

# **THE IMPLEMENTATION AND FACILITATION OF THE WHOLE LANGUAGE APPROACH WITH DEAF LEARNERS (EIGHT TO TWELVE YEARS OLD)**

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## **DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contain in this assignment is my own work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any other university for a degree.

## SUMMARY

Traditionally, schools for Deaf learners taught the language arts within a behaviouristic model with the result that language was broken down into parts and sub-skills and presented in a de-contextualised way. This approach to teaching was sequentially building from the simplest to the most complex form. In contrast to this, the Whole Language approach focuses on a holistic and integrated approach where all language forms are contextualised. Deaf learners need to acquire language as well as develop language before actively engaging in oracy and literacy.

With the acceptance of Sign Language as part of the Total Communication philosophy, the medium of instruction is English/Afrikaans/Xhosa in the printed and written form. This necessitates a move towards an approach in which the teaching and learning of language is meaningful, as well as functional such as the Whole Language approach which includes aspects of constructivist theory, appropriate beliefs and effective practice.

This research focused on the factors influencing teachers' acceptance and problems experienced as well as the literacy development of the Deaf learner during implementation and facilitation of the Whole language approach. The qualitative design accommodated the exploratory contextual nature of this type of research. The research methodology was a qualitative case study, consisting of three experienced teachers of the Deaf and twenty Deaf learners with varying degrees of hearing losses and mixed language abilities.

The methods used during data collection were interviews, journal entries, workshops, and observations. Data analysis was done by using the procedure of open coding where manageable units of data were coded into categories and themes. These themes and categories were interpreted and correlated with the literature.

The researcher facilitated the implementation of the Whole Language approach by providing the resource material, building trusting relationships and continuously consulting with the teachers involved in the study. The findings of the study shows that learners abilities such as confidence, risk taking, interest, power sharing, trust, motivation and active learning contributed to learners engaging in the language system - oracy and literacy whilst it extended and enriched the teachers' practices and teaching strategies.

## OPSOMMING

Tradisioneel het skole vir Dowe leerders taal binne 'n behaviouristiese raamwerk onderrig wat tot gevolg gehad het dat taal in kleiner eenhede en subvaardighede, sonder 'n bekende konteks, aangebied is. Hierdie benadering is stapsgewys aangebied vanaf die eenvoudigste tot die mees ingewikkelde vorm. Hierteenoor staan die Geheeltaalbenadering waar klem geplaas word op 'n holistiese, geïntegreerde benadering waar alle taalfasette gekontekstualiseer word. Die verwerwing en ontwikkeling van taal is 'n voorvereiste vir die Dowe leerder se kommunikasie ("oracy") - en geletterdheidsvaardighede (lees en skryf).

Met die aanvaarding van Gebaretaal as deel van die Totale kommunikasie filosofie, word Engels/Afrikaans/Xhosa die onderrigmedium ten opsigte van lees en skryf. Gevolglik is dit noodsaaklik om 'n benadering te volg waar klem gelê word op betekenis om sodoende aan die taalbehoefte van die Dowe leerder te voldoen. Die Geheeltaalbenadering voldoen aan hierdie vereistes ten opsigte van die teoretiese begroning, die konstruktivistiese filosofie, toepaslike geloofstelsels asook die effektiewe praktyk.

Hierdie navorsing is toegespits op die geletterdheidsontwikkeling van die Dowe leerder en die faktore wat die onderwysers se aanvaarding tydens implementering en fasilitering van die Geheeltaalbenadering 'n rol gespeel het. Die kwalitatiewe aard van die navorsingsontwerp het 'n verkennende en kontekstueel-beskrywende vorm aangeneem. Die navorsingsmetodologie het gebruik gemaak van 'n enkel gevallestudie waaraan drie ervare onderwysers en twintig Dowe leerders deelgeneem het en verskillende grade van gehoorverlies en taalvaardigheidsvlakke openbaar het.

Die metode van data-insameling wat gebruik is, is onderhoude, joernaalinskrywings, werkwinkels en observasie. Die data-ontleding was gedoen deur gebruik te maak van 'n cop koderingsprosedure, waar hanteerbare data-eenhede gekodeer is in temas en kategorieë. Laasgenoemde is met behulp van literatuur geïnterpreteer en gekorreleer.

Die navorser het die Geheeltaalbenadering geïmplementeer en gefasiliteer, deur hulpmiddels te voorsien, sowel as om betroubare verhoudings en effektiewe samewerking tussen kollegas te bewerkstellig. Die bevindinge van hierdie studie het gedui dat leerders se vaardighede soos motivering, bereidheid om te waag, belangstelling, wedywering en vertroue 'n bydrae gelewer het tot h/sy inskakeling as aktiewe leerder ten opsigte van die taalsisteem (kommunikasie en geletterdheid) terwyl die onderwysers se onderwyspraktyk en onderrigstrategieë uitgebrei en verryk is.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## RELEVANCE, STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVE

*"Literacy development is a social, political and cultural process which begins with meaningful interactions with written language. The way then, that children progressively understand languages and interpret the value of literacy in their lives depends on their developing homes, community and school encounters with activities that involve reading and writing"*  
(Bloch, 1999:42).

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, teaching Deaf children has focused on the acquisition of oral language for reading and writing. Language teaching therefore has been fragmented into skills and sub-skills in the various areas in the language system.

Different methods have been used in teaching language where splinter skills have developed in reading and writing (Barcher, 1998:14). In such instances reading and writing is already delayed due to the nature of how language is acquired. The introduction of Sign Language and Sign Supported English/Afrikaans/Xhosa within the Total Communication philosophy has compelled schools to raise questions concerning the most suitable approach for the teaching of language.

The work of Smith and Goodman (in Barcher, 1998:50) suggests that language tuition in general should be meaningful and authentic. The behaviourist model for teaching language no longer seems relevant. In Deaf education, the challenge of teaching language is constantly debated. Since the Congress of Milan in 1880 (Jankowski, 1993:1) the emphasis has been the promotion of oralism. Until the early 1960's this battle has raged in deaf education and amongst the Deaf community. William Stokoe (Battison & Baker, 1980:3) a linguist, who studied Sign Language, was able to give this language the recognition as the *natural* language of the Deaf. The educational system as well as access to information for Deaf people may have changed but hearing educators and people in authority in the educational system had reservations regarding the acceptance of Sign Language.

For the Deaf learner the approach to language learning is twofold - a mode for language learning, that is how to access a language and secondly, a suitable approach for language learning and language acquisition. The Deaf learner with a profound to severe hearing loss requires a bi-modal or multi-modal approach to access language. Once the issue of the medium of instruction is resolved, the second aspect of a suitable teaching approach or programme is needed as the aural-oral approach excludes signing or fingerspelling in its purist form. The Maternal Reflective Method (Van Uden, 1968:5), Fitzgerald Key, Printed Word and the Open Sentence System (in Moores, 1997:231) traditionally used in the school involved in this study and recommended in deaf education, is no longer suitable. These methods do not make provision for the use of signing to support English/Afrikaans/Xhosa because the symbol systems are different. These methods do not allow for the transfer from Sign Language into English/Afrikaans/Xhosa. To illustrate this in spoken English one would say, "I have a red car". In Sign Language one would sign "Car have I red". The language teacher would use the Sign Language structure to teach the correct English structure in the written form. When applying the recommended approaches to language development, the language is obtained through the oral approach.

Johnson, Liddel and Erting (1989:4) researched the educational success of Deaf learners in America and the outcome of the study indicated that the aural-oral approach to educating the Deaf child had failed. It has been stated that the profoundly or pre-lingually deaf child with little or no prior language experience in the aural-oral programme is expected to be taught speech, lip-reading and the fundamental model for the acquisition of English. Deaf children are expected to acquire, understand and use spoken English simultaneously.

It is expected that the Deaf learner does not enter school with the same level of language as the hearing learner due to delayed language development. Early identification of hearing loss, intervention and the appropriate type of intervention for the child with a profound to severe hearing loss is essential. Until recently the only type of intervention has been the aural-oral approach and only when this approach has failed after a period of two to three years could the Deaf learner be transferred to a Sign Language environment. Parents of Deaf children are often hearing and they experience difficulties in communicating with their children. If they do not sign, this

can further delay or restrict the development of language in the Deaf child (Mather & Mitchell, 1993:123).

The South African Constitution (1996) and the South African Schools Act (1996) recognise and support the use of Sign Language as a medium of instruction and has made it possible for the Deaf learner to have linguistic access to curricular information in a bi-modal/multi-modal bilingual environment.

## **1.2 MOTIVATION AND RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY**

Teaching Deaf learners can be a daunting task. The development of language is the main thrust of these learners' education. As a teacher of the Deaf my main focus within each learning area, is based on language. Each lesson is a language lesson. The Deaf learner is constantly engaging in the acquisition and development of language. In the classroom setting however, I have a wide range of language levels, different degrees of hearing losses, the process and time of intervention is different for each learner and there is a considerable variation in reading and writing ability. With this wide range of variables I need to make each lesson accessible to all.

The motivation and relevance of this research is based on the concern regarding language teaching for Deaf learners that has stagnated for many years. This particular research has been chosen for a number of reasons. I undertook this study due to the personal frustration experienced as a class teacher who had to apply the behaviourist approach to language learning. The monolingual view of language learning has led to a search for the most effective methodology in language learning for Deaf learners who require a bi-modal/multi-modal medium of instruction. My search for a meaningful and balanced teaching approach led to the Whole Language approach. I was motivated to explore the philosophy of Whole Language, the elements of which encouraged me to intervene with Deaf learners. The key principles of Whole Language philosophy appealed to me. The characteristics of this philosophy include the learner working in a context of authentic literacy, reading and writing processes, and language learning is integrated with the whole life of the child.

There is a link between language learning, language acquisition and social interaction (Goodman, 1989:207). The Whole Language perspective suggests that the learner is a constructor of knowledge and that language is meaningful.

As the Whole Language approach was used as an approach for American Deaf learners, it provided an incentive to determine how some South African Deaf learners may fair with the same approach. Many methods/approaches have been previously explored but each method has presented its own limitations for Deaf learners. The Whole Language philosophy incorporates a range of aspects suitable for Deaf learners who need a bilingual environment (Sign Language and English/Afrikaans/Xhosa).

I was enthusiastic about this particular approach to learning and teaching language. My knowledge and skills as a remedial teacher, has given me insight into learning theories, language development and language acquisition. Communicative competence in Sign Language and understanding the fundamentals of the syntax of the language has assisted me in language teaching and learning. Knowledge and experience, inter-personal skills such as reflective listening, empathy, sensitivity and facilitation skills have supported me in the process of change. I have taught Deaf learners for twenty years. The move from the oral philosophy to Total Communication has allowed for an understanding and acceptance of change in the approach to teaching language to Deaf learners. My role has been that of a facilitator and I have therefore needed to explore the most effective approaches of sharing knowledge with teachers and to be prepared for the problems that teachers may encounter when changing from a behaviourist model to a constructivist model. I have been motivated to use the Whole Language approach as it is inclusive, coherent and a scientific pedagogy for a democratic society (Goodman, 1992:196). The approach allows the Deaf learner to engage in authentic situations that make the language learning real for the learner.

### **1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Deaf learners experience difficulty in language acquisition because of the modality in which it is acquired and the approach to the teaching and learning of English/Afrikaans language. Traditionally, language acquisition and language learning have been taught through the aural-oral approach, which follows the behaviourist model and excludes Sign Language. It is essentially important to provide the Deaf learner linguistic access to the curricular content. Therefore, with the change of the medium of instruction in this school to support the philosophy of Total Communication, an alternative approach to language teaching and learning is

needed. I expressed the need to change the approach of language learning to support the philosophy of Total Communication. The implementation of a constructivist model namely the Whole Language approach could provide flexibility for the bi-modal/multi-modal bilingual approach for Deaf learners who need Sign Language as well as English/Afrikaans/Xhosa in the printed and written form.

The research question has been formulated as follows:

What does the process of implementing and facilitating the Whole Language approach with profoundly to severely Deaf learners aged eight to twelve years old entail?

#### **1.4 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

The aim of the study focuses on the following:

- The development of the literacy level of Deaf learners with the Whole Language approach.
- Factors influencing the teacher acceptance of the Whole Language approach and problems teachers experienced in the implementation and facilitation of the Whole Language approach.

#### **1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN**

This study has been conducted as an explorative, descriptive and explanatory form of research. The research is qualitative and the format a case study (Mertens, 1998:166). The literature review will form the theoretical point of departure in terms of understanding the Deaf learner and the Whole Language approach for this case study.

The qualitative approach is suitable for this research as it allows for descriptions of the process as well as a record of the problems and changes as they presented themselves during the research. Three teachers and their classes of profound to severe Deaf learners ranging from eight years to twelve years old participated in this case study. The teachers were selected from the staff and they consented to be participants in the case study.

### **1.5.1 Data Collection**

I collected data by monitoring the process as it unfolded through observation, informal discussions and semi-structured interviews. I introduced the Whole Language approach in a careful, sensitive and non-threatening manner using consultative and facilitating skills. It was necessary to observe the participants' and learners' responses during the implementation period of the whole language approach. This observation required visitations to the classrooms where participants' responses were monitored. The learners' responses to the shift in teaching methods needed to be monitored to ensure that the approach was suitable to meet all the needs of Deaf learners. Deaf learners are not a homogenous group as they have different degrees of hearing losses, different language exposure (at home, previous intervention, etc.), different language abilities and home backgrounds (support, stimulation). The time of identification of hearing loss and the quality and quantity of intervention influences the diversity of learners in one classroom. It is therefore necessary to determine if the Whole language approach suits the needs of all learners.

### **1.5.2 Data Analysis**

I have attempted to describe in detail the experiences of the participants as they implemented the Whole Language approach in their classroom teaching practice. The process of change and problems encountered during the implementation is described. The data is analysed and interpreted by coding units of data into themes that are then clustered to find the most relevant categories for interpretation. Data was consolidated and verified to determine the reliability of the findings. The data has been interpreted by finding relationships and revealing the dynamics of the process of change. Conclusions, guidelines and recommendations were suggested.

## **1.6 CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF TERMS**

Key terms related to this study were clarified to eliminate ambiguity and confusion.

### **1.6.1 Whole Language Philosophy/Whole Language Approach**

As Whole Language is a philosophy, it is difficult to provide one common definition. Whole Language has been referred to as the "language integrated approach or curriculum", "language across the curriculum", "language arts" and more commonly as "language experience approach". All of these terms encompass the definition of

Whole language (Froese, 1994:308). Whole Language philosophy proposes that language is acquired through direct use and advocates the use of authentic materials (Barcher, 1998:50). Smith (in Goodman, 1988:301) states that Whole Language is the "instructional philosophy that reflects most consistently the view that meaning and 'natural language' are the basis of literacy learning". It is also suggested that language should be kept whole during teaching instruction, and that fragmentation of the language should be avoided during drill (Watson in Barcher, 1998:50). Goodman believes that Whole Language is not a "dogma to be narrowly practised" but a way of merging a view of language, a view of learning, a view of peoples namely teachers and children (in Barcher, 1998:50).

Although the definition of this philosophy may vary, there is a common view of the principles and characteristics of Whole Language. The following are key features of the Whole Language philosophy (Barcher, 1998:50-52):

- Learning is enhanced when learners actively interact with other learners, books, materials, artefacts and the world;
- Learning is a social act that involves collaboration in a community that is dedicated to learning and supports exploration and taking risks;
- Learning that is purposeful and significant to the learner is more effective and enduring than learning that is imposed by outside forces. When learners are interested in topics, they are likely to risk, achieve and grow;
- Literacy develops from whole to part and from the known to the unknown;
- Literacy has no defined hierarchy of sub-skills, nor a sequence;
- Readers construct meaning for themselves by drawing on clues, prior learning experiences and personal purposes as they read;
- Writers strive to include enough information and detail to make their writing efforts comprehensible to their intended audience. They rely on prior experiences, and learn to write functionally and effectively.

Even for the Deaf learner it is noted that the Whole Language philosophy is a belief that whatever is language is learned like language, and acts like language. All languages - oral, written or signed - share certain characteristics (Burch & Teller, 1996:5):

- They are profoundly social;
- They contain interdependent and inseparable subsystems;
- They are predictable.

### **1.6.2 deaf/Deaf**

Deaf written with a lower case 'd' refers to a deaf person with a mild, moderate, profound or severe hearing loss, one who has an audiological condition or is pathologically deaf.

Deaf written with an upper case 'D' refers to a person having a hearing loss but also a hearing impaired person who recognises that Sign Language is his/her natural language, accepts Deaf culture and is part of a Deaf community, deafness from a socio-cultural context (Jacobs, 1989:8-10).

### **1.6.3 Sign Language**

Sign Language is the language of Deaf/deaf people; a language of space and movement using the hands, body, face and head to convey meaning in a structured manner. Sign Language is considered one of the main indicators of Deaf culture and community membership is identified through the use of sign (Padden, 1980:99).

