phase.

The Foundation Phase (FP) is a critical stage in a child's education, particularly for developing essential language skills (Liando & Tatipang, 2022). Sithole (2023) was of the view that parents play a crucial role in shaping their children's language abilities, both directly and indirectly. Their involvement is a significant factor in a child's academic success, particularly in language development. The mother tongue serves as the foundation for communication and cognitive growth, and children who develop proficiency in it tend to excel academically. This study examines the role of parents in teaching and learning the mother tongue during the Foundation Phase, focusing on how they actively support language development at home. It explores parental contributions to language acquisition through daily interactions, the creation of a supportive learning environment, and the provision of resources. By analyzing parental involvement in this context, the study aims to gain deeper insights into how parents in the Man'ombe Circuit, Mopani District, Limpopo Province, support their children's education in mother tongue learning and how their engagement can be enhanced to improve academic outcomes.

The role of parents in a child's education encompasses the various ways they support their child's learning, growth, and academic success. In the context of mother tongue education during the Foundation Phase, this role includes actively engaging in and facilitating language development both at home and in partnership with educators. As primary language models, parents shape their children's linguistic skills through daily interactions, storytelling, conversations, and exposure to culturally significant language practices. Parental involvement in language learning can take multiple forms, including direct participation, such as reading books, assisting with schoolwork, and introducing new vocabulary, as well as indirect support, like fostering a language-rich environment and encouraging a positive attitude toward learning. Active parental engagement has been shown to

enhance children's confidence, comprehension, and overall academic performance. However, as Idris, Hussain, and Ahmad (2020) posited, the extent of parental involvement may be influenced by various factors, including parents' educational background, language proficiency, socio-economic status, and cultural beliefs.

4.4.1.1 Sub-theme 1: Communication between parents and teachers

Effective parent-teacher communication is essential for supporting mother-tongue development in the Foundation Phase. Azad, Marcus and Mandell (2021) support this view by emphasising that a strong partnership between home and school fosters a consistent learning environment, which reinforces language skills. Regular communication through meetings, progress reports, phone calls, and digital platforms ensures that parents remain informed about their child's academic progress and challenges. Additionally, it provides them with valuable insights into classroom strategies and curriculum expectations, enabling more meaningful support at home.

Open communication fosters mutual understanding, allowing parents and teachers to address barriers to language development effectively. Parents who actively engage with educators are better equipped to support their child's learning, while limited communication may hinder academic progress. Both parents and teachers acknowledged the benefits of collaboration but also highlighted challenges in maintaining effective engagement.

P2 from Sch-B made the following observation: "I appreciate regular communication as it helps me to understand my child's progress and areas needing support". The participant further highlighted that: "I feel that effective communication can strengthen our involvement as parents in our child's education". However, T5FP from Sch-E indicated that: "limited resources or training on how to effectively engage parents in language learning activities"

Some parents are unresponsive; they are making it difficult to establish consistent communication (T2FP from Sch-B), as mentioned, and the above statement was supported by DH4FP from Sch-D when she mentioned that “parents may have unrealistic expectations, such as relying entirely on teachers to develop their child’s mother-tongue skills”. P4 confirms the above view from Sch-D, who said that: “As a parent, I realize now that I’ve been lacking awareness of the important role I play in my child’s language development at home. I used to think that it was mainly the teacher’s responsibility to teach my child the mother tongue. I didn’t understand that what I do at home, like speaking the language regularly, reading stories, or encouraging my child to use it in everyday conversations, can make a big difference. I’m beginning to see that supporting my child’s learning doesn’t only happen in the classroom, but also in the little moments we share at home.”

T1FP from Sch-A highlighted the importance of collaboration between home and school by stating: “Teachers recognise that parental involvement improves children’s language skills and learning outcomes, and regular feedback from parents helps teachers to adapt their strategies to meet children’s individual needs.” She further explained that some teachers actively use technology, such as WhatsApp and emails, to maintain effective communication with parents. However, despite these efforts, challenges persist. For instance, P1 from Sch-A cited time constraints as a significant barrier to his involvement, stating: “Busy schedules prevent me from attending meetings, workshops, responding to teacher messages, or following up on my child’s progress.” This contrast underscores the need for flexible and accessible communication methods that accommodate parents’ varying circumstances while encouraging active participation in their children’s mother-tongue learning.

P3 from Sch-C shared an insightful opening statement that highlights some of the key barriers to effective parent-teacher communication in the context of mother-tongue education. She stated, “Language barriers or literacy challenges may hinder effective communication. I have a lower educational background, I am not

fluent in the language of instruction, and I speak a different dialect. As a result, I find it difficult to communicate effectively with teachers. This makes me feel hesitant to engage with them, as I fear being judged or lacking the necessary knowledge to contribute meaningfully to discussions.” This perspective emphasizes the emotional and linguistic obstacles faced by some parents, which can significantly limit their involvement in their children’s education. It also reflects the need for schools to create more inclusive, empathetic communication strategies that accommodate linguistic diversity and varying literacy levels among parents.

Effective communication between parents and teachers is essential for supporting mother-tongue learning in the Foundation Phase. Clear, frequent, and supportive interactions help both parties enhance the child’s language development. However, challenges such as unresponsiveness, busy schedules, language barriers, and differing expectations can hinder collaboration. To improve communication, schools can provide multilingual materials to ensure parents understand school policies and expectations. Establishing parent support groups can also encourage collaboration and shared learning experiences. Parents acknowledge the importance of communication in their child’s education and are willing to engage with teachers. Overcoming existing barriers through workshops, support networks, and inclusive communication strategies can create a more collaborative and effective learning environment.

4.4.1.2 Subtheme 2: Parental Involvement in Early Literacy Development

Parental involvement plays a crucial role in early literacy development, shaping a child’s ability to acquire and use their mother tongue effectively (Sengonul, 2022). In the Foundation Phase, essential literacy skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing form the foundation for future academic success. As children’s first educators, parents introduce language through everyday interactions and structured activities that promote literacy development. Smitherman and Alim

emphasise that reading and storytelling are particularly valuable, as they help expand vocabulary, improve comprehension, and enhance self-expression. Storytelling also allows children to connect with their cultural heritage while reinforcing language skills. In addition to oral language development, parents contribute by encouraging writing and drawing activities, which foster early writing skills, fine motor coordination, and creativity.

A language-rich home environment further strengthens a child's literacy journey. Parental attitudes toward literacy significantly influence a child's motivation, confidence, and enthusiasm for learning. While many parents actively engage in supporting their child's literacy development, challenges such as limited time, educational background, and access to resources can hinder their ability to provide consistent language-learning opportunities at home.

DH1FP from Sch-A expressed concern about the lack of parental support for learners experiencing academic challenges. She observed: *"The learners who are experiencing learning challenges in their mother tongue, their parents don't care about whatever we are sending learners with to assist at home. Because when you teach in the classroom, you are merely window-dressing, and then you want to extend, so that learners can understand what you were teaching in the form of homework, so the homework is where we reinforce, but the next day you discover that the homework is not completed."* This statement reflects the frustration educators feel when their efforts to support learners beyond the classroom are not reinforced at home. It highlights the essential role of parental involvement in completing homework, particularly for struggling learners, and emphasizes how a lack of follow-through at home can hinder the reinforcement of classroom instruction.

The perspective articulated by DH1FP from School A is further corroborated by T3FP, who expressed a similar view from Sch-C, who highlighted additional challenges affecting parental involvement. She stated: *"It is challenging since*

most learners are cared for by their grandparents; therefore, I can't expect older people who are not very educated to be able to help learners with academic stuff, it would be unjust. Due to their lack of concern for learners' attendance and the limited support provided to teachers, parents are not sufficiently active in their children's education. They also do not care if a learner misses five days of school. When I express concern about a learner's absence, they merely respond, 'It rained, so I didn't wash his or her clothes.' It appears that they are ignorant of the value of education." This reflection emphasises how family structures, such as children being raised by elderly or illiterate caregivers, present significant barriers to effectively home-school collaboration. The teacher's perspective reveals how these attitudes may stem from a lack of understanding of the importance of consistent schooling and parental involvement in the educational process.

T1FP, from Sch-A, a grade 2 teacher, emphasized the negative impact of limited parental involvement on learners' academic progress. She noted: *"For most of the learners who aren't doing well at school, I blame their homes for it; their performances suffer because their parents aren't encouraging, and they don't show up to school when they're called. They use reasons like, 'I don't have enough time due to work schedules or family obligations,' 'I don't have money for transport.' All they ever say is, 'This is not true; my child is doing very well at home."* This perspective reinforces the concern that many parents are either unwilling or unable to engage constructively with teachers, which negatively affects their children's academic development. It also highlights a communication gap between educators and parents, where denial or deflection replaces accountability and collaborative problem-solving. The consistency in these teachers' experiences suggests a broader systemic issue in parental engagement, particularly in disadvantaged contexts.

T4FP from Sch-D acknowledged the mixed levels of parental involvement, noting both positive and negative aspects. She emphasized: *"Some parents are positive, but there are also those who are negative, because some are unable to assist*

their children with their homework due to their weak educational background and inability to read and write. However, some do assist their children perfectly.” This statement highlights the diversity in parental capacity and engagement. While some parents are actively involved and provide meaningful support at home, others face significant challenges rooted in literacy limitations and low levels of formal education. These disparities underscore the importance of tailored support strategies that recognize and address the unique needs of families, while also promoting inclusive parental involvement in mother-tongue learning.

DH3FP from Sch-C expressed concern about parental disengagement, particularly when it comes to learners with learning challenges. He remarked: *“The parents of learners with learning challenges typically are not doing their best for the children, because when we call them, they don't come often, and so it's like they are relieved when they send their children to school.”* This perspective highlights the emotional and logistical distance some parents maintain from their children's education.