### **1.6.4 Bilingualism-Biculturalism**

Bilingualism and biculturalism is the use of two languages namely Sign Language as a vehicle to access English or Afrikaans in the printed or written form sharing cultural views of the community of the spoken, read written language as well as the Deaf community (McCay & Daigle, 1994:122).

### **1.6.5 Total Communication**

Total Communication is a philosophy that utilises spoken as well as signed language. It includes lip-reading, speech, use of residual hearing, oral language, gesture, mime, body language, finger-spelling and Sign Language. Spoken and signing need not be done simultaneously (Jacobs, 1989:51).

### **1.6.6 Bi-modal/Multi-modal Communication**

Bi-modal communication for the Deaf refers to the mode of language instruction or application by a learner in the following ways (Miller & Luckner, 1992:345):

- Audition and lip-reading,
- Audition and finger-spelling,
- Audition and Sign,
- Lip-reading and Sign,
- Lip-reading and finger-spelling.

Multi-modal refers to the mode of language instruction or application by a learner in the following ways (Miller & Luckner, 1992:346):

- Lip-reading, Audition and Finger-spelling,
- Lip-reading, Audition and Signing.

### **1.6.7 Lip-reading/Speech-reading**

When people speak their lips make patterns. Lip-reading or speech-reading is the understanding of speech through the perception of facial and bodily gestures with the auditory signal. It is the ability to read the patterns of sound on the lip movements. For the Deaf learner residual hearing is necessary to assist in lip-reading (White, Dancer & Burl, 1996:236).

### **1.6.8 Finger-spelling**

A different hand shape or position represents each of the letters of the alphabet in Sign Language (Padden, 1980:100).

### **1.6.9 Oracy**

Oracy refers to the ability to listen and speak. These two skills assist the learner in the delivery of coherent speech (Mayer & Tane, 2002:399). For, the Deaf learner seeing/listening (with the limited residual hearing) and signing/speaking will provide a mode of delivery of his/her thoughts (McCay & Daigle, 1994:123).

### **1.6.10 Literacy**

Literacy refers to the ability to read and write in a language (Watson, 1999:96).

### **1.6.11 Implementation and facilitation**

Implementation refers to providing a means to accomplish or put (something) into effect. It is putting a process with structures into effect in order to gain a desired

accomplishment (World Book Encyclopaedia, 2000). Facilitation is a process to help or assist in forwarding a programme or idea by eliciting, modelling or inducing changes (McCowan, Driscoll & Roop, 1995:255).

## **1.7 CONTEXTUAL ORIENTATION**

This research is focused at a micro level even though the study could be extended to a macro level concerning all Deaf learners acquiring language.

The physical setting is in the Western Cape, South Africa. The educational context is an urban residential school in a middle class environment for Deaf learners. The learners attending the school come from all over the Cape Peninsula and outside of the province as far as Namibia. The learners are primarily from disadvantaged backgrounds and most lack stimulation, which exacerbates the problem of access to communication, as parents do not consider the acquisition of Sign Language a priority. It is a Catholic school with a heritage dating back to 1874. This school moved to this residential area because of Apartheid legislation in 1937. Currently, the government funds the school while all the buildings belong to the Catholic Church. Subsequently school fees are low but transport expenses are high due to the distance learners commute to school. The school accommodates 280 learners with varying degrees of hearing losses, primarily profound to severe. This study has been conducted in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases (Grade Four).

## **1.8 STRUCTURE OF PRESENTATION**

The chapters are planned with the following divisions. Chapter One provides an orientation of the research.

Chapter Two is the literature review. It focuses on the theoretical aspect of the Whole Language philosophy, language learning for hearing and Deaf learners and the implications of teaching the Deaf learner using the Whole Language approach.

Chapter Three provides the theoretical framework for the research methodology and the format of a qualitative case study. The researcher outlines the study implementation and facilitation of the Whole Language approach.

Chapter Four provides the interpretation of the data and makes recommendations for future education.

## **1.9 SUMMARY**

This chapter has placed the study in a particular context affirming the research problem, aims and the methodology used to realise the aims. I have contextualized the research within a school for Deaf learners in the Western Cape. I have expressed the relevance and motivation for the research. The methodology for the research has been briefly outlined and the key concepts are clarified.

## CHAPTER TWO

# DEAF LEARNERS AND THE WHOLE LANGUAGE APPROACH

*"Most of us can't remember actually learning our first language - probably because it is such a natural and painless process. It is as though it just happens - children get their first language for free" (Aarons, 1995:8).*

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The loss of hearing is not only the loss of sound but the deprivation of language. Cognitive processing, emotional development, literacy and academic achievements are all influenced by the acquisition of language. For the Deaf learner the acquisition of language is not a process that "just happens", is "painless" or "free". It requires deliberate intervention in a controlled setting. Often Deaf learners can earmark the time when they first started to engage in conversation. Therefore, it is essential that Deaf learners acquire language so that they can become functionally literate individuals and take their place in society, have dreams and aspirations (Aarons, 1995:9).

The Deaf learner enters an educational system that is riddled with bias, confusion and opinions as to what is appropriate for the Deaf learner.

In this chapter I will attempt to record the history of deaf education locally, nationally and internationally, focus on the acquisition of language, and how it is used in the teaching of the Deaf learner. The Language Arts (different genres of language) will be addressed in relation to the acquisition of language.

### 2.2 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF DEAF EDUCATION

International and national historical perspectives of Deaf education will be discussed.

#### 2.2.1 International perspectives of Deaf Education

Historically, Deaf education has been in turmoil as to the best method to educate Deaf children. In Europe there were two educators influential in two different methods which has caused controversy throughout the centuries.

Charles Michel, Abbe' de le l'Epee (Jacobs, 1989:37) founded the first regular school for the deaf in Europe in 1755, introducing Sign Language as a medium of instruction in deaf teaching. Samuel Heinicke started the first public school for the Deaf in 1778, bringing the oral methods into favour. The methods introduced by these two educators have subsequently been both influential and controversial.

In the nineteenth century the move was for more pure oral methods especially after the Congress of Milan in 1880. Consequently, fingerspelling and Sign Language were frowned on in the education of Deaf children (Jacobs, 1989:38).

During the period from 1867 to 1952 educators adhered to the oral methods exclusively. Educators applying the oral methods believed that Deaf children exposed extensively to speech would learn adequate oral communication and successfully return to the hearing world. In these methods, language learning would be broken down into parts - syntax and phonology (Jankowski, 1994:10).

In 1960 Stokoe publicized a paper, *Sign Language Structure* (Baker & Battison, 1980:15), on the first linguistic study of American Sign Language giving rise in the 60's and 70's to the introduction of Sign Language into the classroom by way of the Total Communication philosophy. In the 1980's and 90's researchers Liddel, Erting and Johnson (1989:3) questioned the failure of Deaf education. Access to language related issues, low expectations and the issue of attitudes and values among those who educated Deaf children were sighted as reasons for the failure.

The issue of linguistic access to curricular material has been at the heart of all discussions about the pedagogy in Deaf education since the 1800's. Most arguments have focused on what means of communication should be implemented in order for Deaf children to acquire normative, linguistic and behavioural expectations as hearing children.

The current movement for Sign Language and English literacy is in accordance with the international multicultural and multilingual strategies, especially recognizing the cultural identity of the Deaf people. The notion of bilingualism and multiculturalism is slowly becoming part of the 21st century. Empowering minority groups of people, and in this instance Deaf people has given status to Deaf people as equal to, yet distinct from, hearing people, the dominant society (Jankowski, 1994:29).

### **2.2.2 National Perspectives of Deaf Education**

In South Africa very little has been documented about the history of this minority group. Based on this limited knowledge, as well as documents, newspaper clippings, records and interviews, Penn (1993) recorded the official educational policy for the Deaf as recommended at the Congress of Milan. In 1863, Irish nuns from the Dominican Order became involved in training programmes for the Deaf. Subsequently, the Grimley Institute for the Deaf and Dumb opened in 1874. The school was later separated into two schools due to the politics of that period. In the 1920's oralism was adopted in all schools for the Deaf. However, it is recorded that during 1932-1965, in the Dominican schools for the Deaf in Cape Town, Deaf learners used Sign Language among themselves although it was not taught in the classroom and was strongly discouraged by the teachers (Penn, 1993:18). In 1980, "Talking to the Deaf" a dictionary of signs was published. This was adopted by the Department of Education and Training in all schools for the Deaf and the medium of instruction was changed to English supported with signs (Penn, 1993:14).

Currently, in South Africa, attitudes towards deafness in general are locked into the medical model that adheres to special education. This model is based on the understanding that the Deaf learner needs to be "fixed" in order to "fit into" society.

As South Africa moves into a post-apartheid phase, there is a revised view of education, namely Outcomes Based Education. This view is applied nationwide and takes a closer look at Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN). The White Paper on Education (Special needs education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System Paper 6, 2001:10) has documented the strategies and interventions that would assist teachers to cope with the diversity of learning and teaching needs. The Government has stated an obligation to redress the imbalances of the past by raising the quality of education and training for all. This Paper (DNE, 2001:11) outlines how the change to accommodate learning needs and mechanisms to support learners will develop within a particular time frame. The Ministry of Education has outlined the belief of strengthening the educational support services to assist any Deaf child and to provide for early identification of hearing loss, early intervention, parent counselling, parent support and guidance as to the appropriate educational service (special education or inclusion or oralism versus signing) (DNE, 2001:28).

While the Bill of Rights (RSA, 1996) and the South African Schools Act (1996) makes provision for the inclusion of Sign Language, many schools are still deciding what medium of instruction to use in the school and classroom. There is a greater awareness of Sign Language but diminished financial support from the government continues. Due to the rationalization of teachers, the uncertainties of inclusive education and the limited number of trained teachers for the Deaf, many schools are making do with the situation and strive to provide an education that is suitable for the technological age of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The fundamental question is **how** the Deaf learner acquires language and in **what** medium the language is acquired.

### **2.3 LANGUAGE ACQUISITION OF THE DEAF LEARNER**

When learning and using a language, we are engaging in highly complex processes of which we are unaware. As we communicate through language, we organize our words according to intricate syntax. Our speech contains rules relating to rhythm, emphasis and intonations that facilitate effective communication. When we speak rapidly or unreflectively, we are selecting the appropriate words from a lexicon of 50 000 words, at a rate of five selections per second. We follow the rules of conversation, inter-personal interaction and are attuned to the social context. We have an awareness of language culture that has been developed over the years and stored in our memory (Lynas, 1995:1).

The Deaf learner is unable to process language in the same manner because of certain limitations. Language acquisition for the Deaf learner is an activity that requires deliberate intervention of an otherwise natural informal practice.

#### **2.3.1 Language development of a Deaf learner**

Deafness since birth (pre-lingual deafness) or due to an illness in the post-natal stage (post-lingual deafness) pose a threat to the development of verbal language and communication. The Deaf learner has the normal capacity and potential to develop language, the rules of language as well as communication through socialization and culturally mediated contact with other people. Language which is acquired for most learners through a natural means however, becomes an elusive objective for Deaf learners and without language, access to education and the wider world becomes difficult and limited (Lynas, 1995:2).

The Deaf learner requires a direct and fluent system of communication. Intervention is often needed at an early stage of diagnosis in order to acquire language. The Deaf learner needs to enter into a direct relationship with people for socialization and the development of language in a natural manner (Lynas, 1995:3). **How** to unlock the barrier to language which deafness represents and **how** to trigger the language area of the brain to ensure free and fluent development of communication, has been a controversial issue in many educational spheres for several years (Lynas, 1995:3).

In order to establish how Deaf learners acquire English, or any spoken language, it would be prudent to examine the language processing in hearing learners.

Based on investigations it has been determined that Deaf learners follow the same continuum of language development as hearing learners, but only at a delayed rate (McNally, Rose & Quigley, 1987:34). Language development may be categorized into different aspects, that of communication, language and speech.

### **2.3.2 Aspects of language development**

The aspects of language development to consider are communication, sound, shape and sense of language and speech.

#### **2.3.2.1 Communication**

The acquisition of language requires fluent communicative interaction between children and mature language users as well as intact sensory mechanisms to transmit linguistic information (McNally, Rose & Quigley, 1987:29). Communication is concerned with producing language and being able to understand language. Sign, speech, as well as lip-reading/speech-reading are forms of communication (McCown, Driscoll & Roop, 1995:157).

Conversation is a form of communication and is extremely difficult if the Deaf learner is not adequately equipped. Despite the use of amplification with assisted devices, the training of residual hearing and the intervention of the Deaf learner to become face directed, the linguistic development of the Deaf learner still remains impoverished and incomplete.

Hearing aids do not necessarily compensate for a hearing loss as the auditory signal received by the child remains limited and distorted. Furthermore, visual perception of language differs from auditory perception. Speech-reading as a visual stimulus

therefore provides limited information as many speech sounds are not visible or do not fall clearly on the lips (McNally *et al.*, 1978:29; Eleweke & Rodda, 2000:375).

Research with Deaf learners suggests that when parents learn about their child's hearing loss, communication interaction patterns between the parent and child often become less favourable. This may subsequently have a negative effect on language growth in the Deaf learner (McNally *et al.*, 1987:31; Cocci & Baran, 1998:235).

Several studies have investigated communication patterns between hearing mothers and their Deaf children. The results indicate that the communication style differs from that used by hearing mothers and their Deaf children. It has been found that hearing mothers of Deaf children speak less, use atypical intonation patterns and are less likely to use tutorial strategies and give verbal praise than the mothers with hearing children (McNally *et al.*, 1987:31; MacTurk, Meadow-Orlans, Koester & Spencer, 1995:19).

### **2.3.2.2 The sound, shape and sense of language**

Language is dependent on learning and is modifiable by experience. One of the most noticeable aspects is the very fact that language must be learned (Moore, 1989:109; Watson, 1999:99). Language exists simultaneously on three levels of sound, shape and sense (Moore, 1989:113). The sound system is linked to the phonology and morphology; the shape deals with syntax in addition to morphology and semantics or sense (i.e. meaning and vocabulary of a language).

- **Syntax and Morphology**

Syntax and morphology refer to the shape of the language. Morphology is the study of the units of words. Several studies of English morphological development in Deaf learners indicate that the acquisition of this aspect in language development is similar to that of hearing learners although it is much delayed (McNally *et al.*, 1987:43; Miller, 2000:436).

Syntax is the grammatical arrangement of words governed by rules of a language. A study investigating English syntactic structures in Deaf and hearing learners in the developmental stages of the acquisition of question forms has been conducted. Results show that the comprehension of yes/no question forms is easier than the

comprehension of the why, when, who, what, where, type of question forms (McNally *et al.*, 1987:47).

Generally, research findings indicate that the Deaf learner develops language through similar stages and sequences in language acquisition as hearing learners, although at a much slower rate. The processes that occur in normal language development therefore serve as a guide for practices with Deaf learners.

The spoken language is but one way for a Deaf learner to acquire language. It has been well documented that Deaf learners, with a profound to severe hearing loss, are not oral/spoken language candidates and therefore an alternative to the spoken language acquisition is required, which is Sign Language (Quigley & Paul, 1987:181).

- **Semantic Development**

Semantics is the meaning in language. It is a branch of linguistics concerned with the meaning of words and sentences. Most studies indicate that semantic development in Deaf learners is similar to, but slower than hearing learners. In research, conducted by Schafer and Lynch (in McNally *et al.*, 1987:34; Miller, 2000:451), a commonality has been found in the words first used by Deaf and hearing learners. As with hearing learners, the Deaf speak/sign about people important in their lives, they speak/sign about objects that they manipulate and they name both the objects and movements that are obvious to them. Differences noted are that Deaf learners use words expressing colour and number earlier than hearing learners. This use of words could be as a result of the language curricula of an oral programme or one that includes signing. The obvious difference is the speed of language acquisition where the Deaf learner shows a delay which is most noticeable with the onset of two-word utterances.

Deaf learners have fewer lexical items than their hearing peers. Their knowledge of common content words is deficient and they have difficulty with English (any spoken language) function words (McNally *et al.*, 1987:35; Miller, 2000:436).

### **2.3.2.3 Speech**

There is a sharp distinction between speech and language. Speech is linked to sounds in language; the detail and articulation of phonology.

Speech poses a fundamental problem for the Deaf learner because it may be very difficult to reproduce the sound as it is heard. A proportion of Deaf learners may be able to articulate but the speech is not always clear or intelligible. The Deaf learner may therefore have problems in communicating orally with syntax, morphology and vocabulary.

Because of a history of insufficient input in their environment, Deaf learners typically cannot approach communication in the same way as hearing learners. They must try to filter meaning from the spoken language (English, etc.) through inadequately developed phonological and syntactical systems. The result is frequently a distortion of the original message (Moore, 1989:114; O'Halpin, 1997:100).

### **2.3.3 Language Acquisition Process**

The process of language acquisition may be described as imitation, expansion, induction and gesture.

#### **2.3.3.1 Imitation**

Imitation is an important aspect in language acquisition. The learner may copy and imitate the adult's utterance and retain the adult's word order or may leave out parts of the original utterance. Spontaneous imitation may be verbalized in terms of the child's own level of syntactical development (Moore, 1989:116; Seal, Rossi & Henderson, 1998:279).

#### **2.3.3.2 Expansion**

This is a type of reverse imitation by which parents or caregivers help the child test his/her hypotheses about language. Here parents or caregivers take the child's utterance, echo it and change it back into acceptable adult language (Moore, 1989:116; Seal, Rossi & Henderson, 1998:279).

#### **2.3.3.3 Induction**

The learner is able to understand and construct sentences that s/he has never heard, as a result of having an understanding of the general rules of syntax to which the learner may have previously been exposed (Moore, 1989:118; Seal *et al.*, 1998:280).

#### **2.3.3.4 Gestures**

Several studies of Deaf learners indicate that they exhibit communicative intentions before speech or the acquisition of a formal gestural system (McNally *et al.*, 1987:32). A system of gestures appears to develop prior to the development of a formal expressive language system. It has been found that there is a relationship between forms and meanings of individual gestures and the semantics expressed by the Deaf learner (McNally *et al.*, 1987:34).

### **2.4 ACQUISITION OF SIGN LANGUAGE**

Sign Language acquisition refers to Sign Language communication and development of language in the Deaf learner.

#### **2.4.1 Sign language communication**

If language could be placed on a continuum, then Sign Language is located on the extreme opposite end of Oral language (Reagan, 1985:270). Sign Language may be defined as a visual, spatial language with movement. Communication occurs by means of shapes made by the hands, arms, as well as facial expressions and body postures. The majority of signs have no spoken or written equivalent but there are many signs for the words used in a spoken language. Sign Language has its own syntax which is not based on any spoken or written language. Currently, in South Africa there are 12 identified Sign Language dialects which include different regional signs (South African Schools Act, 1996). Despite the varieties of Sign Language both nationally and internationally, Deaf people are able to communicate because grammatical rules remain constant and similar "roots" in some of the signs. Some signs for example, may highlight its country of origin. For example, the community of Wittebome signs shows strong roots to Irish Sign Language.

Signing is very different to speaking. Sign Language has its own linguistic structure. The phonology, morphology and syntax are linked to the use of space and movement.

#### **2.4.2 Sign Language development of a Deaf learner**

The Deaf learner does not ordinarily acquire Sign Language from his/her parents unless the parents are deaf. It is therefore not possible to refer to the Deaf child as acquiring a first language in Sign Language. After diagnosis, most Deaf learners are

encouraged to acquire a spoken language (English, Afrikaans or Xhosa), so as to give them an awareness of language and basic vocal communication skills (Struckless & Birch, 1997:71). When the learners are unsuccessful in the oral approaches, they are referred to schools where both Sign Language and a spoken language are used. These Deaf learners then learn Sign Language from their peers, teachers and Deaf adults within the school setting. In some instances parents may learn Sign Language in order to communicate with their children.

For Deaf children of hearing parents the exposure to Sign Language may therefore only occur when the child enters pre-school at the age of two to three years. Early development may not be perceived as Sign Language but rather as manual communication. This term refers to the systematic use of manually produced symbols and signs to convey and receive information and is not limited to gestures such as pointing or beckoning (Struckless & Birch, 1997:72). Included in this definition is the finger-spelling of the English, Afrikaans or Xhosa alphabet.

Research documented by Struckless and Birch (1997:77) and Takala, Kuusela and Takala (2000:369) points to the conclusion that early manual communication appears to have no influence on the intelligibility of speech. Exposure to manual communication however facilitates speech-reading skills. The use of early manual communication also facilitates the acquisition of language that later assists in comprehension of reading and written language.

Learning to sign in the early stages may seem to be fairly similar structurally to learning to speak. This may however mask important differences because a Sign Language and a spoken language are different languages.

Laura Pettito has studied the acquisition of American Sign Language (ASL) in depth (in Bellugi, 1988:165). In her research she outlines the mastery of the Deaf learner's pronominal reference system (the use of ME and YOU) in ASL. This study indicates that Deaf learners display precisely the same progression in pronominal reference systems as hearing learners do. This finding provides evidence of the transition from gesture to sign. It also shows that this transition requires a reorganization of the child's linguistic knowledge and suggests that the structure of a gesture as a linguistic unit, rather than the iconicity of its form, determines its course of acquisition.

Studies (Bellugi, 1988:182) also show that Deaf and hearing learners display a strikingly similar course of development if exposed to a natural language at a critical time. However, this is not always so for the majority of Deaf children of hearing parents. The first interaction for these children would be in a formal setting or playground at school. However, formal instruction should not be introduced prematurely. Natural intervention should receive top priority.

In the beginning stages of Sign Language acquisition the young Deaf learner may communicate using Pidgin Sign English/Afrikaans/Xhosa. This is not a contrived sign system but rather the involvement or combination of two languages (i.e. Sign Language and a spoken language) (Quigely & Paul, 1987:187). The use of such signing would depend on the exposure the Deaf learner has had to both languages. Most Deaf children of hearing parents and teachers use Pidgin Sign English/Afrikaans/Xhosa until they are familiar with the phonology, morphology and syntax of Sign Language (Reeves, Newel, Holcomb & Stinson, 2000:319).

The Deaf learner may communicate the following sentence in sign "I WANT THE RED CAR" or "I WANT RED CAR". These two sentences are in Pidgin Sign English. The signs are linked to the Sign Language but the word order is English. The Deaf learner may sign the same sentence as follows, "CAR RED I WANT". This would be in Sign Language.

It has been reported that Deaf learners of hearing parents exposed to Total Communication in pre-school and home environments engage in Pidgin Sign English. These learners are also inclined to have a smaller vocabulary than their hearing counterparts. Their conceptualization of signed nouns, verbs, some prepositions, numbers and specific question words are in the same proportions as those of hearing children (Quigley & Paul, 1987: 196; Takala, Kuusela & Takala, 2000:369).

Despite the deliberate intervention of language in the classroom, language acquired on the playground may not be of a desired nature or may be used inappropriately because the Deaf learner is learning from his/her peers. When the Deaf learner is older and interacts with Deaf adults or has a Deaf class teacher who uses Sign Language, the correct modelling of the linguistic rules is clarified. The alternative as

suggested by the Deaf Federation of South Africa is to have Sign Language taught in classes from Grade one (DEAFSA, 2000:4).

## **2.5 IMPLICATIONS OF DEAFNESS FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING**

To understand the difficulties that Deaf learners encounter, one has to examine the learners prior to entering the formal education system and during their informal preschool education. Historically, the Deaf learner has experienced failure in the educational system for a variety of reasons. There are however a few Deaf learners who do succeed, for example, in oral programmes and in tertiary education with or without the assistance of Sign Language interpreters. The reality is however, that many Deaf learners in the educational system are facing various problems in language learning as well as social, emotional and cognitive development. Hearing learners on entry into the Foundation Phase in school, would have intact linguistic skills as well as a clear understanding of how language operates in its form, content and usage. The teacher builds from this level. The Deaf learner on the other hand, enters school without having acquired at least the rudiments of a natural language. The Deaf learner born into an all-hearing family is exposed to language that is primarily in a spoken language form. This language is almost totally inaccessible to the learner. This affects the learner's cognitive and social development as well as academic performance in oracy - listening/seeing and speaking/signing, and literacy - reading and writing.

### **2.5.1 Pre-disposing Factors**

The pre-disposing factors which impact on a Deaf learner's acquisition of language may be child related and linked to family. The child related factors are demographic and include birth, gender, race, diagnosed hearing loss, the position in the family, residence (urban, suburban, rural) and the etiology of the hearing loss. Family factors are linked to the home programme the parents follow. This includes parental involvement (active or passive parenting) and attendance of the parent guidance/support programme regularly. Family stress such as birth of the child, divorce, unemployment, various illness, acceptance of the Deaf child in the family may contribute to the Deaf learner failing to acquire language adequately (Calden & Low, 1998:232).

## **2.5.2 Optimal Learning Period**

Children learn language rapidly and are able to learn a second language better than most adults. The development of language appears to accelerate and peak at three or four years and then steadily declines as the learner gets older highlighting a critical or optimal period for language acquisition. The language programme for any learner should therefore not be initiated after the age of five years. This relates to an oral programme where auditory stimulation is vital and the training of the residual hearing is crucial for using audition in the acquisition of oral or spoken language (Moore, 1997:85). In the case of the Deaf learner, an appropriate language programme should be initiated as soon as the hearing loss has been determined.

This is not quite the same in the case of Sign Language acquisition. According to Clare Penn (1993:19) about 15 percent of Deaf learners in South Africa acquire Sign Language at the age between birth to three years and 60 percent of learners acquire Sign Language between the ages of six and twelve years. After this there is a decline in the acquisition of language. The success of Sign Language acquisition after the age of six is dependent on access to an appropriate school for the Deaf, suggesting that the Deaf learners can acquire Sign Language after the critical period in language development.

## **2.5.3 Oracy and the Deaf learner**

Oracy is the ability to use the listening and speech skills effectively in conversation. For the Deaf learner listening and speaking are not as influential in good communication as these two aspects are impaired to some degree. Seeing and signing though, will assist in oracy (Mayer & Tane, 2000:399).

### **2.5.3.1 Implications for Oracy**

With Deaf learners the 'seeing/viewing' aspect of communication must be trained. Skills such as being face-directed, making sure the lips and hands are clearly seen and not obscured by shadows or objects is essential to communication and language learning (French, Hallau & Eworldt, 1985:186).

Several studies (Moll & Nover, 1993:187) indicate that Deaf learners need to be exposed to stories, poems and games. Storytelling using signs, gestures, mime, etc. precede reading and signing as discussions precede written language. Deaf learners learn a variety of concepts and information if the information is presented effectively.

Face to face interaction with elements of signing, fingerspelling, lip-reading and speaking enables the Deaf learner to gain insight into the information and the development of prior knowledge. This assists the learner before s/he is able to read or write.

The use of Sign Language during conversation allows the Deaf learner to have equal status to the hearing learner. It allows for spontaneous, rapid, sure and complete expression of thoughts, ideas and critical thinking. Research indicates that with early intervention and the introduction of a suitable modality for language development, the Deaf learner experiences the same milestones in the development of language (Petitto, 1993:196). However, communication or conversation skills in Sign Language is difficult for Deaf learners who do not have Deaf parents. As with hearing learners, Deaf learners at pre-school level need to learn about turn-taking. For the Deaf to acquire language through conversation, a social context is needed with an adult to mediate or facilitate the language process.

### **2.5.3.2 Facilitation of language**

Many teachers of the Deaf focus only on language form and meaning virtually forgetting or ignoring the functional aspect of communication (Miller & Luckner, 1992:346). The shift needs to be from teaching language to facilitating language. It has been documented that in order for language to be produced provision of conversational support is needed (Miller & Luckner, 1992:348). This form of scaffolding enables the learner to participate actively. The guiding principle for these interactions is that learners gain recognition and are credited for their expressed thoughts rather than criticized or corrected for the errors in form (Miller & Luckner, 1992:347).

Contemporary thinking is moving in the direction of engaging language learning through conversation. Language is not learned first and then used contextually, but rather learned through its contextual use (Miller & Luckner, 1992:349).

The environment needs to be arranged in order to promote conversation and communication, especially in the case of the young Deaf learner. External factors such as toys, food, equipment or books with good illustrations motivates the learner to engage in communication. The social environment should include adults who are responsive to the learner's non-verbal (eye contact, pointing, whining and laughing)

and verbal (spoken or Sign Language) requests or comments (Luetke-Stahlman, 1993:405). The use of authentic language in discussing topics such as real events, personal interests, television shows, etc. also encourages the communication in Deaf learners. The rationale behind this is the belief that for language to be reinforced, learners should talk/sign about things in which they are interested (Miller & Luckner, 1992:349).

A study by Erting (in Strong, 1980:23) has indicated that the hearing teacher constantly adopts hearing strategies in her interaction with the Deaf learners (of Deaf parents) which leads to misunderstanding and miscommunication. This study reflects the difficulty hearing people have in shifting from auditory to a visual orientation when interacting with Deaf learners. Deaf learners of Deaf parents arriving at school have an established Sign Language and the teacher is ill equipped to deal with this type of context if s/he is not proficient in Sign Language.

The transition from Sign language to a graphic form of English/Afrikaans/Xhosa is linked to meta-linguistic awareness. However it has been well documented in the Bilingual Approach that American Sign Language facilitates English literacy development (Erting & Pfau, 1994:135). Sign Language also assists in reading and written language.

#### **2.5.4 Literacy and the Deaf learner**

Learning to read and write for Deaf learners is a difficult and challenging task (Watson, 1999:96). Despite the countless efforts made by educators to facilitate the development of literacy skills in Deaf learners, most high school students read English at a third/fourth grade level as determined by the standardized reading assessments (Holcomb & Peyton, 1992:1). During writing, Deaf learners make lexical and structural errors which include omitting or confusing articles, prepositions, verb tense markers, e.g. 's' and 'ed'. They also have difficulty with complex structures such as relative clauses and complements (Holcomb & Peyton, 1992:1).

Summaries of research indicate a dismal picture of literacy for the Deaf. Watson (1999:97) remarks that Paul and Quigley (1990) as well as Banford and Saunders (1991) have all arrived at the conclusion that Deaf learners do not attain adequate reading and writing abilities, whereas Gray (1995) claimed that pre-lingual Deaf learners never achieve literacy. There are however pockets of success. Researchers

Geers and Moog (in Watson, 1999:98) have found that Deaf learners can achieve literacy with good support namely financial, environmental, social, emotional and parental support.

Literacy involves a range of functions that are different for Deaf learners who cannot hear or lip-read sounds and use Sign Language. Because of these differences, reading and writing processes are delayed.

#### **2.5.4.1 Implications for literacy**

Literacy is the application of reading and writing. Reading vocabulary and prior knowledge form a basis for understanding the printed word.

#### **2.5.4.2 Reading**

Reading is a process of understanding word identification and the relationship between words (Bochner & Albertini, 1990:5). Prior knowledge is important for understanding the text as it involves the understanding of the content and vocabulary.

Reading comprehension is more than decoding the words of the text. It is the interpretation of the words and the relationship the words have in a given sentence or paragraph. Proficiency in any language is necessary for reading comprehension. It is not sufficient to have proficiency in a spoken language as comprehension may be due to extralinguistic factors such as the reader's familiarity with the subject matter (Bochner & Albertini, 1990:5). Reading comprehension is a highly complex process involving perceptual, linguistic and cognitive factors as well as the reader's interest and motivation. Reading in English, Afrikaans or Xhosa is a difficult task for most Deaf learners' and not willingly done. The negativity displayed by Deaf learners towards reading in English, Afrikaans or Xhosa is as a result of years of failure in striving to succeed in the reading process.

Selecting reading material becomes a complex matter in that the Deaf learner's lack of English, Afrikaans or Xhosa proficiency and reading skills do not always correspond with the interest level. Reading material does not always link up with the interest level of the Deaf reader. Furthermore, one cannot always rely on selecting age appropriate material, as the learner may not necessarily be equipped to tackle the reading tasks because of poor reading skills. The gap between the interest level

and the suitable reading level (to assist the reader in language) increases as the Deaf learner gets older.

When selecting age appropriate reading material, it does not imply that the learner is equipped to tackle the reading tasks because of the poor reading skills.

Watson (1999:99) stated that if there are similarities in the experience of learning to read and write between Deaf and hearing learners, then the criteria for achieving success in literacy should be the same. Deaf children therefore require the following:

- A solid language base;
- The ability to use that language base for the purposes of literacy;
- A wide general knowledge of the world and of books and stories; and
- Effective word - attack skills which will serve for reading and writing.

When relating the spoken language, especially the phonological level, to the reading process for Deaf learners, it should be clear that the sound/symbol system of language is beyond the reach of these learners who do not have access to any phonological identity. Research has shown that the Deaf reader can go directly from the printed text - miss the phonological level - to the word grammar level which then leads one to the meaning the reader is striving for (Lewis, 1995:92). Deaf readers use linguistic systems such as manual visual systems that are not dependent on sounds (Lewis, 1995:93). Here signs do not represent oral language but directly represent meaning. The Deaf reader is therefore able to read the text using signs.

Carolyn Ewoldt (1982:58) has researched reading in Sign Language using 25 stories with four Deaf learners. The outcome of the research has several implications regarding the approach to reading used in the classroom as well as for using Goodman's (in Ewoldt, 1982:58) reading model for Deaf learners. One of the implications for Deaf readers is that the teacher of the Deaf should allow for more than one language while reading, that is spoken English and Sign Language. Another implication is to focus on deriving meaning from the text. The teacher of the Deaf however, should be consistent in the signs and finger-spelling used, where signs should be acceptable.