T2FP from Sch-B highlighted the lack of parental engagement despite efforts to encourage involvement in their children's learning. She remarked, *“Parents have various attitudes about their children's learning programs because even if you put in the communication book what you want the parent to help with, the communication book still doesn't get signed, indicating that they didn't even open or read it. Therefore, parents don't help much. This is a sign that they are not at all engaged; they leave everything to the teachers, and we (as educators) find it difficult to teach some learners who have difficulties when we do not even understand their difficulties.”*

Parents also faced significant challenges in providing consistent support for their children's literacy development. Responses from P1 and P3 reveal that *“busy schedules and work commitments limited the time available for literacy activities.”* This highlights the time constraints that many parents face, making it difficult to

prioritize educational support at home. P5 from Sch-E further expressed the difficulties they encountered, stating: *“Honestly speaking, with low literacy levels or limited proficiency that I have in the mother tongue, I am struggling to assist my children effectively.”* This comment underscores the impact of parents’ own educational backgrounds and language proficiency on their ability to support their children's learning. Additionally, P4 from Sch-D raised concerns about the lack of guidance from schools, stating: *“I lacked adequate guidance from schools on how to support literacy development at home.”* This reveals a gap in communication and resources, where parents feel unsupported in their role as facilitators of their children’s literacy development, despite their desire to help.

Despite the challenges, parents expressed a strong desire to improve their involvement in early literacy development. They indicated that structured guidance from schools, access to literacy materials, and parent training programs would help them better support their children's language learning. These findings align with the research by Hugo and Phala (2022), which highlighted the difficulties of extending home knowledge to the classroom due to a lack of parental participation. In schools like Sch-A, DH1FP was noted that: *“parents, particularly those with limited formal education and financial resources, struggled to engage in school-related activities due to busy survival tactics”*. This led to a lack of active parental participation in supporting their children's education. The promotion of inclusive educational methods has long emphasized the importance of parental involvement, which leads to benefits like improved teacher morale, better learner discipline, and higher academic achievement.

Responses from participants in this study clearly showed that contact with parents is essential for motivating them to support their children's education. One participant noted that: *“without parental involvement in schoolwork, children may not value education, which creates further challenges in supporting learners”*. Parental encouragement can foster positive learning habits in children. However, a significant number of parents, as reported by teachers and departmental heads

across all participating schools (Sch-A, Sch-B, Sch-C, Sch-D, and Sch-E), were not sufficiently involved in their children's academic programs. Teachers expected more proactive involvement, such as daily reading support and regular engagement with schoolwork. Educators noted that many children were cared for by grandparents with limited education, which could explain the lack of parental participation in homework support.

Despite these challenges, some teachers recognized that parents wanted to help but were unable to due to various barriers. The findings indicate that while parents play an active role in their children's early literacy development, addressing these barriers through school-led initiatives, parental support programs, and better access to resources could improve parental involvement and create a more effective learning environment.

4.4.1.3 Sub-theme 3: Attitudes of parents towards the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction

Parents showed a range of attitudes toward using the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in the Foundation Phase, shaped by social, cultural, and economic influences. According to Meda (2020), some parents expressed concern that learning in indigenous languages might limit their children's future access to higher education and employment, where English or other dominant languages are often prioritized. As a result, they tended to favour early exposure to widely spoken languages and sometimes discouraged the use of the mother tongue at home and in school. Others held these views due to limited educational backgrounds or a lack of awareness about the benefits of mother tongue instruction. On the other hand, some parents strongly supported learning in the mother tongue, believing it builds a solid foundation for understanding, critical thinking, and academic achievement. They also recognized its role in boosting learner confidence and preserving cultural identity.

Many educators observed that most parents preferred English as the primary language of instruction in the Foundation Phase. This sentiment was echoed by DH4FP, DH2FP, T1FP, T3FP, and T5FP, who noted that *“parents often viewed English as a gateway to better academic and career opportunities.”* According to these educators, *parents feared that their children might be at a disadvantage in higher education or the job market if they were not proficient in dominant languages such as English.* This perception often led to reluctance in supporting mother tongue instruction, despite its educational and cultural benefits.

P1 from Sch-A offered a nuanced view, stating: “I wanted to support mother tongue instruction, but I didn’t know how to assist my children effectively at home.” This reflects a common challenge among parents who, while open to the idea of mother tongue education, lack the resources, knowledge, or confidence to support it effectively. The combination of language preference and limited support capacity reveals a gap that schools may need to address through targeted parent engagement and awareness initiatives.

T2FP observed that some parents actively discouraged their children from speaking their home language, both at school and at home. She explained: *“Parents sometimes discouraged their children from using their home language, believing it to be less prestigious or not useful in modern society. They are shy or embarrassed about their home language and prefer English, even if the child doesn’t fully understand it.”* This view was connected not only to societal attitudes but also to practical concerns. T2FP added: *“Sometimes we are forced to use English because parents complain when we teach in Xitsonga, citing concerns about the lack of sufficient learning materials and well-trained teachers to effectively implement mother tongue instruction.”*

Parental perceptions were also echoed in statements from participants such as *P4, who believed: “Starting with English early would give our children a head start in life because they will use it in high school and everywhere”.* Similarly, *P3 from*

Sch-C stated: "Our language is not used in professional places, so why should they learn it?" These views reflect a broader societal undervaluing of indigenous languages and a strong belief in English as the language of economic and academic advancement. This preference often affects parents' willingness to support mother tongue instruction, revealing tensions between cultural identity and perceived socioeconomic mobility.

While some parents expressed reservations about the use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction, others strongly advocated for its inclusion in the Foundation Phase. *DH3FP from Sch-C observed: "There are a few parents who express, encourage, and support the use of the mother tongue (Xitsonga), and believe that its use as a medium of instruction in the Foundation Phase yields positive results for their child's literacy development, as they are taught in a language they understand." T4FP supported this view, stating: "These parents understand that the use of the mother tongue in education promotes cultural heritage, identity, and the transmission of traditional knowledge. They believe that mastering their first language will make it easier for children to learn additional languages later in life.*

Teaching in the mother tongue was therefore seen not only as a pedagogical strategy but also as a means of preserving cultural identity. *This sentiment was echoed by P5 from Sch-E, who remarked: "Our language is part of who we are. If our children don't learn it, they will lose their culture." Similarly, P2 from Sch-B stated: "When they learn in their own language, they become more confident and not afraid to speak up."* These responses highlight the perceived benefits of mother tongue instruction in fostering learner confidence, deepening understanding, and maintaining cultural continuity within early education.

Parents held mixed attitudes toward the use of mother tongue instruction, shaped by its perceived educational and cultural value versus concerns about future academic and career prospects. While some valued its role in promoting

understanding and identity, others preferred early exposure to English. Educators observed widespread parental hesitation, often based on misconceptions about language and success. However, both parents and teachers acknowledged that increasing awareness, providing parental guidance, and fostering inclusive communication are key to strengthening support for mother tongue instruction in the Foundation Phase.

4.4.1.4 Sub-theme 4: Cultural Practices and Language Learning

This study highlights that cultural practices within the home play a pivotal role in supporting the parental role in teaching and learning of the mother tongue in the Foundation Phase. Parents engage children in culturally rooted activities such as storytelling, traditional songs, games, idioms, and ceremonies, which serve as natural and meaningful tools for language exposure and acquisition. These practices not only enhance vocabulary development and comprehension but also contribute to the transmission of values, cultural identity, and traditional knowledge, thereby reinforcing both linguistic and cultural foundations.

To attend to this matter, P2, P4, and P5 from Sch-B, Sch-D, and Sch-E expressed a strong belief that cultural practices are essential for teaching the mother tongue. They reported that storytelling, traditional songs, and customs serve as effective tools for transmitting both language and values. These participants emphasized that their role in language transmission is significant, viewing the home as the foundation for early language and cultural development. In contrast, P3 from Sch-C highlighted challenges in maintaining consistent engagement in cultural activities, citing work schedules, urban living conditions, and a lack of confidence or resources to teach the language formally. This contrast underscores the variability in parental capacity to support mother tongue instruction through cultural means, influenced by lifestyle, environment, and self-perceived competence.

Responses from T1FP and T4FP indicated that “learners who are exposed to cultural practices at home tend to demonstrate a stronger grasp of the mother tongue, with enhanced vocabulary and a deeper understanding of their cultural heritage. However, the teachers also identified several challenges within the school environment, emphasising that insufficient curriculum time and a shortage of instructional materials in the mother tongue constrain their ability to effectively incorporate culturally relevant content into the teaching and learning process.”

DH3FP from Sch-C stated that the Department of Education advocates for the use of home languages and encourages the integration of cultural elements within Life Skills and Language subjects. However, the participant pointed out that financial constraints and a lack of resources pose significant challenges in developing and accessing culturally appropriate teaching materials, limiting the effective implementation of this policy in practice.

The findings of this study highlight the vital role that cultural practices play in supporting mother tongue learning during the Foundation Phase. Activities such as storytelling, traditional songs, indigenous games, and the use of proverbs and idioms provide rich, meaningful opportunities for children to engage with their home language in authentic contexts. Parents, as primary transmitters of culture, were found to embed language learning into daily routines, thereby promoting both linguistic development and the cultivation of a strong cultural identity in their children.

However, the study also revealed a decline in the use of cultural practices that support mother tongue development, attributed to factors such as urbanization, the growing influence of English, and increased exposure to digital media. This shift has negatively impacted on children’s fluency in their home languages. Parents expressed concern over the diminishing use of indigenous languages within the household, particularly as English increasingly dominates both media content and educational settings. The findings highlight the need for collaborative

efforts among families, schools, and education departments to strengthen mother tongue development through culturally rooted practices. Enhancing access to training, educational resources, and community-based initiatives is essential for preserving both linguistic and cultural heritage in early childhood education.

4.4.2. Theme 2: Teaching strategies to enhance the performance of the FP learners in a diverse HL classroom.

Foundation Phase educators face the challenge of teaching learners from diverse home language backgrounds, which necessitates the use of inclusive and adaptable teaching strategies. To support both language acquisition and academic development, educators should employ multilingual resources, code-switching, visual aids, storytelling, and peer-assisted learning. Furthermore, involving parents, differentiating instruction, and incorporating culturally relevant content contribute to the creation of an inclusive learning environment that enhances learner performance and fosters a sense of belonging.

This study aims to explore the role of parents in the teaching and learning of the mother tongue at the Foundation Phase level within the Man'ombe Circuit, located in the Mopani District of Limpopo Province, South Africa. Educators and departmental heads from the selected schools reported an increasing recognition of the linguistic and cultural diversity present in their Foundation Phase classrooms. This diversity is largely attributed to the inclusion of learners from Indian, Mozambican, and Zimbabwean backgrounds, many of whom speak home languages that differ from the dominant instructional languages in schools, such as Xitsonga.

4.4.2.1. Sub-theme 1: Accessible mother tongue instructional materials.

Teachers were requested to assess the extent to which the resources at their disposal supported the teaching of Xitsonga. This inquiry was particularly

significant, as educational resources are essential for promoting effective learning and enhancing learner achievement. Evaluating the availability and relevance of Xitsonga teaching materials was crucial in determining their role in helping learners grasp the content more effectively and succeed in the classroom.

The responses to this question were varied. Some teachers reported that while there were some materials available, they were insufficient and did not provide adequate support. Others were satisfied with the resources at hand, finding them useful for teaching. However, a few teachers mentioned that having Xitsonga materials without clear guidance on how to use them was not helpful. Below are direct quotes from teachers regarding the accessibility and usefulness of instructional materials for teaching mother tongue in the Foundation Phase.

Some teachers expressed frustration with the limited availability of instructional materials in Xitsonga. *Participants DH2FP from Sch-2 and T3FP from Sch-3 noted that, "While a few resources were accessible, they were often inadequate and did not fully support the teaching of the language."* These teachers emphasized the need for more comprehensive, high-quality materials to effectively facilitate the teaching and learning of Xitsonga.

A recurring concern among some teachers was the lack of clear guidance on how to use the available Xitsonga materials effectively. *They pointed out that, "While the resources themselves were present, the absence of instructional support on how to incorporate them into lessons left us feeling underprepared and unsure of their optimal application" (T4FP and T5FP).* In contrast, some teachers were satisfied with the available resources. *DH3FP and T1FP from Sch-C and Sch-A shared this perspective, stating, "The materials we have, though limited, help support our teaching and enhance learners' understanding of Xitsonga."*

Several participants highlighted the importance of teaching and learning materials. While some believed that a variety of resources would better accommodate

learners' diverse learning styles and that these materials should be tailored to each learner's level of understanding or confidence, *one participant emphasized, "Learning and teaching materials need to be modified to ensure learners experience success on some level" (DH5FP from Sch-E).*

The findings of this study indicate that the accessibility and effectiveness of mother tongue instructional materials for Xitsonga in the Foundation Phase remain a significant concern among educators. Although some teachers reported satisfaction with the available materials, the majority expressed that the resources were either insufficient, outdated, or not well-aligned with curriculum requirements. A recurring issue was the lack of practical guidance on how to effectively utilize these materials in the classroom, limiting their potential impact on teaching and learning. Furthermore, there was a notable call for more culturally relevant and learner-centered resources that reflected the lived experiences of Xitsonga-speaking learners.

In conclusion, while some resources are available, they fall short of fully supporting effective mother tongue instruction. This underscores the urgent need for the development and distribution of high-quality, contextually appropriate Xitsonga materials, coupled with professional support for educators on their implementation, to improve language instruction and learner outcomes in the Foundation Phase.

4.4.2.2. Sub-theme 2: Gain knowledge about the inclusive approach.

In today's diverse educational context, adopting inclusive teaching and learning strategies is vital to address the unique needs of all learners, especially those who face barriers such as disabilities, language challenges, or socio-economic disadvantages (Heilage et al. 2020). An inclusive approach promotes equity, respect for diversity, and meaningful participation. This theme examines the core principles, benefits, and strategies of inclusion, particularly in the context of

parental involvement in mother tongue instruction at the Foundation Phase level within the Man'ombe Circuit, Mopani District, Limpopo Province. The following are educators' perspectives on inclusive education.

According to participants P2 and P5 from Schools B and E, concerns were raised regarding their children's experiences of exclusion resulting from language barriers. They emphasized that gaining knowledge about inclusive approaches could empower them to better support their children's learning at home. Participant P3 further proposed that schools should facilitate parental workshops or meetings to raise awareness about inclusive teaching practices and how parents can actively contribute to the development of their child's mother tongue. This view was supported by P1, a parent from a non-Xitsonga-speaking background, who acknowledged a limited understanding of inclusive education but expressed a strong willingness to learn and support such practices if provided with appropriate guidance.

Many educators acknowledged the importance of understanding inclusive education to effectively support learners from diverse linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds. *T3FP from Sch-C and T4FP from Sch-D emphasized that inclusive practices are essential to ensure that all learners, especially those who do not speak the dominant language, Xitsonga, are able to participate meaningfully in the classroom. DH4FP from Sch-D elaborated that, "Departmental heads acknowledged that while inclusive education is a key policy priority, its practical implementation remains inconsistent." She emphasized the need to equip both educators and parents with the necessary knowledge and tools to adopt inclusive approaches, particularly in multilingual settings. DH5FP added that, "Our school recognizes that for inclusion to be effective in teaching the mother tongue, policies must be supported with resources, teacher training, and community involvement." T5FP from Sch-E also shared his perspective, stating, "Teachers expressed a need for ongoing training and professional development to help them implement inclusive strategies, such as differentiated instruction, the*

use of multilingual resources, and culturally responsive teaching.” He further highlighted the importance of collaboration with parents in supporting learners’ mother tongue development within an inclusive framework.

The findings reveal a shared understanding among parents, educators, and departmental heads of the importance of gaining knowledge about inclusive education, particularly in the context of mother tongue instruction in the Foundation Phase. There is a consensus that inclusive approaches play a vital role in ensuring that all learners, regardless of language background, ability, or socio-economic status, have equitable access to quality education.

Educators recognize that inclusive education is essential in supporting learners from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds. They highlighted the need for ongoing professional development and training to implement inclusive strategies effectively, such as differentiated instruction, the integration of multilingual resources, and culturally responsive teaching methods. Teachers also stressed the importance of parental collaboration in reinforcing mother tongue development within an inclusive framework.

Parents, particularly those from non-Xitsonga-speaking backgrounds, admitted to having limited awareness of what inclusive education entails. However, many expressed a willingness to learn, noting that gaining this knowledge would enable them to provide more effective support for their children’s learning at home. Parents called for workshops and school-based meetings to enhance their understanding of inclusive teaching practices and their role in their children’s language development.

While there is strong recognition of the value of inclusive education, the findings highlight a need for capacity-building across all stakeholders: educators, parents, and school leadership. Strengthening knowledge of inclusive approaches, especially among parents, is crucial for enhancing learner participation and

achievement in mother tongue instruction. The study underscores the importance of collaborative, well-resourced, and culturally grounded strategies to support inclusive education in multilingual Foundation Phase classrooms.

4.4.2.3. Sub-theme 3: Lack of awareness campaigns

Parents serve as the foundational educators in their children's lives, playing a crucial role in establishing the basis for future learning. As the first teachers, it is their responsibility to ensure that learning continues beyond the classroom. According to Sibanda (2021), it is essential to educate parents about the relationship between home-based learning and formal schooling. Regardless of socioeconomic status, race, nationality, or religion, all parents have a responsibility to be actively involved in their children's education. When parents are engaged, teaching and learning at school can be significantly enhanced. Findings from this study suggest that awareness campaigns could be highly effective in supporting parents as they teach their children their mother tongue at home. One of the key insights highlighted by participants was the importance of implementing effective awareness initiatives to help parents understand how to actively participate in their children's education during the Foundation Phase.

According to participant DH3FP from Sch-C, the lack of awareness campaigns was acknowledged as a significant gap in the current educational support system. He further noted that limited resources and planning often hinder the implementation of meaningful parent engagement initiatives. Nonetheless, he emphasized that raising awareness among parents, particularly in linguistically diverse communities, is essential for improving learner outcomes in the Foundation Phase. Similarly, T2FP recommended the development of context-sensitive awareness strategies, such as community radio announcements, pamphlets in local languages, and school-based information sessions, to educate parents about the importance of their role in supporting mother tongue education.

Other participants, such as T4FP from Sch-D and DH1FP from Sch-A, echoed with this concern, highlighting the absence of structured efforts to inform and involve parents. They reported that “many parents appeared uninformed or uncertain about how to assist with their children’s language learning at home”. These educators stressed that “the effective awareness campaigns would not only enhance parental understanding of their responsibilities but also foster stronger partnerships between home and school”. T1FP from Sch-A added that “without proper outreach, many parents remain disconnected from school activities and often fail to recognize the value of mother tongue instruction during the early years of learning”.

Parents expressed that they had not been sufficiently informed about the importance of their role in supporting their children’s mother tongue development. Participants P1 and P4 noted that “neither schools nor the Department of Education had provided clear communication or organized initiatives to educate parents on how to be actively involved”. P2 from Sch-B stated that “if awareness campaigns, workshops, or parent meetings had been offered, he would have felt more confident and empowered to contribute meaningfully at home. Similarly, P3, a parent from a non-Xitsonga-speaking background, shared that “I would have appreciated receiving guidance and appropriate resources to support his children’s learning”. P3 also concurred with P2’s viewpoint, emphasizing the need for targeted support to enhance parental involvement in mother tongue education.