### **2.5.4.3 Vocabulary development**

It has been documented that vocabulary size is a good predictor for success in reading comprehension (Davey & King, 1991:105). Research has shown that the vocabularies of Deaf learners are substantially smaller than their hearing peers. Although the Deaf learner may have a sizeable Sign Language vocabulary, the reading vocabulary is often smaller because the learner has not made sufficient connections between the sign and the written form of the word. Additionally, Sign Language does not ordinarily have a word match in any spoken language thereby compounding the situation (Gregory, Knight, McCracken, Powers & Watson, 1998:112).

Furthermore, the Deaf learner often only understands the lexicon in one particular context and is not able to transfer it into another context. The morphology and syntax of the written language provides information of time and relationships in the text. As the Deaf learner has not fully grasped the linguistic rules of the spoken and written language, problems will arise making reading comprehension difficult (LaSasso, 1993:436; Kelly, 1993:295). A study of developing skill processing of English grammatical conventions indicates that some Deaf learners rely on memory while other learners do not notice grammatical conventions at all (Kelly, 1993:294).

### **2.5.4.4 Prior knowledge**

Prior knowledge which is linked to semantic development also plays a role in the reading process. Readers use background knowledge to bring understanding and meaning to the text (Malik, 1996:135). A lack of exposure to general knowledge as a result of the nature of how one learns incidentally (e.g. eavesdropping, watching television, casual conversation, listening to a radio, etc.,) makes reading for the Deaf learner difficult. The use of colloquialism and direct speech in text is also complex for the Deaf learner as s/he has no experience of the various phrases. This results in limiting the reader from gaining access to the text, including the curriculum, often resulting in poor academic achievement.

### **2.5.4.5 Written language**

There is evidence that reading and writing are interrelated and that they develop in conjunction with one another (Lewis, 1995:100). The learner when developing one skill would be engaging in a number of other activities that would develop the other

skill. The learner does not need to be proficient in reading before s/he can attempt to write though, in reading and writing the orthography of the spoken language are important. The orthography of the language represents the phonology of that language and therefore also represents meaning (Lewis, 1995:99). The performance of Deaf learners in written language tasks however, reveals deficiencies indicative of their English language inadequacies.

Deaf learners use three forms of communication when engaging in written language. These are Sign Language, Pidgin Sign English or Signed English which follows the English grammatical rules or English supported by sign where more voice is used than sign (Lewis, 1995:94). As the Deaf learner develops a meta-language, the teacher is able to state the differences between the Sign Language structure and English syntax (Mayer & Tane, 2000:400). Through these three forms of communication, the Deaf learner arrives at what are the grammatical elements for the written language of English. They could, on the other hand, also lead to confusion.

Deaf learners encounter obstacles to getting their thoughts on paper. The various difficulties are linked to a limited vocabulary in the written form to express thoughts and ideas, the unfamiliar spelling of words and how to express the thought and ideas in a coherent English sentence that is syntactically correct. The Deaf writer requires the skill to write about a set topic and elaborate on the topic. The linguistic problems already exist in language development of the learner, which further hampers the Deaf writer in English/Afrikaans/Xhosa (Mayer & Tane, 2000:401). These are all skills that require deliberate intervention.

An investigation of profoundly to severely deaf learners found that the learners were inclined to introduce more topics in their writing without elaborating on them (Heefner & Shaw, 1996:152). With young Deaf writers, the use of story grammar is evident but story coherence needs to be elaborated on. Because of limited vocabulary and a lack of variety of words to discuss the topic, the writer uses the same limited lexicon repeatedly (Heefner & Shaw, 1996:150). It has been noted that learners use more articles and nouns, and fewer adverbs, adjectives and conjunctions. There are also fewer substitutions of nouns for pronouns in the younger Deaf writer. For example, *The girl* is referred to as *the girl* rather than *Jill* or *the child* or *she*. This is a fairly common error in the early writings of the Deaf learner.

It has been noted that the learners lacked a variety of syntactic and semantic skills to convey information. The same type of syntax and semantics were applied repeatedly (Yoshinag-Itano & Downey, 1996:31). Studies show that the areas where common syntactic errors occur are linked to the inflectional morphology (for example, the verb tense and agreement), or the misuse of function words (such as articles and prepositions and other errors such as the incorrect use of conjunctions, and subordinate conjunctions). These problem areas reflect the way the Deaf learner processes and acquires English syntactic structures (Bochner & Albertini, 1990:6). The word order is problematic for the Deaf learner, as the syntax order of Sign Language is different to that of a spoken language. Therefore, in the beginning stages of writing the learner writes as s/he signs.

In written language one of the problems Deaf learners face is the spelling of words. As they do not have access to phonology, the alternative is finger-spelling. Deaf learners will therefore memorize the visual shapes of the words in sign and associate the formation in space with the written form (Ruiz, 1995:214).

Reading and written language are aspects within language learning and like listening and speaking or seeing and signing, they need deliberate intervention in the classroom setting. In deaf education there are many programmes or approaches used for the teaching of language, reading and writing. These approaches depend on the modes of communication and the medium of instruction that is set down by the school.

## **2.6 MEDIUM OF LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION**

The controversial issue revolves around the recognition of Sign Language as a language with linguistic and pragmatic rules. Total Communication incorporates the use of gesture, sign, speech, speech-reading, finger-spelling, reading, writing, sign supported systems and Sign Language. This could be perceived as the simultaneous use of speech and sign but not necessarily so. It is suggested that the use of this form of sign supported language with the use of spoken English could assist in the learning of English creating a solid language base (Watson, 1999:104; Mayer & Tane 2000:394).

Some teachers use spoken and written English and Sign Supported English/Afrikaans/Xhosa but modify their language to accommodate the needs of the

Deaf learner or their own signing ability. This influences language learning and can be detrimental to the development of a language base for literacy (Watson, 1999:105).

For a number of Deaf learners, language acquisition in language learning may be viewed as the acquisition of a second language, despite the spoken language being the first language. The acquisition of a spoken language, read or written language (such as English, Afrikaans, Xhosa) and Sign Language occurs under the conditions of restricted intake. Deaf learners of a variety of signing dialects interact in the same way as speakers of pidgin or creoles (Strong, 1980:4).

In the Total Communication philosophy, parents are encouraged to use signs with their Deaf child. With the support of signs and spoken language, restricted access to language is minimized. With improved access to linguistic symbols, the process of language acquisition is accelerated (Lynas, 1995:41).

Bilingualism acknowledges two distinct different languages. The young Deaf learner needs to acquire a natural signed language and methodologies which will be used to teach the reading and writing of the language of the majority hearing community. This presents challenges in classroom methodology, policy making and the training of teachers.

Lastly, the medium of instruction through the spoken language is referred to as Oralism. In this oral-communication philosophy, instructional methods focus on auditory training and learning, as well as the development of speech and speech-reading (Binet & Simon, 1997:35). This instructional environment is similar to that of a school setting for hearing learners where the primary focus is audition. This method provides opportunities for the learner to acquire spoken language skills. The Deaf learner does however need to be equipped with good hearing aids and the FM system. This medium of instruction is for a select few Deaf learners.

Within the medium of instruction there are various approaches to the teaching of language, reading and written language, which will be discussed briefly.

## **2.7 CURRENT APPROACHES IN DEAF EDUCATION**

Current approaches to deaf education have been in existence for many years. As such, many have proved to be successful in dealing with certain learners. Approaches to language development, which incorporate reading and writing,

include the Natural language approach, the Structured and Combined approaches, the Kanazawa and Bilingual-Bicultural approaches, each of which will be shortly discussed.

### **2.7.1 Natural language approach**

Mildred Groht (McNally *et al.*, 1987:80) published a book in 1958 "Natural language for deaf children" advocating and describing a language programme from pre-school to high school. The programme embodied a natural approach. The purpose of language was, and still is, to communicate. The development of language was to include the use of experiences, interests and the needs of learners as facilitators of comprehension and communication. The underlying principles of this programme included:

- Language involves interactions among the components of content, form and use;
- Information about normal language development is the basis for determining language goals and intervention strategies;
- Language is learned through communication;
- Communicative competence is the ultimate goal of language development;
- The acquisition of language takes place through interactions taking place in the environment.

The mode of language communication is not stated but in the late 50's and 60's oralism was the accepted approach for teaching language. By today's standards, the same approach could be applicable for the teaching of Sign Language.

In 1968 Father Van Uden, director of the Institute for the Deaf, St. Michielsgestel, Holland, designed an approach called the Maternal Reflective Method. His model is based on the hearing learner's acquisition of the mother-tongue, through language interaction between mother and child, in which the mother constantly refines and expands the child's utterances. He regards conversation as the natural situation of language (Van Uden, 1968:125).

He emphasizes the importance of establishing receptive language from which expressive vocabulary and grammar can grow. He places emphasis on the written form of language. Through the use of individual diaries, the content of words,

pictures, events and language with which the learner is already familiar, are recorded.

This method is however teacher dependent. The model of mother-child language acquisition makes it necessary for a child to remain with the same teacher ideally for four to five years. The teacher assumes other parental functions and has a profound influence on the learner's affective and social development.

Van Uden is strongly opposed to any form of signing or manual sign system and the learners are not to have any contact with Deaf adults. This method is not clear on how language acquisition is developed in senior school learners.

### **2.7.2 Structured and Combined Methods**

These methods involve explicit instruction in the components of language. Here the underlying assumption is that language development is dependent upon experiences with meaningful language, combined with a structured organization of a language form for the expression of those experiences (McNally *et al.*, 1987:111).

Structured and combined methods make the following assumptions:

- The Deaf learner is able to acquire the structure of language through imitation of models;
- Repeated exposure to specific structures of language will enhance the child's rate and skills in the use of correct English form;
- External and explicit cues such as meta-linguistic symbols will provide the learner with a reference and reinforcement mechanism that can be used as a guide for the structuring of language.

The guiding principles of the method are as follows:

- Language modelling must occur in language lessons but also as an integral part of content areas;
- The child must receive frequent examples of the sentence patterns and target language forms;
- Structure stimuli must be provided so that the child has the opportunity to perceive the patterns of language and eventually reproduce the target patterns;

- Acquiring language patterns must be applied to novel stimuli to ensure that generalizations of language are used in a variety of situations.

### **2.7.3 Kanazawa Method**

This method is a multi-sensory approach focusing on reception and production training through sign communication as well as auditory training, lip-reading and written language training.

The method uses early manual instruction for development of oral language. The assumption is that written language can be acquired independently of oral language; that written language teaching can be initiated at an early age; and that written language is transferred to oral language in the auditory mode or via lip-reading.

A study of this method (Notoya, Suzuki & Furukawa, 1994:348) has indicated that the first words expressed through sign communication are obtained earlier than oral or written communication. The production of sign communication makes up for the lack of oral communication. Learners' signing is equivalent to that of hearing learners and the signs are acquired faster than oral language in the early stages. Early sign instruction serves to promote communication awareness in Deaf learners.

It has also been determined that the acquisition of oral communication ability is generally delayed by a profound to severe hearing loss. The learning of expressive and receptive vocabulary by means of the printed word increases rapidly. The use of written language is useful as it increases and supports new vocabulary.

### **2.7.4 Bilingual-Bicultural Approach**

This approach integrates the Sign Language and spoken language within a curriculum. The spoken, read or written language is however taught as a second language, with the medium of instruction as Sign Language.

The assumption is that both languages are acquired equally.

This approach is also linked to attitude and social identity for the Deaf. Within this approach the Deaf learner gains exposure to the Deaf culture as well as the culture of the dominant society.

### 2.7.5 Other approaches

Traditionally, approaches to reading and written work have been met with limited success for a variety of Deaf learners. There are still learners who struggle with Bottom-up or Top-down approaches. These approaches are associated with the basal reading programme, language experience and reading to children. These methods or approaches are but a few of the many currently used in the education of the Deaf. Some teachers of the Deaf are eclectic and use a number of approaches simultaneously in the teaching of reading and writing.

The following section will review the Whole Language approach, the theory and practice as well as the language system.

## 2.8 THE WHOLE LANGUAGE APPROACH

*"Whole language contrasts with traditional teaching of Language Arts as raising roses contrasts with buying a bouquet. The gardener does not expect to harvest roses to admire, or sell on planting day. Raising roses is not to be rushed, so, too the Whole Language student. Reading and Writing are processes, not just drop-by-and-buy one affairs.*

*The lifelong learner is the student who leaves the class confident of his/her ability to face the world. This student knows how to cope with the new situations because s/he has grown an individual bouquet of learning skills. The teacher did not hand out a common, prepared bouquet of facts or skills"*  
(Whitt, 1994:123).

It can be assumed that when learners enter school at the Pre-school or Foundation Phase level, they will already have been exposed to speaking, listening, reading and writing. Children will have listened to a repertoire of stories and have acquired knowledge in various areas of interest. The average child has an established basic vocabulary and linguistic structures of the spoken language would be intact.

A natural approach to language learning would entail the continued use of the approach used before entry into a formal school setting and applying it in daily classroom teaching. The Whole Language approach is one such view that promotes the language learning process as interactional and holistic.

The Whole Language philosophy is firmly based on constructivist theory, has a belief system that may be referred to as the "creed" well as Whole Language practice to assist the teacher and the learner (Meyer & Flurkey, 1994:11). The philosophy views

the language system as having four equally important areas namely, listening/seeing, reading, speaking/signing and writing.

## **2.9 THEORY OF THE WHOLE LANGUAGE APPROACH**

It has been debated whether teachers should know the theoretical aspects of Whole Language. There are possibly many arguments to support that teachers need not know because they are involved in the practical side of teaching in the classroom setting or that theory focuses on the ideal world and cannot relate to the realities of the classroom on a daily basis.

However, it is essential that the teacher is aware of the theory as it would allow the teacher to use this information as a framework to link the practical teaching and if teachers have the knowledge they are able to extend the activities for the daily teaching. There is theory behind the practice.

### **2.9.1 Whole Language and Politics**

Whole Language teachers need to form their own beliefs based on their knowledge base acquired from the theory. There is a need to accept multiple realities and construct their own reality (Stephens, 1998:9). The theory in Whole Language Approach allows the freedom of speech. The teacher has the freedom to provide a wide variety of opinions and to declare specific opinions based on the knowledge base of the Whole Language Approach.

Culture is promoted in the Whole Language approach together with the rights of individuals to develop language arts within that culture (Shannon, 1994:92). The Whole Language approach advocates engagement in the Bill of Rights. There is a need to change the way of life in the face of overwhelming human suffering caused by greed, racism and sexism. The White Paper (2001:19) outlines the need to remove the barriers to learning through the curriculum, content, language, medium of instruction and process of assessment. These aspects are cemented in the theoretical framework of the Whole Language Approach.

### **2.9.2 Whole Language as constructivistic model**

The holistic, constructivist view is linked to the cognitive and social theory of language learning. Language is essentially an interactive, cognitive-social process (Dechant, 1993:14). Constructivism is the action in which the learner participates in a

cognitive process. It may be described as an internal psychological process whereby knowledge is the outcome of individual constructions of reality (Brooks, 1990:111). It is suggested that learning is the result of continual creations of rules and hypotheses to explain what is observed. New rules and hypotheses are created when the learner's current concepts of reality do not correspond or are not in balance because of differences between present conceptions and new information. In this process, the learner is repeatedly checking new information against old rules and revising rules when discrepancies or disparities appear. Through this process the learner is constantly revising and gaining new understandings.

Holistic constructivism focuses on the processing of the inner brain intermediaries such as conscious experience, understanding, perception, relationships and meaning (Dechant, 1993:29). This theory suggests that learning is contextualized, holistic and meaning-centred. In this approach, learning is a process of discovery rather than reception. Learning is best approached holistically where individual parts are understood within their context. Learning and behaviour are therefore said to be emergent as opposed to a focused result.

Learning is a natural action of continuous construction and reconstruction. It is defined as transactive, generative and transformative (Dechant, 1993:32). When an understanding of relationships and insight is developed, the learner resorts to trial and error, or risk taking, in order to understand a difficult problem. Learning is then constructed and reconstructed to reach new and more complex yet connected meanings. Learning is modified or elaborated on when there is an expansion of what the learner already knows. There is transformation in learning, an expansion to a new level of understanding, and the extension of thinking and the releasing of more cognitive energy in constructive, holistic learning. These are critical attributes in the theory of constructive learning (Dechant, 1993:32).

### **2.9.3 Whole Language in a Social Theory**

Social theory is founded on Vygotsky's suggestion that language learning is based on the interpersonal contributions of adults and classmates. Because language is both personal and social, the interactive relationship shared in the classroom setting contributes to the facilitation of language learning. The learner has an intrinsic need

to communicate to, and be shaped by, external factors towards the norms and practices of societies (Weaver, 1990:5).