The findings indicate a shared concern among parents and educators about the absence of structured awareness campaigns, which significantly hinders parental involvement in mother tongue education at the Foundation Phase level. Both groups highlighted a lack of communication and outreach from schools and the Department of Education, particularly affecting parents from non-Xitsonga-speaking and immigrant backgrounds. Educators reported feeling underprepared to support multilingual classrooms due to insufficient training and resources, leading to missed opportunities for cultural and linguistically responsive teaching.

Parents expressed that the lack of support and recognition for their children's home languages contributes to feelings of exclusion and disconnection from the school environment.

There was consensus that awareness campaigns are urgently needed to promote linguistic inclusion, strengthen home–school collaboration, and enhance learner outcomes in multilingual settings.

4.4.3 Theme 3: The effectiveness of the mother tongue as a language of instruction on the learning abilities of FP classrooms

The use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction in the Foundation Phase is vital for supporting learners' cognitive development and academic achievement, particularly in multilingual contexts like South Africa. This study, conducted in the Man'ombe Circuit, highlights that the effectiveness of mother tongue instruction specifically Xitsonga is closely linked to parental involvement. Findings show that active parental support, understanding of the curriculum, and access to home language resources significantly influence learners' success. Strengthening the parental role is therefore essential for maximizing the benefits of mother tongue instruction in early education.

4.4.3.1 Sub-theme 1: The South African national policy currently in effect regarding mother tongue teaching and learning in the foundation phase

South Africa's Language in Education Policy (1997) supports mother tongue instruction in the Foundation Phase, promoting additive bilingualism and encouraging learners to start education in their home language. The CAPS curriculum aligns with this by allowing the gradual introduction of English or Afrikaans as additional languages. While the policy framework is in place, its implementation faces challenges such as limited resources, insufficient teacher training, and the complexities of multilingual classrooms. This study explores how

these national policies function in practice and their impact on young learners' language and cognitive development.

Educators were generally aware of the Language in Education Policy (LiEP) and recognized its objective of promoting effective learning using learners' home languages. Participants T3FP, T4FP, and DH2FP emphasized that "teaching in the mother tongue enhances learner comprehension, engagement, and overall academic performance. However, they also pointed to significant practical challenges in implementing the policy, including overcrowded multilingual classrooms, a shortage of teaching materials in various indigenous languages, and insufficient teacher training". DH5FP further noted that "while the policy is well-intentioned and appropriately structured, its effectiveness is hindered by the lack of supporting infrastructure and the absence of ongoing professional development for educators."

Parents' responses varied depending on their background and awareness of the policy. Parents, particularly those from rural or under-resourced areas, noted that "they support mother tongue instruction and believed it helped their children understand concepts better" (P1 and P4 from Sch-A and D). P5 from Sch-E went on to say that, in my opinion, "I preferred English as the primary medium of instruction." This participant aspired for her children to become proficient in English for future academic and career opportunities. P2 expressed that "I am lacking understanding about the national language policy and felt excluded from decision-making processes at schools".

The study's findings indicate that while educators demonstrated a clear understanding of the South African Language in Education Policy (LiEP) and its intention to promote effective teaching using learners' home languages, many parents were largely unaware of the policy or its implications. Educators acknowledged that teaching in the mother tongue enhances learner comprehension, engagement, and academic performance. However, they also

reported significant challenges in the practical implementation of the policy, including overcrowded multilingual classrooms, limited teaching materials in indigenous languages, and a lack of adequate teacher training. These challenges contribute to a noticeable gap between the policy's theoretical aims and its actual application in Foundation Phase classrooms. Additionally, parents expressed that there was limited communication from schools or the Department of Education regarding the policy, and that they had not been adequately informed or empowered to support their children's language development at home. Both educators and parents emphasized the need for improved communication, awareness campaigns, and inclusive engagement strategies to ensure the effective implementation of the policy. The study concludes that for the national policy to be truly impactful, there must be a coordinated effort involving resource allocation, professional development for educators, and structured parental involvement initiatives, especially in linguistically diverse school communities.

4.4.3.2 Sub-theme 2: Advantages of mother language use in a setting that values diversity

In educational settings that embrace and value diversity, the use of learners' mother tongue as a medium of instruction offers significant advantages, particularly in the Foundation Phase. Research and practice have consistently shown that mother tongue instruction not only enhances early cognitive development and literacy skills but also fosters a sense of identity, belonging, and cultural pride among learners.

In the context of the Man'ombe Circuit, Mopani District, where linguistic diversity is pronounced due to the presence of learners from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds, using the mother tongue, specifically Xitsonga, can help bridge the gap between home and school learning environments. This sub-theme explores how the incorporation of learners' home languages in teaching supports inclusive education, promotes equitable participation, and contributes to academic success.

Furthermore, it highlights how parental involvement in mother tongue development reinforces these benefits by creating a supportive and culturally affirming learning environment both at home and in the classroom.

Educators emphasized that using the mother tongue as the language of instruction in a diverse classroom setting enhances learners' understanding and fosters a sense of inclusion. T1FP and DH5FP noted that "learners who are taught in their home language grasp concepts more quickly and participate more confidently in class activities. They highlighted that mother tongue instruction serves as a strong foundation for cognitive development and future academic achievement.

DH1FP and T2FP echoed the importance of recognizing linguistic diversity using mother tongue instruction. They stated that "such practices validate learners' cultural identities and encourage better engagement both at school and at home". DH3 further pointed out that "when learners feel that their language and background are acknowledged, they are more likely to succeed academically and socially".

Parents expressed strong support for mother tongue instruction, particularly when it reflects the linguistic and cultural realities of their children. P2 mentioned that "my children feel more confident and connected to their learning when taught in Xitsonga". P3, a parent from a non-Xitsonga-speaking background, appreciated the inclusive approach by noting that "it helped my child to adjust better and feel accepted in the school environment".

The findings demonstrate a shared understanding among parents, educators, and departmental heads that the use of the mother tongue particularly Xitsonga within a diverse learning environment offers substantial educational and social advantages. Participants consistently noted that mother tongue instruction enhances learners' comprehension, participation, and confidence, particularly in the Foundation Phase, where language development is critical. Teaching in the

learners' home language was seen to promote deeper understanding of content, reduce learning anxiety, and support early literacy and numeracy development.

Moreover, all stakeholder groups emphasised that valuing linguistic and cultural diversity through mother tongue use fosters a sense of belonging and identity among learners. When learners see their language and culture reflected in the classroom, they are more likely to engage actively and feel respected, which strengthens their motivation to learn. Parents also highlighted that when the language of instruction aligns with the language spoken at home, they are better able to support their children's learning, leading to stronger home-school partnerships.

Educators further emphasized that inclusive language practices contribute to creating a supportive and respectful classroom atmosphere, where learners from diverse backgrounds feel recognized. However, they also pointed out the need for continuous support, including teacher training and culturally relevant materials, to fully realize the benefits of mother tongue instruction in diverse settings.

4.4.3.3 Sub-theme 3: Professional development for educators

Under this theme, the participants' responses to the question revealed that a significant gap exists in the professional development of educators regarding the use of mother tongue instruction in Foundation Phase classrooms. *T2FP from Sch-B expressed that "I lacked adequate training to effectively teach in learners' home languages, especially in classrooms with multiple language backgrounds, and this lack of preparation often leads to the use of inconsistent instructional strategies, such as code-switching or overly simplified explanations, which can hinder learners' understanding and academic progress".*

It was found in this study's interviews and observations that effective mother tongue instruction in Foundation Phase classrooms depends on well-trained

educators. Professional development is essential for equipping teachers with the skills and confidence to teach in learners' home languages, especially in South Africa's multilingual context. However, many educators struggle due to a lack of training and support. This section highlights the need for ongoing professional development to enhance teacher readiness and promote inclusive, effective learning.

DH2FP and T4FP from Sch-B and E emphasized *“the value of workshops, in-service training, and language support programs that could enhance their confidence, teaching techniques, and ability to support multilingual learners effectively”*. T3FP also highlighted that *“most training currently focuses heavily on English, with little emphasis on practical methods for teaching in African languages. As a result, many rely on translation, code-switching, or simplified instruction, which may hinder deeper understanding and learning”*.

Parents, meanwhile, expressed concern that “some teachers lack the skills needed to teach in our children's mother tongues. I believed that with better training, teachers would be more capable of supporting all learners equally, regardless of language background” (P3 from Sch-C). Participant further noted that “when teachers are well-prepared, learners show improved performance, stronger communication skills, and more enthusiasm in the classroom”.

The findings also indicate that current teacher education programs and workshops often prioritize English, with limited emphasis on indigenous languages and multilingual teaching methods. As a result, educators felt under-resourced and unsupported when expected to implement mother tongue instruction in line with national policy. Parents, too, observed the effects of this gap in teacher readiness. They noted inconsistencies in how teachers supported learners from different linguistic backgrounds and expressed concern about the quality of instruction in their children's home languages. Some parents believed that their children would

benefit more if teachers received proper training in both language and inclusive teaching approaches.

4.4.4 Theme 4: How mother tongue teaching in the FP classrooms can be utilized to expand literacy.

Mother tongue instruction plays a key role in promoting early literacy, especially in the Foundation Phase, by helping learners develop reading and writing skills in a language they understand. In South Africa, where many learners speak a different language at home than the school's medium of instruction, using the mother tongue helps bridge the gap between spoken language and formal learning. This approach enhances comprehension, vocabulary, and overall academic performance, while also laying the groundwork for lifelong learning and future bilingual or multilingual development.