Learners cannot be separated from their social, cultural and historical context when engaged in learning. It is suggested that learning occurs inter-psychologically before it is internalized intra-psychologically as development (Cordeiro, 1992:231). Learning occurs best in the zone of proximal development where learners are able to work in the company of peers and adults.

The beliefs or guiding principles of Whole Language need to be central to a teacher's view of implementing this philosophy in the classroom context as well as how s/he views language, the curriculum, the learner and him/herself.

## **2.10 BELIEF SYSTEM IN THE WHOLE LANGUAGE PHILOSOPHY**

Whole Language Philosophy has a belief system with guiding principles that are central in the way in which a teacher views a range of aspects associated with language learning and acquisition. This belief system addresses the environment, the view of language, social interaction, the learner, empowerment of the learner, the teacher and the curriculum.

### **2.10.1 The Environment**

The environment in the Whole Language context is a print-rich classroom. The environment is "littered" with learners' and teacher's printed language (Reutzel & Hollingsworth, 1988:415; Raines, 1995:14). The classroom is a genuine literacy-orientated environment.

There are centres and resources within the classroom. These areas are designed to facilitate the integration of all language processes via conceptualized learning. The focus of the centres is to have suitable resources that will assist in language processes of listening, speaking, reading and writing (Reutzel & Hollingsworth, 1988:415; Freeman & Freeman, 1994:251).

The environment is not competitive as the focus is learning. The atmosphere has an "aura of trust" that fosters co-operation and collaboration (Doake, 1994:138; Reutzel & Hollingsworth, 1988:415; Raines, 1995:14).

## **2.10.2 A view of language**

Language is viewed as being indivisible (Reutzel & Hollingsworth, 1988:402; Doake, 1994:139). Reading and writing begins with whole and connected language because learners are familiar with whole and undivided language. Whole Language is equated with the natural acquisition model which suggests that language is acquired through a natural process. Based on research, it is suggested that the learner acquires the native language - especially the oral language - by being immersed in a society where the members use whole and connected language (Doake, 1994:140).

Accordingly, the teacher models effective language processes, from which learners extract information needed to facilitate language acquisition and the use of language.

There is a need for authenticity in language. Language is placed in a social context and relevant to the learner (Kucer, 1998:184). The classroom language should therefore reflect the real world.

While the whole language teacher recognizes that language is whole, inclusive and indivisible there is a more scientific view of language. There is a recognition that language comprises of symbols and systems. Linguistic systems are linked to form, content and use. The form includes the phonology, morphology and syntactic systems. The content is the semantic system and the use is the pragmatic system (Lerner, 2000:349).

### **2.10.2.1 Phonology**

Phonology is the system of speech and is made up of sounds in language. Phonics is the recognition of these sounds. Phonemes are analyzed and synthesized in written words. It is suggested that learning phonics is difficult for most children (Weaver, 1998:119; Lerner, 2000:349).

### **2.10.2.2 Morphology**

Morphology is the system of meaning units in language. Different languages represent meaning changes through different morphological forms. In Standard English *toy* is one morpheme, but *toys* are two morphemes *toy* and the plural representational morphological form *s* the second morpheme (Weaver, 1998:120; Lerner, 2000:350).

### **2.10.2.3 Syntax**

Syntax refers to the grammatical structure of the language. It is the way words are linked together to produce a coherent sentence. In syntax, word order is important as it conveys meaning (Weaver, 1998:121; Lerner, 2000:350).

### **2.10.2.4 Content-Semantic system**

Semantics concerns the meaning of words as they are used. Vocabulary and lexicon are important in the meaning of language. The development of vocabulary is an ongoing activity in the life of the learner (Lerner, 2000:350).

### **2.10.2.5 Use-Pragmatic system**

Pragmatics is the social aspect of language, and is linked to actual communication, as well as the relationship between the speaker and the listener. It is also linked to the non-verbal aspect in language learning, such as body language, facial expression, tone and social skills (Lerner, 2000:350). Pragmatism relates to how the learner uses language in his or her environment.

If language is reduced to its smallest units, then it is not language but a system. Direct instruction of language occurs after the learner has had experience with the whole text. The concept of whole is linked to whole text, connected discourse in the context of speech and literacy events (Goodman, 1989:27).

### **2.10.3 A view of Social Interaction**

Social interaction concerns ecology. The learner is shaped through the impact of the ecology. The individual engages with the world over time and through this interaction is shaped by the responses of the significant people in his/her life. Therefore, critical to Whole Language philosophy, is the concept of social interaction. Within the holistic constructivist model, the learning situation is facilitated by social interaction and personal purpose (Dechant, 1993:37). Language use is triggered by attempts at communication. Research indicates that the process of learning to talk is based on utterances developed out of meaningful attempts to communicate with other people. Based on this understanding the implication for the language arts is that learning events allow the learner to participate in a significant way in communication. The creation of opportunities to share in real use of knowledge and social interaction, assist in learning to read and write. It is suggested that learning to read and write is

best achieved when the purpose is genuinely motivated by communication, between the author and the reader, the writer and the audience or the reader and the listener (Hemmings & MacInnis, 1995:245).

Communication allows the learner to develop a conceptual framework and the use of language as it is used in various contexts (Hemmings & MacInnis, 1995:245). In this regard, it has been suggested that the context in which learning occurs determines what is learnt (Dechant, 1993:38).

Vygotsky (in Dechant, 1993:38) states that through social interaction and interpersonal mediation, the learner can be led into the zone of proximal development. Through this process the learner would achieve the potential level which is considered a level ahead of what the learner could manage on his/her own. The zone of proximal development is described by Vygotsky as the "distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (as quoted in Dechant, 1993:38).

#### **2.10.4 A view of the learner**

The learner cannot be viewed in isolation or as parts of a whole. The whole being is viewed as an individual influenced by significant people in his/her life. The Self is constructed, based on the perceptions of how others see him/her as well as how s/he sees her/himself. The development of the individual is built on the learner's need for self actualization (Dechant, 1993:36).

As such, the learner reads, writes and talks because s/he wants to - the learning is self-directed, self-regulated, and divergent learning is emphasized.

Teaching within Whole Language philosophy is child-centred. The primary concern of teachers revolves around the learner's interest and welfare as well as the recognition of individual worth. The learner is viewed as one who is recognized as an active experience seeker. It is essential to regard the learner as an individual with social and cultural differences, with personal value systems, interest, needs, language and achievements. The focus in this philosophy is to nurture the learner's self-concept. It is also imperative to develop a respect for the learner and trust among the learners and teacher.

It is a powerful experience for a learner when s/he realizes that the teacher cares for him/her or believes and accepts what s/he communicates. Learners have a sense of well being when teachers respect their individuality or believe that they can succeed (Dechant, 1993:36).

The learner engages in collaborative learning. The individual is therefore prepared to share the desk, learn and has the freedom to talk and discuss in groups. The learner uses language as a tool to explore the world and express his/her growing knowledge thereof.

The learner is actively engaged in reading, writing, speaking and listening for a variety of authentic purposes. The functional use of language is developed through purposeful involvement with a variety of texts.

In the Whole Language classroom the learner is regarded as one that is capable rather than incapable or deficient. It is suggested that there are few behavioural problems as the learner is actively involved in learning and given the opportunity to develop self-control rather than submit to teacher control.

### **2.10.5 Learner Empowerment**

Through empowerment the learner develops responsibility for his/her own speaking, listening, reading and writing. The learner has a role in selecting books, topics to write about and the purpose of written or reading activities (Dechant, 1993:17; Fennacy, 1998:463). Watson (in Dechant, 1993:17) purports that the learner would have responsibility or be empowered if s/he has interest, and is motivated by his/her needs. It is recognized that literacy empowers learners in that it may alter the individual's social standing, ensuring that the learner has a voice.

Part of this empowerment is achieved through the process of collaboration. The teacher and learner are jointly involved in the decision-making of the curriculum, themes and topics. The process of negotiation is used to arrive at a curriculum with the relevant guidelines where necessary. There is a sense of learner-ownership. The learner has control of how s/he spends his/her time and develops his/her own objectives. The choice of topic and purpose is his/her to make (Dechant, 1993:18).

Learners constantly engage in risk taking. Because learning is active, mistakes and errors develop. The learner is therefore encouraged to engage in experimentation and approximation. Via errors, the learner is led to valuable approaches to learning.

Risk taking does however occur in a supportive atmosphere where feelings of confidence and competence can grow. The environment is non-corrective where learning is seen as pleasurable. The use of imagination should be emphasized (Doake, 1994:139).

#### **2.10.6 A view of the teacher**

The teacher plays a primary role in the development of reading and writing. The role of the teacher is to facilitate learning in this transactional model - development is associated with the construction of meaning. The teacher models a specific type of behaviour that is non-threatening. The teacher does not label or categorize learners (Reutzel & Hollingworth, 1988:414).

Teaching is informal and discovery based. The teacher demonstrates the effective language processes by engaging in the reading and writing of real texts with the learners. The teacher provides ample opportunity for the learner to practice newly acquired skills. Here, the learner will engage in guided and independent practice by working in small groups either with the teacher's assistance or on his/her own.

The teacher emphasizes risk taking and gives the learner choices. An atmosphere of non-correctiveness and support is created. The focus is to seek out the strengths and interests of the learners (Dechant, 1993:33).

The teacher learns with the learners. The teacher participates in the learning process with the learners where learning is modelled. The questions come from both the learners and the teacher. The understanding is that there is not only one right answer (Doake, 1994:138). Teachers also share learning with each other at regular meetings where learners' progress with the aim of providing mutual support, different approaches are discussed within the Whole Language philosophy. Teachers are agents of change and as such require the support of a like-minded body of teachers. Teachers belonging to the professional body of Whole Language share information by way of articles, books and ideas. These teachers are never satisfied with the state of their own teaching and continuously strive for effectiveness. Professional interaction also encourage teachers to be reflective about their own teaching methods (Doake, 1994:139).

### **2.10.7 A view of the curriculum**

The curriculum is central to the Whole Language approach. The curriculum is literature-centred and not mandated but personalized, thereby allowing for a focus on the needs, interests, strengths and ability of the learner. The teacher and learner collaborate to formulate a curriculum that meets the needs of the learner and the requirements of the teaching practice.

The curriculum is really a dual curriculum but the learner perceives it as a single curriculum. By means of a dual curriculum, the teacher attempts to maximize opportunities for the learner to engage in the language arts whilst simultaneously learning from the content subjects linked to scientific study, historical significance or the development of decimals, fractions or percentages (Goodman, 1989:30).

Primarily the Whole Language teacher organizes the curriculum around themes or topics. The thematic units or topics provide a focal point for inquiry and allows the learner to be exposed to choices of authentic, relevant activities in the curriculum (Goodman, 1991:31).

However, language is the primary tool for constructing and communicating meaning in a curriculum that accommodates the language arts as well as the content subjects. In this process, literature is used to integrate the language arts and content subjects (Dechant, 1993:21). There is therefore a need for integration in the curriculum. The language arts (i.e. speaking, listening, reading and writing) are integrated across the curriculum (Egawa, 1998:338).

Evaluation is also part of the curriculum, and is ongoing, informal and process orientated. Although the teacher possesses intimate knowledge of each learner's progress and potential, the aim is to arrive at self-evaluation. Assessment is therefore intertwined with learning and teaching. Although periodic assessment may be preplanned and structured, daily learning experiences continuously provide opportunities for assessment. This in turn leads to modification of teaching as the need arises.

Evaluation may be based on the demonstration of acquired competence. When the learner is ready, s/he would be given opportunity to display new understandings. The teacher would use a broad range of informal assessment measures to consistently gather descriptive data on the learner's progress. The information allows the teacher

to establish specific and appropriate goals for individual learners as well as for group instruction (Mickelson, 1994:61).

The Whole Language teacher is involved in the Whole Language process and is aware of its underlying beliefs. These beliefs relate to the environment, social interaction language learning, the learner, the curriculum as well as the teachers' own roles in this philosophy enabling them to put into practice the teaching and learning based on the beliefs. Outcomes Based Education embraces the beliefs of Whole Language philosophy. Outcomes Based Education suggests that knowledge is constructed by the learner when engaging in an authentic learning environment. The learner is central to the process of learning.

### **2.11 THE WHOLE LANGUAGE PRACTICE**

The Practice of Whole Language philosophy is linked to the actual "doing" of the approach. This aspect addresses the "how" and "what" of language learning and is embedded in the beliefs and theories of Whole Language philosophy.

When utilizing the Whole Language approach there is no single way of engaging learners in language learning. The learning consists of developing strategies enabling problem solving and integrating the language arts. Aspects considered essential in the Practice of Whole Language include curriculum, time management in the school day, appropriate material (i.e. literature which is age appropriate and accommodates the interest of learners) and the language practices or activities linked to the approach. In this approach there are borrowed practices which become owned practices in Whole Language (Watson, 1999:604).

Practice in Whole Language addresses the learning of each language art in terms of the other, learning each language mode - reading and writing as an integrated whole and developing proficiency in the language arts areas (Dechant, 1993:53). Within the Whole Language practice the language system is essential in assisting the literacy development of the learner.

### **2.12 THE WHOLE LANGUAGE SYSTEM**

The language system encompasses forms of language such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. The primary language system is listening and speaking (Lerner, 2000:342). The secondary language system is reading and writing. The four forms of the language system are categorized into a receptive language and an expressive

language system. The receptive language system (or the input mode) is listening and reading and the expressive language system (or output mode) is speaking and writing.

Within the Whole Language philosophy these four forms of the language system are integrated and each form is of equal importance.

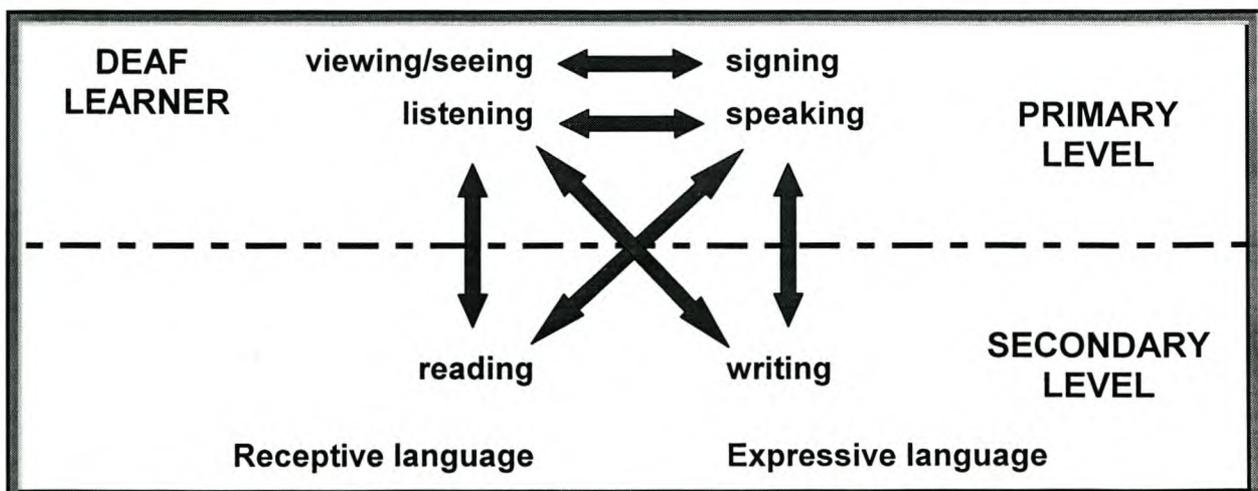
Communication is vital in the practice of Whole Language. It is the tool by which to access all information in the process of language learning. Therefore one should consider language as a communication process (Lerner, 2000:344).

Language makes it possible for people to communicate with each other. There are many methods of communicating but for the purpose of this study listening and speaking will be highlighted (see 2.12.1.2). Other methods of communication are gesturing, non-verbal language - body language, facial expression and Sign Language.

### 2.12.1 Receptive Language system

Receptive Language comprises the listening and reading aspect of the language system.

**Figure 2.1: A visual representation of language**



An adaptation: Lerner (2000:236)

#### 2.12.1.1 Listening

Listening forms part of oral language (Lerner, 2000:364). Listening is an auditory skill that requires teaching and practice. It demands that one selects appropriate meanings and organize ideas according to their relationships. Listening requires

evaluation, acceptance or rejection, internalization and at times appreciation of the ideas expressed. It is the foundation of all language development. This skill is a major aspect of communication. Listening is a participation skill and is best learned in situations where there are opportunities to exercise this skill effectively. In the Whole Language classroom setting, the teacher encourages the learner to be actively engaged in thoughtful listening to other learners. In this activity the learners are required to share ideas and effectively co-operate in the achievement of goals in group discussions (Sampson, Van Allan & Sampson, 1990:48).

There is a relationship between listening and reading. The similarities between these two modes of decoding symbolic language are that both are sensory perception: one via the eye and the other via the ear. Both require a memory bank for vocabulary to relate to the words that are read or heard. Both require an understanding of the linguistic language system that is in use, such as phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. There is a comprehension of the ideas that are being listened to or that which is read (Lerner, 1981:270). Listening and reading are dependent upon past experiences or prior knowledge. The listener or reader interprets what is heard or read, based on prior learning or background, associating this with the current information, gaining consequent meaning (Dechant, 1993:59).

The difference between the two modes of language listening and reading is that the reader could reread the text but the listener can hear the material only once. However, with modern technology and the tape recorder the listener is able to hear the information repeatedly.

Reading aloud and listening to stories are basic strategies in developing literacy. It is important in literacy education to be able to recognize words by ear, before being able to recognize them by sight (in print). The learner must understand the language of others by listening to it before the learner can comprehend the language in print (Sampson *et al.*, 1990:58).

Listening also provides the opportunity to sentence structure and language patterns that support comprehension of oral and written language. Auditory skills are developed through critical listening. These skills assist in phonetic analysis in reading (Dechant, 1993:60).

### **2.12.1.2 Reading**

Dechant (1993:103) suggests that reading is thinking through print. Reading cannot be separated from thinking and therefore should be perceived as a cognitive process involved in the construction of meaning in a multi-faceted approach. Reading is also defined as an integration of word recognition and comprehension.

Reading is a constructive process whereby the reader has to use multiple sources to construct meaning from the text. Four types of cues assist in integrating information to arrive at the meaning of the text (Clay & Cazden, 1992:115; Goodman, 1998:113). These four types of cues are the semantic information linked to text meaning, syntactic information linked to sentence structure, the visual or orthography of the language (i.e. format and layout) and lastly, the phonological information (i.e. sounds of the oral language) (Clay & Cazden, 1992:120).

However, this is not sufficient for the reader to arrive at the meaning of the text. The reader is also required to use a variety of strategic thinking skills, when one has to change and direct the reading style, depending on the intention for reading. The reader adjusts his/her reading to suit his/her purpose and the type of text that is being read. The processes of constructing meaning and strategic adjustments operate simultaneously. A strategic reader is able to both monitor and think while reading. Each time a reader engages in reading there is a purpose. In the event that the reader maybe reading for pleasure, the approach to the text will be different to reading when studying say, for an examination, following instructions or directions. The strategic reader adjusts to the text at hand. The reader will grasp this process when engaging in different types of text structure as s/he explores the range of literature (Cooper, 1993:13). The complexity of the reading material and the familiarity of the topic of the text would also require the reader to alter the reading style and use specific strategies in reading.

Other aspects of reading that assist in the construction of meaning of the text are the schemata (building blocks) and prior knowledge. Schemata are structures that represent the concepts stored in the memory. The schema explains how structures are formed and related to one another as a child develops knowledge. This does not happen independently of language. Through various experiences, the child develops schemata. If a reader lacks experience or is limited in a particular topic, there will be

no schemata or insufficient schemata to retrieve or recall. In such instances, comprehension will be limited (Cooper, 1993:22). Reading as a process relies on the reader to have a sense of schemata and prior knowledge acquired through experience in general as well as experience achieved through storytelling, retelling of stories and the world at large with the different forms of media.

Readers understand text based on accumulated experiences. Their prior knowledge or experiences assist in identifying with the author's words, sentences or plot. The reader may not have the ability to decode or encode all the words but the variety of cues provided in the text allows the reader to interact with the text creating meaning. Comprehension of a text is easier when the schemata of the readers is close to the match of schemata intended by the author of the text (Cooper, 1993:22; Goodman, 1998:18). This is also linked to the authenticity of the text for the reader to construct meaning from the text (Weaver, 1990:1). Reading and writing are constructive processes that are mutually supportive. As the reader comprehends, new information is processed and linked with old information stored in the memory – the schemata. With the new and old information processed, comprehension of the text is meaningful and new meaning is constructed (Cooper, 1993:12). Chall (in Dechant, 1993:131) has noted that we read in order to gain experience and yet, we get more out of reading if we have more experience.

Motivation is a key element in engaging children to read. Gambrell (1996:16) believes that an engaged reader is motivated, knowledgeable, strategic and socially interactive. The four key features associated with the motivation to read are:

- access to books,
- opportunities to self-select books,
- familiarity with books, and
- social interaction with others about books.

These four features are evident in the Whole Language classroom. A Whole Language teacher is aware of the need to motivate learners to engage in reading in a relaxed, non-threatening and enthusiastic manner.

Gambrell (1996:23) further suggests that children need support in their literacy learning. Teachers and parents need to be reading models and motivators, creating

a culture that is book and print-rich, providing opportunities for choice, and encouraging social interaction about books (Gambrell, 1996:20).

There is a connection between speaking and reading, where proficiency in speaking assists with reading. As with listening, speaking provides the learner the opportunity to develop vocabulary and sentence patterns for reading. A proficiency in listening and speaking determines the readiness for becoming an emergent reader. Reading is made easier when words and sentences have been heard or previously spoken. It is also believed that language patterns of reading that are similar to spoken language patterns, makes reading easier and assists in reading comprehension (Dechant, 1993:70).

Reading is a lifelong pursuit for a reader who is motivated. We learn to read by reading. Through the practice of reading, skills are mastered. When reading is regarded as a pleasurable activity and the reader is motivated, the 'art' of reading is no longer a chore (Maxim & Five, 1998:165).

## **2.12.2 Expressive Language system**

Speaking/signing and writing form part of the next level in the language system. For the Deaf learner speech is at times unintelligible and signing is his/her only expressive form of language in conversation. As signing does not have a written form, Deaf learners are required to write a 'spoken' language such as English/Afrikaans/Xhosa.

### **2.12.2.1 Speaking/Signing**

Speaking is the production of oral language (Lerner, 2000:364). It is a skill continuously developed from birth. The child goes through many stages of oral language development, beginning with babbling. By the time the child reaches the age of six, s/he would have acquired the grammar of the native language and an understanding of the vocabulary of about 24 000 words (Lerner, 2000:374).

Learners learn to engage in oral sharing. Oral sharing is basically known as "getting acquainted", where experiences are expressed during communication. There is a freedom to use personal language in oral sharing. It is a process of opening up communication between the learner and the teacher. The learner establishes a rapport with the peer group. Through this process the learner reveals ideas, interests and aspirations, fears and doubts. The learner also shares influences that come from

reading, observing, imagining and reflecting home language with its strengths and weaknesses (Sampson *et al.*, 1990:66).

In the process of oral communication there is a range of activities that support oral sharing namely, storytelling, reader's theatre, reporting, interviewing, discussing and conversing, all leading to developing skills for oral communication (Sampson *et al.*, 1990:68).

Listening and speaking are two aspects of oracy and both are needed for literacy. Learners are active participants in oracy and dependent on verbal means of communication (Tann, 1991:9). Oracy implies that the teacher and learners act as speakers and listeners. Learning therefore takes place in an interactive context, where participants, construct meaning together (Tann, 1991:11). Oracy is an important method of active learning. When optimizing learning in an oral context, the teacher needs to consider the use of productive language strategies. Through open-ended questions listeners become speakers in responding.

For learners to be active in oracy, teachers need to model the correct form of behaviour. Conversation in the classroom among the learners or small groups is less threatening. Conversation encourages the learner to respond in a meaningful manner encouraging collaborative learning (Tann, 1991:13). Learners also need to think on the spot and independently. Discussions around a topic lend itself to many ways of viewing an issue.

Oracy requires particular skills that facilitate both talking and listening. Learners as talkers and listeners experience language in a number of different ways namely, *playground talk* (a type of language spoken or listened to namely slang, jokes and chanting); *geographical and historical varieties* (a family provides a source of words to describe family relationships, for example, 'matar' Hindu for mother, or 'boetie' for brother, surnames and nicknames); *playing with words* (humour); *language in different settings* (using language for drama or a play); *different language* (that of an adult or a peer) where register begins to change in different social settings (Tann, 1991:89).

#### **2.12.2.2 Writing**

It is said that writing is a sophisticated and complex achievement of the language system (Lerner, 2000:442). Writing is a process and not a product. Writing integrates

previously acquired knowledge and experiences in listening, speaking and reading. Proficiency in writing requires a range of skills and competencies. For the writer to put pen to paper s/he has to keep an idea or thought in mind while formulating the idea into words, sentences and graphic representation on paper. The writer is actively producing a piece of work that did not exist before by using many related abilities from spoken language, such as the ability to read, spell and write legibly. Knowledge of the form of language is also essential. The young writer explores the function and forms of language when writing. Through exploration, the emergent writer realizes how his/her native language functions. In early literacy the meaning of the writer's message stems from within the writer and is known to the writer in advance (Lerner, 2000:444).

The process of writing is linked to the development of a written document. Thinking is an important aspect of this process. The writer needs to think about what to write, select and organize. It is a skill that is learned and can be taught. The technical writing process that is pre-writing, writing, revising and sharing with the audience, forms the various stages of the writing process.

Ferreiro and Teberosky (in Bloch, 1997:37) suggest that "[we] must let children write, even in a writing system different from the alphabet". Writing to communicate is essential for the learner (Bloch, 1997:11). Reading and writing hold different meanings in different communities. Different communities have their own way of using written language. For spoken and written language to emerge in the learner, the learning of language should be placed in a meaningful context (Bloch, 1997:11).

A learner presents his/her experiences at an early age in the form of drawings. Emotional expressions and feelings of security are linked to meaningful writings. The initial reasons for writing are often naming and labelling. Later, writing emerges in more meaningful communication, such as written messages which may be directed at family members (Bloch, 1997:17). This may not hold true in all communities.

In the Whole Language classroom, writing implies that the learner writes to become an author. The classroom setting is organized as a writer's workshop where the learner and teacher use various techniques to arrive at writing (Froese, 1991:98; Raines, 1995:30). In this approach, writing is for a variety of purposes. True/real writing is writing that achieves a language function, namely to help the learner/writer

clarify his/her thoughts, emotions, experiences, record, or communicate his/her ideas to a reading audience. As the learner/writer engages in this language function s/he is simultaneously applying the skills of writing, from transcribing using graphemes, syntax, semantics, etc. to the composition of a text. The emphasis of any of the aspects depends on the learner/writer's intentions and purposes (Froese, 1991:100). Froese (1991:103) suggests that a "revolution is the teaching of writing". Traditionally, the focus had been on reading and too little emphasis on writing. In the Whole Language approach writing is a way of learning and developing as well as a communication skill. The action of writing is perceived as a means of discovering and communicating, rather than an activity based on a series of skills that need to be mastered. The learner writes to learn and most learn to write (Froese, 1991:104).

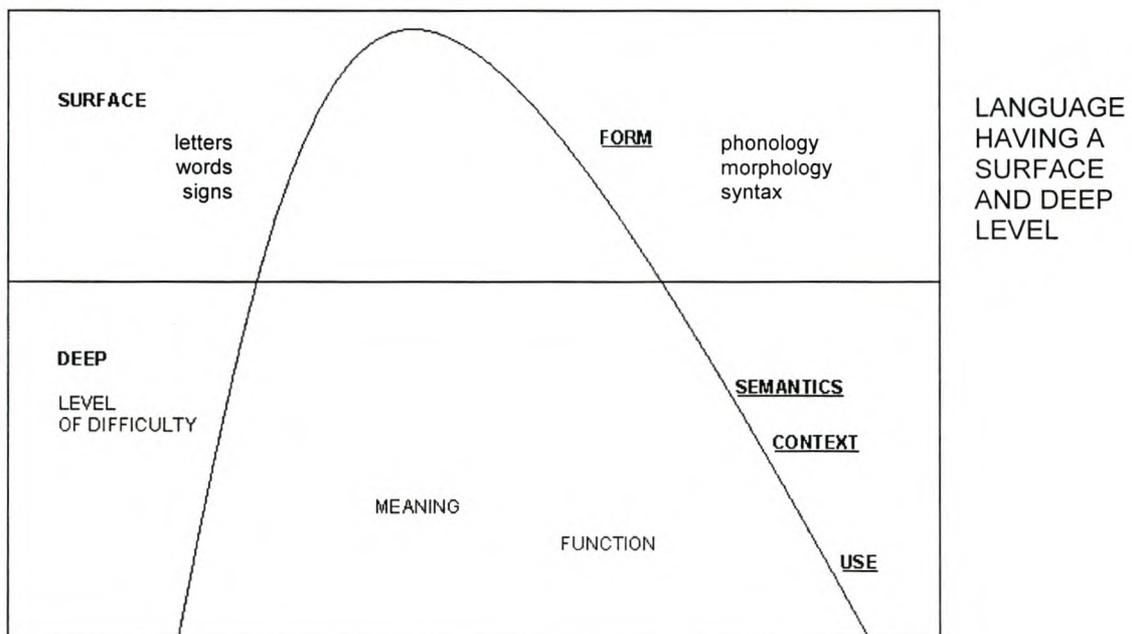
Constance Weaver (1990:84) suggests that there is no rigid sequence or stage at which children develop as readers/writers, but that there are general trends. The earliest forms of learners' writings do not reflect an understanding of the relationship between the letters and sounds of a spoken language. Later they develop an understanding of the phonology and the link with the graphemes. It is at this stage that the writer then follows the convention of the language. In the Whole Language approach, writing is developmental. Initially, writing will be imperfect and immature, but this will adjust as the learner/writer develops his/her process of writing. Whole Language writing teachers expect parts, namely spelling of words, writing of a sentence, etc. to be acquired in the context of the whole. Therefore, during the Whole Language writing process, it would not be expected to find fragmentation of language (Goodman, 1989:275). The Whole Language teacher expects misspelling of words and the clumsiness or disjointed attempts in presenting written language but move towards proficient writing by "writing to learnt" (Froese, 1991:108). Role models are instrumental in this task. The teacher has to be a writer in the Whole Language classroom.

Spelling is linked to the writing process. It is a complex skill that the writer engages in when transferring his/her thoughts into the orthography of the language. Spelling does not distract from the creative aspect of writing but it does influence the ease with which a piece is read. The learner who uses invented spelling is one who is willing to write and share his/her thoughts in print. This skill of the learner is a

reflection of the phonological awareness of the sounds in language (Lerner, 2000:461).

The language system of writing is complex and requires skills as well as an understanding of how the language functions. The deep structure of language is linked to the meaning of the language, while the surface structure of the language is linked to the form of language. For the learner/writer to transcribe thoughts coherently, the deep and surface structures of language should be adhered to.

**Figure 2.2: Language is like an iceberg: The impact of what is seen and heard is far greater**



(Bailes, 1986:97)

### 2.13 MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE WHOLE LANGUAGE APPROACH

The Whole Language approach is not a step-by-step teaching approach but looks at language learning as a whole as well as a process. The approach has, however been criticized and numerous myths or misunderstandings have arisen.

Such misunderstandings could possibly result from brief in-service presentations of the Whole Language approach. Little support is offered to teachers wishing to engage with the approach after these 'one-shot' presentations.

As the Whole Language approach does not advocate a basal programme, it often instills a sense of insecurity. Due to a lack of structured teaching in this approach, many questions often arise.

Another concern presented by teachers wishing to adopt this approach, is the absence of a formal curriculum. After short introductory courses, some teachers may not fully understand the empowerment aspect of a curriculum that emerges from the classroom itself (Doake, 1994:136).

A further misinterpretation is that because learning is regarded as a natural process, teachers are exempted from teaching. Some teachers also believe that the Whole Language approach fails to address the problem areas because learning occurs in the context of meaningful and relevant situations. This may be compounded by the whole-to-part aspect of this philosophy, as opposed to the traditional part-to-whole approach. Consequently, teachers may believe for example, that attention need not be given to issues like spelling, syntax and punctuation. This approach deals with such aspects within a context and from the whole to part teaching (Doake, 1994:143). The Whole Language teacher is said to teach "actively, sensitively and at the opportune times" (Doake, 1994:144).

Still other teachers believe that by attending a few Whole Language workshops, visiting a Whole Language classroom and using a resource book of Whole Language, activities one is adequately equipped with the philosophy of Whole Language. This is clearly a misunderstanding that contradicts because the Whole Language teacher is a lifelong pursuer of gaining a comprehensive understanding of the system of beliefs about the learning and teaching which contributes to the philosophy of Whole Language (Doake, 1994:146).

Whole Language does not accept models that view reading as a set of abilities and skills that change with development (Dolman, 1992:280).

Lastly, it should be stated that the concerns about this approach stem from the misconceptions, misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the philosophy.