4.4.4.1 Sub-Theme 1: Problems associated with using one's mother tongue

The participants were asked a question about the problems associated with using one's mother tongue in the Foundation Phase. Both parents and educators expressed mixed feelings about the use of the mother tongue in Foundation Phase classrooms, acknowledging its benefits while also highlighting several practical challenges. *DH1FP from Sch-A pointed out that: "one of the main problems is the lack of standardized teaching materials and resources in many indigenous languages. This shortage often forces us to translate or simplify content, which can affect the depth and accuracy of instruction. Additionally, the above statement is supported by T5FP from Sch-E by saying that: "in linguistically diverse classrooms, I struggle to accommodate all learners' home languages, especially when there is multiple mother tongues represented, leading to inconsistent implementation of mother tongue instruction".*

Some educators also shared concerns about their own proficiency in teaching specific indigenous languages, "as teacher training programs often focus more on

English. As a result, I am feeling unprepared or uncomfortable delivering lessons in languages that I'm not fluent in, which can impact the quality of learning" (T2FP from Sch-B).

Parents, particularly those from multilingual urban communities or immigrant backgrounds, expressed concerns about the long-term value of mother tongue instruction. While they recognised that "mother tongue makes learning easier in the early years, but now it might delay our children's exposure to English, which they view as essential for future academic and career success" (P1, P3, and P5).

In conclusion, the findings indicate that while mother tongue instruction offers significant educational advantages, its implementation faces practical challenges related to resource availability, teacher preparedness, and the multilingual nature of classrooms. Both educators and parents acknowledged these issues and called for better support, clearer policies, and more resources to address the challenges associated with using mother tongue instruction effectively. The section above has presented and analyzed the data collected from the in-depth interviews. The following subsequent section presents and analyzes the data obtained from non-participant observations.

4.5 DATA COLLECTED THROUGH OBSERVATIONS

The observation data provided clear evidence of how teachers implemented mother tongue instruction in classrooms. Educators consistently employed strategies such as the use of visual aids, repetition, and simplified language to align with learners' needs. Learner participation was generally active, with many engaging in oral drills and vocabulary exercises, though struggling learners required additional support through one-on-one assistance, remedial explanations, and peer-assisted learning. Teachers fostered a supportive environment by encouraging learners, praising efforts, and drawing on culturally relevant examples. Interactions were marked by frequent questioning techniques, averaging several per lesson, and constructive feedback was given both verbally

and through marked classwork. Importantly, parental involvement was observed in the provision of learning materials, attendance at language-focused events, and engagement in home-based activities, reflecting a conscious effort by educators to strengthen school–home partnerships.

Document analysis corroborated these observations. Lesson plans aligned with curriculum requirements, emphasizing foundational language skills such as vocabulary development, sentence construction, and oral expression. Learner workbooks revealed differentiated tasks and constructive comments tailored to individual progress, while school records and communication logs documented parental engagement through meetings, letters, and invitations to cultural events. Curriculum documents further reinforced the emphasis on mother tongue development in early grades, prescribing strategies that matched those observed in practice. By triangulating observation data, as captured through the observation schedule presented in Table 4.5 below, with documentary evidence, the findings gain credibility and depth. This demonstrates consistency between planned instruction, classroom enactment, and learner outcomes, while also highlighting areas where additional support for struggling learners remains critical.

Date:	School :	Grade:	Subject:	Duration:
Section A: Language of Instruction				
Indicator	Observed (✓)	Not Observed (X)	Comments/Evidence	
Teacher uses mother tongue as the main language of instruction				
Teacher uses English during the lesson				
Code-switching between mother tongue and English occurs				
Code-switching supports understanding				
Language use supports learner participation				
Language use limits learner participation				

Section B: Learner Participation			
Indicator	Observed (√)	Not Observed (X)	Comments/Evidence
Learners ask questions			
Learners respond to teacher questions			
Learners participate in discussions			
Learners show confidence when speaking			
Section C: Teaching Strategies			
Indicator	Observed (√)	Not Observed (X)	Comments/Evidence
Use of storytelling			
Use of songs/rhymes			
Use of role-play			
Use of visual aids			
Teacher-centered teaching			
Section D: Teaching and Learning Materials			
Indicator	Observed (√)	Not Observed (X)	Comments/Evidence
Availability of mother tongue books			
Use of culturally relevant materials			
Use of charts/posters in mother tongue			
Section E: Home–School Connection			
Indicator	Observed (√)	Not Observed (X)	Comments/Evidence
Homework supports mother tongue learning			
Evidence of parental involvement			

Table 4.5: Classroom Observation Schedule

4.6 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to investigate the parental role in the teaching and learning of the mother tongue at the foundation phase of Man’ombe Circuit, Mopani District, Limpopo Province, South Africa. The thematic approach of

qualitative data analysis was used to present, analyze, and interpret the data collected through interviews with 15 participants. This could be based on the data collected by means of interviews, observations with the parents, Foundation Phase educators, and their Departmental Head. The participants answered all 15 interview questions, which indicated that they were clear and easy to understand. The categories of participants and their descriptions were presented in the study, as well as the themes that emerged from the research. The data analysis shows that parental involvement is vital for mother tongue learning in the Foundation Phase, though many parents face challenges such as limited time, resources, and teaching skills. Home language use and cultural influences play a key role in children's language development, with regular use of the mother tongue enhancing fluency and understanding. Strengthening school-family partnerships through parent support initiatives is essential. The next chapter presents the study's findings, recommendations, and conclusions.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATION, AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to explore the role of parents in the teaching and learning of the mother tongue in the Foundation Phase within the Man'ombe Circuit of the Mopani District, Limpopo Province, South Africa. The previous chapter presented, analyzed, and interpreted the findings of the study to respond to the main research, sub-research questions, and the objectives of the study as outlined in Chapter 1, which was based on the background, and motivation to the study, rationale for the study and the research problem.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS

The study explored the parental role in teaching and learning of the mother tongue in the Foundation Phase within the Man'ombe Circuit of the Mopani District. The findings revealed that most parents understand and value the importance of using their mother tongue as a foundation for learning. They believe it enhances children's comprehension, confidence, and cultural identity. However, despite this positive attitude, many parents demonstrated limited involvement in supporting their children's learning of the home language due to factors such as low literacy levels, lack of time, and inadequate resources.

The study further found that teachers acknowledge the crucial role parents play in promoting mother tongue learning, yet they experience minimal collaboration from parents. Many parents rely solely on teachers to foster language development, rarely participating in school activities or assisting with home-based learning tasks. This weak partnership between home and school negatively affects learners' language progress and consistency between the two learning environments. Additionally, some parents' preference for English, which they associate with

future success, contributes to the declining use and support of the mother tongue at home.

Lastly, the findings revealed that schools face several challenges that hinder effective mother tongue instruction, including insufficient teaching materials, limited curriculum time, and inadequate teacher training in multilingual education. These challenges, combined with parents' limited participation, weaken efforts to strengthen mother tongue teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase. The study therefore emphasizes the need for stronger collaboration between parents, teachers, and educational stakeholders to promote meaningful mother tongue development and improve learning outcomes in early education.

5.3 DISCUSSION BY INDIVIDUAL MAIN FINDINGS

The researcher understands that the findings of a study mean the totality of outcomes of a research project reached after conducting the investigation. The study revealed a range of challenges faced by Foundation Phase educators and parents regarding parental involvement in the teaching and learning of the mother tongue.

5.3.1 Main Finding 1: The parental role in teaching and learning of the mother tongue in FP

In interpreting these findings, it becomes clear that parental involvement is not merely a supportive element but a decisive factor in the effective teaching and learning of the mother tongue in the Foundation Phase. The observations resonate strongly with Sithole's (2023) assertion that this phase is critical for literacy and cognitive development, and that parental engagement significantly shapes language acquisition, academic achievement, and cultural identity preservation. The data show that when parents actively participate through storytelling, reading, and daily communication in the home language, learners demonstrate richer

vocabulary, stronger linguistic competence, and greater confidence in classroom participation. This aligns with Cummins' (2000) interdependence hypothesis, which emphasizes that proficiency in the mother tongue provides a cognitive and linguistic foundation for learning additional languages. Similarly, UNESCO (2008) underscores that parental reinforcement of home language use enhances children's comprehension and overall educational success.

However, the findings also highlight constraints in the Mopani District, particularly in the Man'ombe Circuit, where socioeconomic realities limit parents' ability to engage fully. Many caregivers work long hours, leaving little time for educational support, which echoes the challenges identified by Heugh (2011) regarding systemic barriers to mother tongue education in under-resourced contexts. The tendency among some parents to prioritize English for perceived economic advantage further complicates the situation. Scholars such as Bamgbose (2004) and Alexander (2005) caution that this shift undermines indigenous language acquisition, leading to confusion and weaker conceptual understanding among learners. Teachers' concerns about the erosion of home language use confirm these theoretical warnings, showing how parental attitudes and practices directly influence classroom outcomes.

The findings also reveal that parental involvement is mediated by educational background and perceptions of indigenous languages. Parents with limited formal education or negative attitudes toward the mother tongue were less engaged, while those who valued cultural heritage deliberately reinforced school-based learning at home. This reflects Hornberger's (2002) "continua of biliteracy" framework, which stresses the importance of community and family attitudes in sustaining language practices. Moreover, the lack of awareness among many parents about the cognitive and cultural benefits of mother tongue instruction, coupled with communication barriers between schools and caregivers, limits effective collaboration. This is consistent with research by Desai (2012), who

found that inadequate school–parent communication often leaves caregivers feeling ill-equipped to support language-related activities.

Despite these challenges, the expressed desire by many parents for their children to retain cultural identity through language points to opportunities for intervention. The literature suggests that stronger school–parent partnerships, community awareness programs, and parent empowerment initiatives can bridge these gaps (UNESCO, 2016; Trudell, 2013). Thus, the interpretation of findings highlights both the enabling role of parental involvement and the structural and attitudinal barriers that hinder it. By situating the data within broader scholarly debates, the discussion underscores the need for deliberate strategies to mobilize parents as co-educators, ensuring that mother tongue education in the Foundation Phase is both pedagogically effective and culturally sustaining.