## 2.14 WHOLE LANGUAGE AND THE DEAF

*Fundamental to the philosophy of Whole Language is a belief that whatever is language is learned like language, and acts like language. All languages - oral, written, or signed - share certain characteristics" (Burch & Teller, 1996:145).*

Currently, Whole Language is being used in some schools for the Deaf in America. Research conducted by Ewoldt (1993:11) has illustrated that in a print-rich environment, Deaf children resemble hearing children as they are able to encode print into meaning without going through any processing of auditory decoding (Ewoldt, 1993:11). Ewoldt (1993:13) suggests that the Whole Language Approach presents to learners a complete array of language in various forms and in all uses and allows each learner a form in which s/he wishes to work in. She elaborates by asserting that Sign Language and written language are two appropriate languages for the ideal literacy development of Deaf learners, and the Whole Language Approach is suited to support the use of both.

Research has been documented (Rottenberg, 2001:270) relating to the success of Deaf learners learning to read by initially focusing on pictures and illustrations in books, reading familiar words in context, focusing on sign and print and relating the sign print to English. Several factors contributed to this success, namely a curiosity about print, interacting with adults in literacy events, exposure to a print-rich environment and literacy acquisition through storytelling that is a daily event (Rottenberg, 2001:271). The study also conveys the need for the support of sign to print as this influences the development of emergent reading and writing.

It has also been suggested that the reading skills of learners may be positively influenced by the teaching style and content as well as by the kind of control exercised on learners by teachers and the greater school environment (Walter, Munro & Rickards, 1998:98). Learners attain higher scores when use is made in their classes of print that is functional, recreational and interesting as well as print that is linked to themes and topics (Walter, *et al.*, 1998:99).

Deaf learners tend to use Sign Language outside the classroom and during socialization. They discuss a limitless range of topics and issues. In the Whole Language approach, the goal is to encourage the connection between school activities, the curriculum and real life experiences and values (Mason & Ewoldt,

1996:293). By using signing in the teaching and learning process, the Deaf child feels safe to use enough signing with their peers and teachers. The Deaf learner feels part of the whole educational process. It is important that the Deaf learner feels that s/he is seen, listened to, understood and appreciated by the teacher.

There is a distinct difference between the Whole Language approach in a bilingual setting and the Whole Language approach in a monolingual setting. In a monolingual setting the Deaf learner has to learn and measure up to the spoken language of the majority. The Whole Language approach in a bilingual setting allows for access, development and respect for all languages (i.e. Sign Language and a spoken language) (Mason & Ewoldt, 1996:294). In the bilingual context of Sign Language and a spoken/written language, this approach facilitates the construction of meaning by means of relevant, enjoyable and natural communication. The Whole Language approach therefore assists Deaf learners in being able to deal with relevant modes of accessing information.

The Kendell Elementary School for the Deaf in Washington, D.C., America is one of many schools that has implemented the Whole Language Approach in the school setting. The language philosophy of this school is referred to by terms such as meaning-centered, the pragmatic approach and the Whole Language approach. It reflects the importance of understanding the process by which Deaf learners acquire language in its written, spoken and signed forms (French, Hallau & Ewoldt, 1985:1). The Whole Language approach means that components of the language arts (reading, writing and spoken/signed language) are taught as a whole to the Deaf learner. Reading and writing are viewed as compliments and extensions of the natural language learning processes. The interaction of language; through print, forms the basis of what readers construct in their minds as they read. Writing is when writers construct on paper what they know about print and language and includes their experiences. Central to the philosophy of Whole Language at Kendell Elementary school is the view that Deaf learners are constructors of meaning (French *et al.*, 1985:3). This approach encourages in the Deaf learner a willingness to experiment.

## **2.15 THE TEACHER OF THE DEAF AND THE WHOLE LANGUAGE APPROACH**

Harlin, Lipa and Lonberger (1991:6) equate the interest and experimentation of a "new" Whole Language teacher to embarking on a journey. To undertake this journey, the teacher is required to address several aspects related to this approach (Froese, 1990:8). In the practice of Whole Language the teacher engages in a variety of activities centered round the learning and teaching of language.

The teacher of the Deaf inevitably has to make a paradigm shift from the reductionist or mechanistic perspective to a constructive and holistic paradigm (Ewoldt, 1993:10). In the implementation of Whole Language the teacher of the Deaf acknowledges that "lithe children were born with a pre-disposition towards language, an innate need to make sense of their world and an ability to negotiate meaning" (Ewoldt, 1993:11).

The move from the traditional teacher-directed instruction and the phonics first to whole word perspective, to a learner-centered instruction with a perception of whole to part, requires a Whole Language teacher to be clear in the philosophy and practice of the Whole Language approach (Sauder, 1995:69).

The need to recognize that major causes of failure in literacy undertaking are not to be found in the incompetence of learners but in the departure from educational principles as represented in developmental learning which is interactive. The Whole Language approach emphasizes that learners actively learn smaller parts of a task within the context of a meaningful whole, such as age appropriate books and experiences, experience stories and themes with hands on learning (Sauder, 1995:69).

The Whole Language teacher needs to see the classroom as a "co-operative community" (Sauder, 1995:73). S/he is the facilitator, guide, observer and role model at times. Team teaching in deaf education (a hearing or Deaf teacher with a hearing or Deaf teacher aid) becomes part of the Whole Language philosophy. This includes speech and auditory training which is essential to train residual hearing and lip-reading in the Whole Language approach (Sauder, 1995:73).

The attitude of the teacher in the Whole Language classroom is one of enthusiasm and a positive notion towards reading and writing. The teacher encourages and motivates the learner. If the teacher believes that all children can learn and share

feelings directly or indirectly, s/he can set expectations for success (Cooper, 1993:39).

Mason and Ewoldt (1996:296) purport that the teacher in the Whole Language approach is more interested in what the Deaf learner says, than in which language the learner chooses to express him/herself.

## **2.16 THE WHOLE LANGUAGE AND THE DEAF LEARNER**

David Dolman (1992:278) has questioned the implementation of the Whole Language approach to the field of deafness. He does not consider the following issues to be evident in the Whole Language Approach:

- a uniform set of practices;
- support of basal readers, workbooks, skill sequences;
- models that view reading as a complex set of abilities and skills that improve with development; and
- the teacher does not teach spelling or grammar.

A primary issue of the Language approach is at which stage real literature should be introduced to Deaf learners and whether authentic material should form the entire language arts programme. Research (Dolman, 1992:280) indicates that less direct instructional methods in the education of the Deaf could have a deleterious effect in Deaf disadvantaged learners especially with regard to reading abilities.

A project conducted comparing basal reading approaches to the Whole Language approach, concludes that the two approaches produce approximately equal effect. It also indicates that the Whole Language approach produces weaker effects with disadvantaged learners than with non-disadvantaged children. It is therefore suggested that disadvantaged learners need direct instruction in order to catch up (Dolman, 1992:281). Although this study does not include Deaf learners, an analogy can be made between the reading and writing ability of low income disadvantaged learners and Deaf learners. In both cases there is a deficiency in exposure to print, interaction with books and experience with Standard spoken languages. Dolman (1992:281) recommends a direct instructional method to literacy development.

In Deaf education, the Whole Language approach and English as a Second Language (ESL) may be perceived as two separate approaches, that cannot be combined. Mason and Ewoldt (1996:29) respond to this concern, by suggesting that ESL is an umbrella term for many approaches where a language is not taught as a First Language. ESL is not a philosophy. Whole Language is a philosophy and an ESL approach may therefore be selected to fit within the tenets of Whole Language approach.

It has been suggested that Deaf learners require simplified language material because they have difficulty with English syntax and therefore, cannot be engaged in a Whole Language approach as this involves the use of naturally written texts. This notion has been disputed by Yurkowski and Ewoldt (1986) as well as by Israelite and Helfrich (1988) (in Mason *et al.*, 1996:296). Many schools for the Deaf engage in literature-based approaches for reading and are opposed to using basal readers with simplified texts.

Some educators of the Deaf believe that Deaf learners are unable to make personal choices. This influences the concept of ownership in the Whole Language approach where the learner is responsible for his/her own learning. It has however been demonstrated that Deaf learners are capable of being responsible for their learning as well as providing messages about literacy that have not been expressed by their teachers or the parents (Mason *et al.*, 1996:296).

The need for pre-reading skills for Deaf learners is said to be necessary before reading a text. This is not addressed in the Whole Language approach. It has been documented that Deaf learners from the age of three and four years old have the necessary skills to be successful readers and writers, given the correct conditions and appropriate environment (Mason *et al.*, 1996:296).

A number of educators opposed to the Whole Language approach claim that this approach is unstructured and chaotic. However, the Whole Language teacher must be organized in his/her record keeping and the classroom must be inherently structured for creativity and individual freedom. The Deaf learners involved in the Whole Language approach are busy, alert, friendly and eager to share their work because it is meaningful and relevant (Mason *et al.*, 1996:281).

## 2.17 SUMMARY

Language is learned via communication for the purpose of communication. The acquisition of language, whether it is Sign Language or the language of the dominant society, takes place in a natural manner. Deaf learners are often confronted with the daunting task of acquiring a language in the spoken, read and written form. Deaf learners progress through the same stages and sequences as hearing learners but the pace may be slower and the language delayed. The acquisition and development of language impacts on language learning. For the Deaf learner language plays a different role to that of a hearing child. Language is not primarily a tool or a facilitating device; it is an obstacle to be overcome painstakingly slowly. For language learning to take place the teacher needs to apply certain approaches and modes of communication that assist the Deaf learner to obtain linguistic access to the curriculum and academic achievement.

The Whole Language Approach is an interactive model for the development of the four language forms - listening, speaking, reading and writing. The Whole Language Approach is referred to as a philosophy of teaching and learning language in an integrated, holistic way. The philosophy is grounded in a theory with specific beliefs and practices. The theory and beliefs of the Whole Language approach supports the view of using two languages - Sign Language and a spoken or written language such as English, Afrikaans or Xhosa.

## CHAPTER THREE

# RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

*"The central purpose of the methodological section is to explain to the readers how the research was accomplished"*  
(Berg, 1995:225).

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

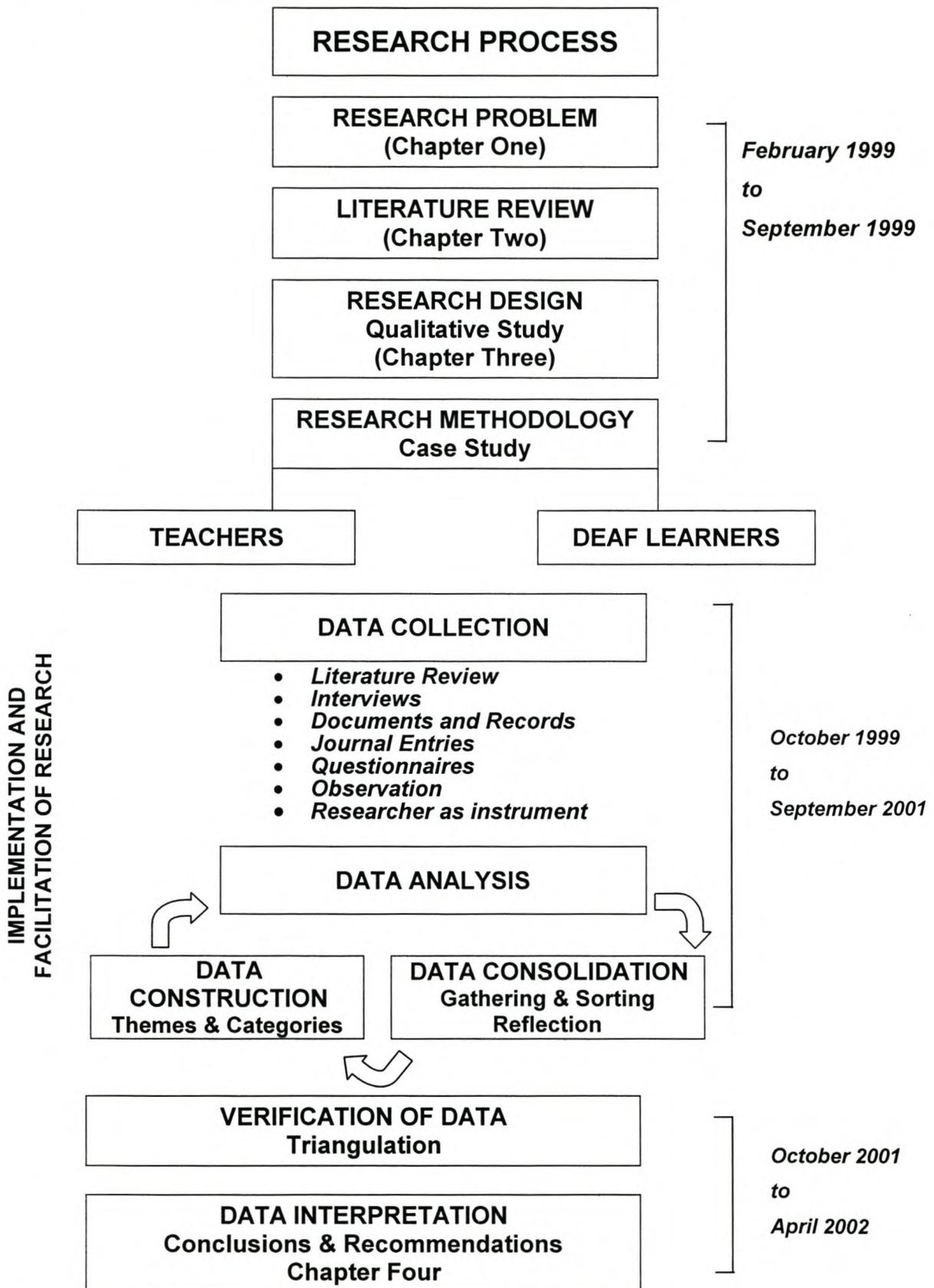
The focus of this chapter is to give a detailed account of the process of the research as it emerged from an idea, to the theory (literature review) and progressed to the design and method, data collection, analysis and the findings.

### 3.2 RESEARCH AIM

The study aims to look closely at the literacy development of Deaf learners with the Whole Language approach. Deaf learners aged between eight and twelve years and three teachers were the central focus of this study.

The aim of this study is to explore and understand the process of the implementation and facilitation of the Whole Language approach with teachers and Deaf learners.

**Figure 3.1: Schematic presentation of the Research Process**



(Goodyer, 1997:97)

### 3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design refers to the blueprint according to which data will be collected, organised and integrated, resulting in an end product. The design selected is informed by the worldview of the researcher, the nature of the research problem, the question it raises and the product desired (Mertens, 1998:160; Merriam, 1998:3). The nature of the research question has resulted in a *qualitative, descriptive, interpretative, exploratory and discovery* research design being chosen. The research format is that of a case study.

*Qualitative* research is used to provide an in-depth description of a specific practice in a particular context (Mertens, 1998:159). It is research in which the data is collected and recorded in words to express the phenomenon. Qualitative research is concerned with the study of a phenomenon and how it is experienced (i.e. lived and felt) by people in a natural setting (Merriam, 1998:6; Mertens, 1998:160). The interest is derived from the process rather than a particular outcome. According to Patton (as quoted in Merriam, 1998:6) qualitative research is:

*"[Qualitative research] is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in future necessarily, but to understand the nature of the setting – what it means for the participants to be in that setting ..."*

Some aspects relevant to this study will be discussed:

- As the aim of the qualitative research is to understand situations, it was considered suitable for the purpose of this study.
- Qualitative research takes place in the real world, a specific orientation in which the phenomenon occurs (Merriam, 1998:7; Mertens; 1998:161). The study was based at an educational institution, namely a school, to gain insight into the way in which meaning is constructed by the participants interacting with their social worlds (Merriam, 1998:6).
- Data is mediated in words and pictures through the researcher and participants rather than an inanimate inventory. The researcher is responsive to the context.

- Qualitative research is inductive. The study is based on formation of concepts and abstractions (Merriam, 1998:7; Mertens, 1998:161).
- The researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (Mertens, 1998:175; Merriam, 1998:9). The process of data collection used in this qualitative research is interviewing, observations and reviewing documents.

This study is *contextually based* in a residential school for Deaf learners in the Western Cape as well as from outside the borders of South Africa. The school serves profoundly to severely Deaf learners from low socio-economic to middle class areas locally, nationally and internationally. The linguistic context is Sign Language and English or Afrikaans. The school is at present using the philosophy of Total Communication as the medium of instruction. The school is funded and administered by the regional educational department although the Church owns all the buildings.

*Descriptive research* aims at providing detailed descriptions of the phenomenon as it is experienced. The study aims at understanding through accurate and careful descriptions, the implementation and facilitation of the Whole Language approach with Deaf learners and teachers in the context of a school for the Deaf.

### **3.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Research methodology refers to the case study, sampling, and methods of data collection and data analysis.