5.3.2 Main Finding 2: Teaching strategies to enhance the performance of the FP learners' HL classroom

The study's findings revealed that the use of varied, learner-centered, and culturally relevant teaching strategies significantly enhances the performance of Foundation Phase learners in the Home Language classroom. Teachers emphasized that employing interactive methods such as storytelling, songs, role-playing, and visual aids actively engages learners and enhances their understanding and retention of concepts. These strategies were found to promote learners' oral communication, listening comprehension, and participation in classroom activities.

Participants further indicated that differentiated instruction is essential in addressing the diverse learning needs present in Foundation Phase classrooms. Teachers used group work, one-on-one support, and scaffolded activities to accommodate both advanced and struggling learners. The incorporation of

phonics-based methods, vocabulary development exercises, and writing tasks was reported to improve learners' reading and writing skills in their home language. Many teachers also found educational games and visual teaching aids effective in maintaining learners' interest and promoting active participation. These practices align with findings by Yang, Weipeng and Li (2022), who assert that effective implementation of mother tongue education in the Foundation Phase relies on strong policy support, adequate teacher training, quality teaching resources, and active community involvement.

Despite the effectiveness of these strategies, participants acknowledged several challenges that hindered their implementation. These included overcrowded classrooms, limited teaching materials, insufficient training in innovative language teaching methods, and inadequate support from school management. Such constraints occasionally reduce the impact of learner-centered approaches. Nevertheless, teachers demonstrated dedication and creativity by adapting available resources to enhance learning outcomes. They emphasized that continuous professional development, peer collaboration, and parental as well as departmental support are crucial to strengthening mother tongue instruction and sustaining improved learner performance in the Foundation Phase.

5.3.3 Main Finding 3: The effectiveness of the mother tongue as a language of instruction on the learning abilities of FP classrooms

The participants strongly agreed that the use of the mother tongue as a language of instruction in the Foundation Phase significantly enhances learners' comprehension, participation, and overall academic performance. Teachers emphasized that when learners are taught in a language, they understand best, they are more confident, engaged, and able to grasp new concepts easily. Many participants highlighted that the mother tongue enables learners to express their thoughts freely, ask questions without fear, and actively participate in classroom

discussions. This leads to improved understanding of literacy and numeracy concepts, as learners are not hindered by language barriers.

Participants further noted that teaching in the mother tongue allows learners to connect new knowledge with their everyday experiences, thereby deepening their conceptual understanding. They explained that when teachers use familiar words, examples, and cultural references, learners can relate learning content to their home environment, which promotes long-term retention of information. Several participants observed that learners taught in their home language developed stronger reading and writing foundations, as they could decode and comprehend texts more effectively. They also reported that the mother tongue fosters a sense of identity, pride, and cultural belonging among learners.

However, the findings also revealed some challenges affecting the effective use of the mother tongue in the classroom. Participants expressed concern that a lack of appropriate teaching materials written in indigenous languages limits teachers' ability to deliver lessons effectively. In addition, some parents and even a few educators undervalue the mother tongue, perceiving it as less useful for future academic or economic advancement compared to English. This perception sometimes leads to inconsistent language practices at home and in school, causing confusion among learners. Despite these obstacles, most teachers maintained that the mother tongue remains the most effective medium of instruction in the early years of schooling, as it builds a strong foundation for learning additional languages and promotes cognitive development.

Participants concluded that mother tongue instruction needs to be fully effective, ongoing support from education authorities, teacher training in language pedagogy, and increased community awareness are essential. They emphasized the need for well-developed learning materials and collaborative efforts between schools and parents to ensure that learners receive consistent language support both at home and in school.

5.3.4 Main Finding 4: How mother tongue teaching in the FP classrooms can be utilized to expand literacy.

The participants emphasized that teaching through the mother tongue serves as a powerful foundation for developing literacy skills in the Foundation Phase. They explained that when learners begin reading and writing in a language they already understand, they are able to make sense of sounds, words, and sentence structures more easily. Teachers reported that learners who are taught literacy in their home language demonstrate greater confidence in decoding words, constructing sentences, and comprehending reading materials. This familiarity with the language enables learners to engage more deeply with reading activities and to develop a love for learning.

Participants further pointed out that mother tongue instruction helps bridge the gap between spoken and written language, as learners can draw on their existing oral vocabulary when learning to read and write. Teachers mentioned that the use of storytelling, songs, and oral games in the home language helps reinforce phonemic awareness and vocabulary development, which are essential building blocks for literacy. Moreover, integrating cultural content and everyday experiences into reading and writing activities makes learning relevant and meaningful, helping learners to connect literacy with their real-life contexts.

However, participants also identified several challenges that hinder the effective use of the mother tongue to expand literacy. These included a shortage of reading materials in indigenous languages, inadequate teacher training on literacy methodologies, and negative parental attitudes toward learning in the home language. Some teachers reported that the lack of well-developed graded readers and language-rich classroom environments limits learners' exposure to print in their mother tongue. Despite these barriers, most participants maintained that teaching literacy through the mother tongue provides a strong cognitive and

linguistic foundation that supports the later transition to additional languages, including English.

Participants concluded that expanding literacy through the mother tongue requires collaborative efforts among teachers, parents, and education stakeholders. They recommended the provision of culturally relevant reading resources, teacher development programs focused on mother tongue literacy instruction, and active parental involvement to encourage reading practices at home. Such collective support, they argued, would help strengthen literacy acquisition and ensure that learners develop both language competence and academic confidence in the Foundation Phase.

5.4 FINDINGS FROM THE OBSERVATIONS

The interpretation of the classroom observation findings highlights the central role of the mother tongue in shaping learner participation, comprehension, and confidence in the Foundation Phase. When teachers consistently used learners' home languages, lessons became more inclusive and supportive, enabling learners to ask questions, respond to discussions, and engage freely in classroom activities. This finding is consistent with Cummins' (2000) interdependence hypothesis, which argues that proficiency in the first language provides a strong foundation for the acquisition of additional languages. UNESCO (2008) similarly emphasizes that instruction in the mother tongue enhances comprehension and overall educational success, particularly in early literacy and numeracy. The use of familiar vocabulary and culturally relevant examples observed in classrooms aligns with Alexander's (2005) argument that contextualized teaching strengthens conceptual understanding and learner engagement.

However, the inconsistency in language use across classrooms where some teachers frequently switched between the mother tongue and English raises important concerns. While codeswitching can serve as a pedagogical strategy to

aid comprehension (Setati, 2005), excessive or unstructured switching often leads to confusion among learners still developing foundational language skills. This tension reflects Heugh's (2011) critique of South African language-in-education practices, where policy support for mother tongue instruction is undermined by inadequate implementation and resource constraints. The observed lack of adequate teaching and learning materials in indigenous languages further corroborates Bamgbose's (2004) warning that without sufficient resources, mother tongue education risks being marginalized despite its pedagogical value.

The variation in teaching strategies also underscores the importance of teacher training and pedagogical orientation. Classrooms where teachers employed interactive, culturally relevant methods such as storytelling, singing, role-playing, and visual aids demonstrated higher levels of learner engagement and motivation. This finding resonates with Hornberger's (2002) "continua of biliteracy" framework, which highlights the role of culturally embedded practices in sustaining language learning. Conversely, teacher-centered approaches were associated with passive learner responses, echoing Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory that stresses the importance of interaction and scaffolding in cognitive development.

Parental involvement emerged as minimal in most schools, which weakens the reinforcement of mother tongue learning outside the classroom. This finding aligns with Sithole (2023), who emphasizes that parental participation in the Foundation Phase is critical for literacy development and cultural identity preservation. The limited home-school partnerships observed reflect broader challenges identified by Desai (2012), who notes that communication barriers and lack of awareness often prevent parents from actively supporting language-related activities. Without deliberate efforts to empower parents and strengthen collaboration, the benefits of mother tongue instruction risk being confined to the classroom, rather than extended into the home environment where language use is most natural and sustained.

Taken together, these findings confirm that the mother tongue plays a crucial role in facilitating literacy development and learner engagement in the Foundation Phase. Yet, its effectiveness depends on three interrelated factors: the consistency of language use by teachers, the availability of quality resources, and the reinforcement of language practices in the home environment. Linking these findings to the literature underscores the need for systemic interventions strengthening teacher training, improving access to mother tongue materials, and fostering parental involvement to ensure that mother tongue education fulfills its pedagogical and cultural potential. This interpretation sets the stage for recommendations that address both classroom practice and broader community engagement, ensuring that language policy translates into meaningful educational outcomes.

5.5 FINDINGS FROM DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

The analysis of school and classroom documents provided valuable insights into how the mother tongue is implemented and supported in the Foundation Phase. The reviewed documents included lesson plans, language policies, learners' workbooks, assessment records, and school communication materials such as newsletters and parental meeting minutes. The findings revealed that most lesson plans and teaching materials reflected the use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction, particularly in literacy and Life Skills subjects. Teachers' planning documents indicated that they incorporated oral activities, phonics exercises, and vocabulary-building tasks aimed at strengthening learners' proficiency in their home language.

However, it was noted that the extent and quality of mother tongue integration varied among schools and teachers. In some lesson plans, the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) was clearly specified as the home language, while in others, it alternated between the mother tongue and English. This inconsistency indicates that, although teachers acknowledged the pedagogical value of mother

tongue instruction, several of them appeared to lack the requisite confidence, pedagogical competence, and instructional resources necessary for its effective implementation.

The document analysis also revealed limited parental involvement in supporting mother tongue learning. Few records indicated active communication between teachers and parents regarding language development or home-based learning support. School policy documents and meeting minutes showed that while schools acknowledged the importance of parental engagement, practical strategies to involve parents in promoting their mother tongue were minimal. Additionally, there was a noticeable shortage of reading and learning materials written in indigenous languages, particularly for use in classroom libraries and home reading programs.

Overall, the document analysis confirmed that while schools in the Man’ombe Circuit recognize the mother tongue as a crucial foundation for learning in the Foundation Phase, its implementation remains inconsistent and under-resourced. Strengthening the alignment between language policy, classroom practice, and parental involvement was found to be essential. The findings underscored the necessity for the development of high-quality teaching and learning materials in the home language, strengthened teacher support in instructional planning and assessment, and the establishment of structured communication channels aimed at promoting active parental involvement in mother tongue literacy development.

5.6 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study have important implications for teachers, parents, and education authorities. The results indicate that parental involvement in mother tongue teaching is essential for enhancing learners’ understanding and language development in the Foundation Phase. Therefore, schools should strengthen home–school partnerships by encouraging parents to participate actively in literacy activities, attend workshops, and support learning in the home language.

Teachers also need to design strategies that include parents as partners in learning, such as providing take-home reading materials and offering guidance on how parents can assist their children with language-based tasks.

Furthermore, the study recommends that the Department of Education should provide robust support for mother tongue instruction by supplying adequate learning materials, offering ongoing teacher training, and allocating sufficient curriculum time for the home language. Policymakers and school leaders should work collaboratively with communities to promote positive attitudes towards indigenous languages and reduce the dominance of English in early education. These actions would ensure that the mother tongue remains a powerful tool for learning, cultural preservation, and identity formation among young learners.

5.7 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The implications of the recommendations are significant, particularly when linked to the broader literature on mother tongue education and parental involvement. If parents take an active role in supporting their children's education by consistently using the mother tongue at home, learners are likely to develop stronger linguistic competence, richer vocabulary, and greater confidence in classroom participation. This aligns with Cummins' (2000) interdependence hypothesis, which emphasizes that a solid foundation in the first language enhances cognitive development and facilitates the acquisition of additional languages. UNESCO (2008) also stresses that home-language reinforcement improves comprehension and academic success, especially in the early years. Thus, a language-rich home environment not only strengthens literacy but also preserves cultural identity, as highlighted by Sithole (2023).

For educators, building partnerships with parents and integrating culturally relevant strategies will foster learner identity and engagement. The literature (Hornberger, 2002; Alexander, 2005) shows that when teachers value cultural

knowledge and employ interactive methods, learners are more motivated and responsive. The implication is that professional development and resource provision will directly improve teaching quality and learner outcomes. At the policy level, inclusive language-in-education frameworks, particularly in rural contexts, will ensure equity and sustainability. Heugh (2011) cautions that without systemic support, mother tongue education risks being undermined by resource shortages and inconsistent implementation. Therefore, collaboration among schools, communities, and government is essential to provide training, materials, and advocacy.

For future research, expanding studies to diverse contexts and employing mixed methods will generate more generalizable insights. Investigating fathers' roles, digital tools, and long-term impacts will deepen understanding of how parental involvement shapes literacy trajectories. The implication here is that evidence-based strategies can be developed to address context-specific challenges in under-resourced communities, ensuring that mother tongue education contributes meaningfully to both academic achievement and cultural continuity.

In concise terms, the recommendations imply that active parental involvement will strengthen learners' language foundations and confidence; teacher–parent collaboration will enhance classroom engagement; inclusive policies will ensure equitable resource distribution; and expanded research will provide holistic, context-sensitive strategies for sustaining mother tongue education. This interpretation provides a clear bridge to the conclusions and underscores why the recommendations are both necessary and impactful.

5.8 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In conclusion, the purpose of the study is to investigate the parental role in the teaching and learning of the mother tongue in the foundation phase classroom of Man'ombe Circuit, Mopani District, Limpopo Province, South Africa. The findings

underscore the value of parental involvement in enhancing early literacy skills, supporting cultural identity, and strengthening learners' academic foundations using the home language. Although challenges such as limited resources, language barriers, and a lack of awareness were identified, the findings indicate that collaborative engagement among parents, teachers, and educational stakeholders has the potential to bring about significant improvements in the teaching and learning of the mother tongue. The study contributes to the growing body of knowledge that advocates for the integration of families into the education process, especially in the early years, and calls for stronger policy implementation and support systems to empower parents in this role. Ultimately, the success of mother tongue instruction depends not only on classroom practices but also on the active, informed participation of families and communities in nurturing learners' development.

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Appendix A : Registration Letter to the University of South Africa

UNISA, —

0113

RUBAYI H A MS
P O BOX 6405
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0826

STUDENT NUMBER 45034877
ENQUIRIES TEL 0800 001 870
eMAIL : rnannd@unisa.ac.za
2026-01-28

Dear Student

I hereby confirm that you have been registered for the current academic year as follows:

Proposed Qualification: MED (INCLUSIVE EDUCATION) (98443)

PROVISIONAL EXAMINATION

CODE PAPER S NAME OF STUDY UNIT

NQP credits LANG. EXAM. DATE CENTRE (PLACE)

Study units registered Without
DFIED9S XEd - Inclusive Education e
DFIED95 XEd - Inclusive Education
● Exam transferred from previous academic year

You are referred to the University brochure regarding fees that are forfeited on cancellation of any study units.

Your attention drawn to University rules and regulations (www.unisa.ac.za/register) .
Please note the new requirements for reregistration and the number of credits per year which state
and thereafter must complete that students registered for the first from 2013, must
Students registered for the first, second, and third year of study, 36 NQP credits in the first year of study, 48
important information. NQP credits per year.
degrees must visit the SBL/BSO/BSI for study material and other

Readmission rules for Honours: Note that in terms of the Unisa Admission Policy academic activity must be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the University during each year of study. If you fail to meet this requirement

In the first year of study, you will be admitted to another year of study. After a second year of not academic activity to the satisfaction of the University, you will not be re-admitted, except with the approval of the executive Dean of the College in which you are registered. Note too, that this study be completed within three years. Non-compliance will result in your academic exclusion, you will therefore not be allowed to re-register for a qualification at the same level on the National Qualifications Framework in the same college for a period of five years after such exclusion, after which you will have to re-apply for admission to any such qualification.

Readmission rules for M&D: Note that in terms of the Unisa Admission Policy, a candidate must complete a qualification within three years. Under exceptional circumstances and on recommendation of the candidate to the Executive Dean, a

be allowed an extra (fourth) year to complete the qualification. For a Doctoral degree, a candidate must complete the study programme within six years. Under exceptional circumstances, and on the recommendation of the Executive Dean, a candidate may be allowed an extra (seventh) year to complete the qualification.

BALANCE ON STUDY Account: 13460.00

Payable on or before:	2026/03/31:	2026/05/15:	2026/08/15:
Immediately:	0.00	6730.00	6730.00
	2026/11/15: 0.00	2027/03/15: 0.00	

Yours faithfully,

Prof MM Sepota
Registrar



Appendix B : Ethical clearance – Faculty of Education, University of South Africa

UNISA COLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 08 January 2025

Dear **Ms Hlamalane Agnes Kubayi**

Ref: **2024/11/15/000000395/07/RB** Name: **Ms Hlamalane Agnes Kubayi**
Student No.: **45034877**

Researcher(s): Name: **Ms Hlamalane Agnes Kubayi**

E-mail address: 45034877@mylife.unisa.ac.za

Telephone: **082 9391068**

Supervisor: Name: **Dr. Maite E.Maebana**

E-mail address: maebame@unisa.ac.za

Telephone: **0737288290**

Title of research: *AL ROLE IN MOTHER TONGUE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE.*

Decision: Ethics Approval form

Qualification: MEd

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above-mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period **2025/01/08** to **2028/01/08**.

*The **low risk level** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on **15 November 2024** in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached.
2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.

3. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.
4. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
5. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.
6. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
7. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
8. The study's risk level is Category 2- Low risk: Human participants are involved and there is foreseeable risk of inconvenience. Non-vulnerable adult participants and non-sensitive information is involved.
9. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2028/01/08**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

*The reference number **2025/01/08/00000395/07/RB** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Kind regards,



Prof RB Mnyai Prof Mpine Makoe Acting Head: CEDU Research Executive
Dean: CEDU monyarb@unisa.ac.za gakisme@unisa.ac.za

Approved - decision template – updated 16 Feb 2017

Appendix C : A letter to request permission from the Dept of Education Mopani District



Kubayi Hlamalani Agnes

Student Number: 45034877

Master of Education (Inclusive Education) Student

University of South Africa

Date : _____

The District Director
Mopani District Office
Department of Education
0826

Subject: Request for Permission to Conduct Research in Mopani District, Man'ombe Circuit Primary Schools

Dear Sir/Madam,

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is **Kubayi Hlamalani Agnes**, a Master of Education (Inclusive Education) student at the University of South Africa (UNISA). I am conducting research under the supervision of **Dr. Maebane M.E**, an external supervisor in the Department of Inclusive Education.

As part of my academic study, I am requesting permission to conduct research in five primary schools within the **Man'ombe Circuit**, under the **Mopani District**. My research focuses on "**The parental role in teaching and learning the mother tongue in the foundation phase within the Man'ombe Circuit of Mopani District, Limpopo Province, South Africa**". The study will involve Departmental heads, Foundation Phase teachers, and parents, and data collection methods will be interviews, document analysis, observation, and audio recordings.

I would like to assure you that all ethical guidelines set by the University of South Africa and the Department of Education will be strictly followed. Participation in the study will be voluntary, and confidentiality will be maintained throughout the research process. Additionally, I have obtained ethical clearance from UNISA, which I can provide upon request.

I kindly seek your approval to proceed with this study and would greatly appreciate your support. I look forward to your positive response.

Signature : _____ Name of the receiver : _____ Date : _____

Yours sincerely,

Kubayi Hlamalani Agnes

Cell : 082 939 1068 / 073 978 0049

Email : aggykubayi@gmail.com

Dr. Maebane ME (Supervisor)

Cell : 073 728 8290 / 072 641 3526

Email : maebame@unisa.ac.za

Appendix D : Dept of Education Mopani District Research Approved letter

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
MOPANI DISTRICT OFFICE
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

11 JUN 2025

PRIVATE BAG X 578
GIYANI 0826
LIMPOPO PROVINCE



**DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION**

**MOPANI EAST DISTRICT
CONFIDENTIAL**

ENQ: Ngobeni D Tel: 063 146 1114/0760448081 Email: davidngobeni9@gmail.com Date: 11 -06 - 2025

TO: KUBAYI HA

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: THE PARENTAL ROLE IN MOTHER TONGUE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE OF MAN'OMBE CIRCUIT, MOPANI DISTRICT, LIMPOPO PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA.

1. The above matter refers.
2. The Department wishes to inform you that your request to conduct research on the above mentioned topic has been approved.
3. Your focus should only be limited to the primary schools in Man'ombe Circuit.
4. The following conditions should be considered:
 - 4.1. Arrangement should be made with the Principal of the school.
 - 4.2. The research should not be conducted during examinations especially the 4th term.
 - 4.3. During research, applicable research ethics should be adhered to, in particular the principle of voluntary participation (the people involved should be respected).
 - 4.4. Upon completion of the research study, the researcher shall share the final product of the research with the Department.
 - 4.5. The research should not have any financial implications to the Department of Education Limpopo Province.
5. Furthermore, you are expected to produce this letter to schools and offices where you intend to conduct your research since it will serve as proof that you have been granted permission to conduct the research.
6. The Department appreciates the contribution that you wish to make and wishes you success in your research.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "D. Ngobeni", written over a horizontal line.

DISTRICT DIRECTOR

**11 JUNE 2025
DATE**

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: KUBAYI HA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
MOPANI EAST DISTRICT, Private Bag X 578 GIYANI, 0826
Tel 015 811 7803

The heartland of Southern Africa – development is about people

Appendix E : A letter to request permission to conduct data collection at school

Kubayi Hlamalani Agnes

Student Number: 45034877

Master of Education (Inclusive Education) Student

University of South Africa



Date : _____

The Principal

Name of the school

Man'ombe Circuit

Mopani District

Subject: Request for Permission to Conduct Research atPrimary School

Dear Principal,

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Kubayi Hlamalani Agnes, a Master of Education (Inclusive Education) student at the University of South Africa (UNISA). I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Maebane M.E, an external supervisor in the Department of Inclusive Education.

As part of my academic study, I am requesting your permission to conduct research at **Primary School**. My research focuses on "**The parental role in teaching and learning the mother tongue in the foundation phase within the Man'ombe Circuit of Mopani District, Limpopo Province, South Africa,**". The study will involve Departmental heads, Foundation Phase educators, and parents, and data collection methods will be interviews, document analysis, observations, and audio recordings.

I assure you that the research will follow all ethical guidelines set by UNISA and the Department of Education. Participation will be voluntary, and all information collected will be treated with strict confidentiality. No school, participant, or personal details will be disclosed in the final research report. Furthermore, I have obtained ethical clearance from UNISA and permission from the **Mopani District Office** to conduct this study.

I would greatly appreciate your support in granting me access to conduct this research at your school, and I look forward to your positive response.

Signature : _____

Name of the Principal : _____

Date : _____

Yours sincerely,

Kubayi Hlamalani Agnes

Cell : 082 939 1068 / 073 978 0049

Email : aggykubayi@gmail.com

Dr. Maebane ME (Supervisor)

Cell : 073 728 8290 / 072 641 3526

Email : maebame@unisa.ac.za

Appendix F : A letter to the participants, and consent form

Kubayi Hlamalani Agnes

Student Number: 45034877

Master of Education (Inclusive Education) Student

University of South Africa

Foundation Phase Departmental Head / Educator / Parent

Name of the School

Department of Education

Dear Sir/Madam,

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

I am conducting a research study titled "**The parental role in teaching and learning the mother tongue in the foundation phase within the Man'ombe Circuit of Mopani District, Limpopo Province, South Africa,**" as part of my academic work at the **University of South Africa**. The purpose of the study is to explore the role of parents in supporting the teaching and learning of the mother tongue in the foundation phase.

I kindly request your participation in this study, which will involve interviews, observations, document analysis, and audio recording. All information will remain confidential and used only for research purposes. Participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without penalty. Your contribution will help improve teaching, learning, parental involvement, and language development. Please contact the researcher or supervisor for any questions and sign the consent form if you agree. To ensure the integrity and confidentiality of participants, the following guidelines will be observed:

I confirm that I have read and understood the information provided in the information letter regarding the study conducted by Ms. Kubayi H.A of the University of South Africa in Limpopo Province, South Africa. I was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and I received satisfactory answers, as well as any additional information I required.

I understand that I have the option to consent to my interview being audio-recorded to ensure an accurate record of my responses. I am aware that extracts from the interviews may be used in the dissertation and/or in future publications arising from the study, with the assurance that my identity will remain anonymous. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw my consent at any time without any penalty by informing the researcher.

Participant's Name (Please Print) _____

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix G: Interview Schedule for participants

RESEARCH TITLE: The Parental Role during Teaching and Learning of the Mother Tongue in the Foundation Phase Man’ombe Circuit of Mopani District, Limpopo Province, South Africa.

Purpose of the Interview:

The purpose of this interview is to explore the role of parents in supporting the teaching and learning of the mother tongue in the foundation phase. The study aims to understand parents’ perceptions, experiences, challenges, and the factors that influence mother tongue instruction in schools.

Ethical Considerations:

1. Welcome and thank you for your participation in this study. My name is **Kubayi Hlamalani Agnes**, and I am a graduate student at the **University of South Africa (UNISA)**, conducting my special study in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Inclusive Education degree
2. The length of this interview will depend on the level of detail in your responses to the questions. With your permission, I would like to audio-record this session to capture the information you provide accurately, but if you prefer not to be recorded, only written notes will be taken.
3. Participation is voluntary; however, the findings may indirectly benefit parents, educators, and schools by strengthening our understanding of how parents support mother tongue learning in the foundation phase.
4. You may withdraw at any time without any consequences.
5. Responses will be kept confidential and used for academic purposes only.
6. No names will be recorded, and anonymity will be maintained.

Interview Questions:

Section A: General Information - Warm-up questions to make participants comfortable

1. Can you please tell me a little about yourself (role as a parent/teacher / DH)?

2. What language(s) are spoken most frequently in your home/school?
3. How long have you been a parent/teacher / Departmental Head in this school?
4. What grade are you teaching, and what subjects do you teach

Section B: Parental Role in Mother Tongue Teaching and Learning in the Foundation

Phase

1. How often do you communicate with your child's teacher/learner's parent about their progress in learning the mother tongue, and what methods of communication do you and the teacher usually use (e.g., meetings, messages, calls)?
2. In what ways do you help your learner/child learn to read and write in their mother tongue at school/home, and how do you encourage them to use their mother tongue in daily activities?
3. What kind of support or resources do you think teachers/parents need to effectively support early literacy in the mother tongue?
4. How do you feel about your learners/children being taught in their mother tongue in the foundation phase, and what benefits do you think come from using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction?
5. Do you think cultural practices play an important role in maintaining the mother tongue? Why or why not? What cultural activities or traditions in this school / in your home, or community promote the use of your mother tongue?

Section C: Teaching strategies to enhance the performance of the FP learners in diverse HL classroom.

1. What types of learning materials in the mother tongue are available for your learners/child at home or school (e.g., books, posters, storybooks)?
2. How easy or difficult is it to find reading or learning materials written in your mother tongue (Xitsonga)?
3. How do you think the use of the mother tongue - Xitsonga can help include all learners in the classroom, and what role do you think educators and parents can play in promoting inclusivity through language learning?
4. Have you received any information or training on inclusive teaching and learning methods?
5. Are there any awareness campaigns or community programmes in your area that promote the importance of the mother tongue, and what kind of campaigns or activities would help raise awareness among parents and the community?

Section D: The effectiveness of the mother tongue as a language of instruction on the learning abilities of FP classrooms.

1. Are you aware of any national or departmental policy that promotes the use of the mother tongue in the foundation phase? How is this policy implemented in your school or your child's school?
2. What role do you think parents can play in supporting the implementation of the national language policy?

3. What benefits have you noticed when children learn in their mother tongue in a multilingual or diverse classroom?
4. How does learning in one's home language influence learners' understanding of other languages later on?
5. Do educators in your school receive any training or workshops on teaching in the mother tongue?

Section E: How mother tongue teaching in the FP classrooms can be utilized to expand literacy.

1. How do learners cope when they later must switch from their mother tongue to English or another language in higher grades
2. What advice would you give to other educators/parents about improving or promoting teaching and learning of the mother tongue in the foundation phase?

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix H: A letter from the language editor

**LEBOMA INVESTMENTS (PTY) LTD
REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2018 / 299676 / 07**

EDITORIAL LETTER

This letter serves to confirm that I, **Prof T.W Molotja**, have proofread and edited the research report for

**KUBAYI HLAMALANI AGNES
STUDENT NUMBER: 45034877**

entitled

**THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN MOTHER TONGUE TEACHING AND LEARNING
IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE: A CASE STUDY OF THE MAN'OMBE
CIRCUIT, LIMPOPO PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA**

focusing on

- Eliminating spelling errors.
- Fluency in reading.
- Academic writing.

I therefore recommend for its submission.

Yours sincerely

Date: 27/11/2025