#### **3.4.1 Case study**

The qualitative case study is a method of learning about a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context (Merriam, 1998:27). The case study is defined in terms of the unit of analysis, the process of carrying out the investigation and the end product (Merriam, 1998:34; Mertens, 1998:166).

##### **3.4.1.1 The unit of analysis**

The case study is the unit of analysis. It is a defining characteristic of this method of research. The case study is in a bound system in that its boundaries are clearly defined in terms of who is included (Mertens, 1998:167; Miles & Huberman, 1994:26)

and it focuses on an embedded design (i.e. multiple units) with description and explanation (Mertens, 1998:168). The central focus of this study is a particular group of teachers teaching Deaf learners between eight and twelve years old. The case study is a design well suited to situations in which it is impossible to separate the phenomenon's variables from their context (Merriam, 1998:29).

The phenomenon of teachers exploring the implementation and facilitation of the Whole Language approach with the Deaf learners is seen against the backdrop of a context in which linguistic issues exist. It is relevant to take cognizance of the context where the phenomenon is explored.

The school is a multi-cultural, multi-racial and multi-credal place of learning for learners from three years old to twenty-four years old. The classes consist of mixed ability groups of profoundly to severely Deaf learners. The average number of learners in a class is ten. The learners in the Foundation Phase (Grades one to three) are taught by the class teacher. In the Intermediate Phase (Grades four to six) subject teaching is introduced.

#### **3.4.1.2 *The process***

The case study is conceptualized as a process (Merriam, 1998:29). The aim is to describe and analyze the unit of analysis in qualitative and complex terms as it unfolds over a period of time. Becker (in Merriam, 1998:29) suggests that the purpose of the case study is to "arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the group under study". The process is viewed in two ways namely the monitoring and causal ways. The monitoring way describes the context and the case study; discovering the extent to which the phenomenon is implemented and facilitated. The causal explanation discovers or confirms the effect that the phenomenon had (Merriam, 1998:33).

#### **3.4.1.3 *End product***

The end product of the case study is described in rich descriptions providing complete, literal descriptions of the investigation. Literary techniques and prose are used to describe, analyze and elicit images (Merriam, 1998:30).

### **3.4.2 Sampling**

The aim of the study was to discover, understand and gain insight. The selection of the sample is purposeful. Purposive sampling is based on the assumption that the sampling is selected where the most can be learned (Merriam, 1998:61). Patton (in Merriam, 1998:61) suggests that purposeful sampling lie in selecting cases that are rich in information for in-depth study. The type of purposive sampling is convenience, in that it is dependent on the availability of the participants and respondents (Merriam, 1998:61).

The literature review identified relevant factors for sampling the participants. The following criteria were used to select the sample:

#### ***Participants (3)***

- Teachers in the Foundation as well as Intermediate Phases with experience of more than ten years;
- Teachers unfamiliar with the Whole Language approach and using the behaviourist model of language learning;
- Teachers able to articulate their points of view and knowledge.

#### ***Respondents (20)***

- Profoundly to severely Deaf learners;
- Age range between eight and twelve years old;
- English or Afrikaans as the written and read medium of communication;
- Sign Language users.

The following was added on the basis of the researcher's own experience with the context of the school.

- The teachers have all been trained in a wide range of language learning methods as well as the Outcomes Based Education philosophy and Curriculum 2005. They are familiar with different teaching methods for reading and writing. These factors contribute to the implementation and facilitation of the Whole Language

approach. The teachers are well versed in the philosophy of Total Communication as the medium of instruction.

- The Deaf learners have no added disabilities. This is considered important in the exploration of the implementation and facilitation of the Whole Language approach. The researcher was interested to explore literacy development with Deaf learners.

### **3.4.3 Methods of Data Collection**

Methods of data collection used in qualitative research are a literature review interviews, surveys, questionnaires, documents, and observations are used. For the purpose of this study the following methods of data collection are used literature review, interviews, documents and records, journal entries, questionnaires, observations and the researcher as research instrument.

#### **3.4.3.1 Literature Review**

The literature review provides a construct for the theoretical basis for establishing a platform for this study. The construct of this review elaborates on the Deaf learner and related language issues as well as the conceptual framework of the Whole Language philosophy (discussed in Chapter two). In the review, previous studies in the Whole Language approach are explored, thereby contextualising this study amongst other national and international research.

#### ***Resource material***

As researcher and consultant I provided resource material gathered from the literature review in the school library. The resource material would support the teachers in their understanding of the Whole Language philosophy formation. Books and articles were placed mainly in the school library so that the teachers could peruse or copy the material that could be useful.

### **3.4.3.2 Interviews**

Interviewing is conversation with a purpose. The aim of interviews is to gain special information (Merriam, 1998:71). Interviews have been conducted in a variety of ways, including focus groups and semi-structured groups.

- **Focus groups**

The purpose of the focus group interview is to gain answers to questions but also allow for interaction within the group. The nature of the interaction will elicit opinions from the participants. This interaction also exposes the struggle for understanding, the interpretation and use of key terms as well as exposing agreements, disagreements and relevant issues to the research (Mertens, 1998:174).

- **Semi-structured**

The semi-structured interviews allow for more flexibility and adaptability as data emerges (Merriam, 1998:72). This type of interviewing is a mixture of more or less structured questions. The questions were structured around the implementation and facilitation of the Whole Language approach. A less structured approach to the interviews was used to gain access and information regarding the feelings, concerns and attitudes of the participants.

A copy of the semantic units of interviews is attached as Appendix A.

### **3.4.3.3 Documents and Records**

Documents and records trace the history and current status of the school in which this research is being conducted (Mertens, 1998:324). Various documents such as the school policies regarding the medium of instruction and curriculum planning in the Outcomes Based Education philosophy were made available. Other records from which information was gleaned, were the assessment criteria for English and Afrikaans, language reports from the speech therapist and the reading reports from the remedial teachers. These reports would give an indication of the linguistic and reading levels of the Deaf learners.

#### **3.4.3.4 Journal entries**

Each teacher participant kept a journal as part of her professional development process. The journal recordings allowed for the teacher to be reflective in her thinking and strategy planning and to express their personal fears, reservations, problems and concerns. The researcher kept a journal for a period of 22 months during the course of the implementation and facilitation of the Whole Language approach. A copy of the journal entries is attached as Appendix B.

#### **3.4.3.5 Questionnaires**

Questionnaires have been used so that the learners can respond directly to their experiences with reading and writing, and how the Whole Language approach has influenced their own performance and attitude towards literacy development (Merriam, 1998:74). (See Appendix D).

#### **3.4.3.6 Observations**

It is suggested that in qualitative research the method of observation occurs in a natural setting (Mertens, 1998:317). I interacted with the participants and collected the data from them. Spadely (in Mertens, 1998:181) defines some types of participation and the following has been used in this study.

#### ***Non-participation***

Participants were videotaped and the tape was reviewed at a later stage. This provides the lowest form of involvement whilst simultaneously allowing for an opportunity to review a number of elements that contribute to the Whole Language approach for Deaf learners. Arrangements were made to provide the teachers with opportunities to see different ways of organising the learning environment and relating to the learners. As the teachers became aware of alternatives, the easier it became to design and manage the Whole Language classroom in a Whole Language approach. Teachers were also encouraged to video tape their own performance in the classroom setting. The objective was to view the tapes in private or with other teachers and critically analyse the strategies used and if necessary,

how to revise them. The focus was to improve the teaching performance in all areas – classroom management, interaction and instruction.

### ***Moderate participation***

I have attempted to balance the roles of observer and participant by assisting with teaching in the classroom setting as well as to build time for discussion and reflection into a planned schedule. The teachers met sharing their concerns, questions, breakthroughs and triumphs. A time for sharing and reflecting was necessary and it was important not to impose too much structure during these sessions. The meetings were effective when the teachers supported their comments with the learners' works. It was functional to share, evaluate and talk about the worrying issues associated with the implementation of the Whole Language approach. The meetings should be relaxed, spontaneous and non-threatening.

### ***Complete participation***

Here I continued my role as a teacher of the Deaf and applied the Whole Language approach while collecting data. My observational role as qualitative researcher had therefore been that of "complete-member-researcher" where I had studied scenes in which I was already a member (Mertens, 1998:319). Accordingly, within the research process, I was participating in the social educational world, which was being studied. I not only observed but also was allowed to experience the experiences and emotions of the participants. The advantage the participant researcher had in these observations were that the researcher was able to direct actions and happenings, reaffirm and offer support during this educational journey (Mertens, 1998:319). It was acknowledged that this presented a disadvantage in trying to collect data and maintain a questioning and a reflective stance (Mertens, 1998:318).

Various areas in the Whole Language approach were 'workshopped' together with the participating teachers such as a writer's workshop, reader's workshop and storytelling session. Some workshops were used to reflect on the Whole Language approach. The workshops were hands on, short and informal. The teachers were actively involved in the Whole Language approach themselves in the nature of providing the information with a collaborative, co-operative approach associated with Whole Language. This method of workshops supported the view that one person

does not have the right answers and that collaboratively one can arrive at a possible solution.

#### **3.4.3.7 *The researcher as research instrument***

As I am a participant in the study process, I am instrumental in the research. Daily contact with participants has allowed me to see the implementation and facilitation of the Whole Language approach as a process. I have also been included in the decision making process when choosing methods or discussing practical issues during the implementation and facilitation of the Whole Language approach.

As researcher I bring my own experience of working with Deaf learners to this study, and this in turn influences my interaction with the teachers. My prior knowledge assists me when discussing certain issues related to literacy development.

#### **3.4.4 Data Analysis**

Data analysis is an interactive process throughout the study (Merriam, 1998:161). The process of selecting, sorting, discarding and organizing in order to gain cohesion in the data, assist in drawing conclusions and verifying the data. Data analysis is making meaning from raw data collected. The content of interviews, field notes and documents were analyzed (Merriam, 1998:160).

The data were analyzed to communicate meaning during the study. Analysis is inductive: "Although categories and 'variables' initially guide the study, others are allowed and are expected to emerge throughout the study" (Merriam, 1998:160).

The process of data analysis is used to understand the phenomenon better, is initially identifying units of meaning, and then finally integrating the units into data.

- ***Process of data analysis***

The following steps were applied in the process:

- A tape recorder was used to obtain data from the interviews. All interviews were transcribed verbatim.

- The transcriptions were read to form an understanding while keeping the research questions in mind.
- Open coding was used whereby the data was broken down into units of meaning from the transcriptions. The units were closely examined, compared for similarities and differences. The researcher took apart each observation, sentence, paragraph and journal entry and gave each incident, idea or event a name, code or label that represented the phenomenon under study. The units were listed (See Appendix E). During this process themes emerged. The data has sorted according to themes. The themes in this study were educational and sociological constructs, formulated by myself based on my knowledge of the field of study. Data from the interviews, journal entries and observations were compared for consistency or differences. Categories were constructed and an independent person was asked to verify these categories. The meaning of the data in the categories were interpreted by me and presented in the form of a description. These categories were clustered into patterns to describe the findings.

### **3.4.5 Validity and reliability**

Validity and reliability refer to the extent to which the research is trustworthy. Qualitative research involves conducting the study in an ethical manner. Reliability and validity of the study is attained by the approach through careful attention to the "study's conceptualization" and the way in which the data is collected, analyzed and interpreted (Merriam, 1998:199-200).

Reliability refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated. This is not suitable for qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (in Merriam, 1998:206) suggest that "dependability" and "consistency" of the results obtained from the data should concur and make sense. Replication of the qualitative study may not yield the same results.

Validity, namely internal validity, refers to how the research findings match reality (Merriam, 1998:201). Reality is defined according to Lincoln and Guba (in Merriam, 1998:203) as "a multiple set of mental constructions ... made by humans ..." Validity and reliability is named differently by some authors namely internal validity is parallel

to credibility, transferability and dependability. Reliability and external validity are related in other forms of research (Mertens 1998:181).

#### **3.4.5.1 Credibility (parallels internal validity)**

Credibility is used in research to determine the truth-value, or validity of a study's findings. In this study, credibility has been obtained through the use of multiple data sources, triangulation, peer briefing, member checks and persistent evaluation (Mertens, 1998:181).

- **Triangulation**

Data triangulation involves the use of multiple data collection and analysis methods. For the purpose of this study, data has been collected by means of interviews, documents, field notes and observations. Data sources included teachers, Deaf learners and myself.

- **Peer briefing**

An independent person, a fellow teacher who works in the field of deaf education as well as a psychologist at a school for the Deaf were used to keep me focused. They were asked to critically comment on my findings as they emerged. This created opportunity to discuss and to assimilate the data collected as well as to arrive at conclusions.

- **Member checks**

Member checks allowed me to determine my interpretation of the data and reflects the participants' position at the different points in the research. Accordingly, through informal member checks, I have verified constructs as they develop through data collection and analysis with the participants.

- **Researcher's bias**

The researcher's motivation for the study as well as her concerns around language teaching and learning and the Deaf learner were discussed with an educational psychologist at a school for the Deaf as well as a teacher at school.

### **3.4.5.2 *Transferability (parallels external validity)***

Transferability refers to the extent or the degree of similarity between the study and the broader context. External validity refers to the means of generalizing the results to other situations. The extensive and careful description of the participants, the school context, the socio-cultural context of the Deaf learners, the nature of language and the Deaf learner as well as the processes involved have been explicitly described to permit adequate comparison with other cases. I have therefore endeavoured to provide a detailed description, allowing for enough information to use in future comparisons.

### **3.4.5.3 *Dependability (parallels reliability)***

Dependability considers the consistency of data. It is referred to as a case study protocol that details each step in the research process. Accordingly, every notable change in the research should be documented. Strategies needed to achieve dependability in this study are:

- An audit trail describing in detail how the data was collected, decisions made, and derived at themes and categories (Merriam, 1998:172-175). In this study a detailed account of the nature of the data collection and analysis has been described to authenticate the findings of the study;
- Triangulation using multiple methods of data collection;
- A description of my position.

## **3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Merriam (1998:217) suggests that in qualitative research ethical dilemmas will emerge with regard to data collection and also in the dissemination of findings. Ethics also come into question regarding the consent of the participants.

In this research, I take the stance that I am but a "guest in the private spaces of the world" (Merriam, 1998:214) and that I have respect and courtesy with the participants and Deaf learners in this study. The following methods were used to ascertain consent in order to control ethic standards:

- ***Informed consent***

Permission to conduct the research in the school was sought from the Western Cape Education Department in the prescribed manner. The owners of the school, namely the Dominican Sisters were informed in writing regarding of the study at school. Permission was obtained from the School Governing Body who considered the curriculum and language school policies from which the research would deviate. Parents were informed in writing of the undertaking of the study as well as the video taping of lessons with the Deaf learners and permission was granted. The Deaf learners were asked verbally and they granted permission verbally and in sign.

- ***Confidentiality and anonymity***

The participants were assured that neither their names nor the name of the school would be used in the report or documentation of this research. I communicated my position of respect to them. They were assured that the audio and video tapings would be destroyed once the research was completed.

- ***Feedback***

The school principal, teachers and support team at the school, were assured that the findings of the study would be made available to them.

### **3.6 SUMMARY**

The framework for the research methodology employed in this study has been discussed in detail. I have conducted an educational study using qualitative, interpretative, explorative and descriptive forms of research. The theoretical framework of this study provides a logical and holistic approach in gaining insight into the development and processing of research data in the context of the school for Deaf learners. This chapter concluded with the discussion of validity, reliability and ethical considerations.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# FINDINGS, INTERPRETATIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

*"In a case study, communicating understanding - the goal of the analysis - is to link the fact that data have usually been derived from interviews, field observations and documents"*  
(Merriam, 1998:193).

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This concluding chapter will focus on the discussion of the data collection, the method of data analysis and the findings which emerge from the process. The interpretations and discussion of the findings will draw together the different sources of information presented in the data collection. Patterns and problem areas relevant to the research aims presented in chapter one will be discussed. Implications resulting from the interpretation will be discussed. This chapter will conclude with recommendations and a discussion of the limitations.

### 4.2 PROCESS OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The process of data collection as mentioned in chapter three was by means of interviews, observations, journal entries and questionnaires. The data was collected at different times over the period from October 1999 to September 2001 excluding December months (in 1999 and 2000) as the school closed early for the summer holidays. The implementation and facilitation of the Whole Language approach spanned 22 months. Within the time frame of 22 months the participants and Deaf learners explored the Whole Language approach (See appendix D).

#### 4.2.1 Interviews

Five interviews were audio-taped and notes were made during the sessions. The three participants were interviewed. The interviews were transcribed and restructured soon after they took place. Over the 22 months the interviews were conducted to explore the process of the implementation and facilitation of the Whole Language approach with Deaf learners.

The first interview had questions to elicit the existing status of the school with regard to the language learning. The main themes in the teachers' semi-structured and focus group interviews focused on the Whole Language philosophy, theme cycles in curriculum planning, classroom management, Sign Language and concerns about the reading and writing of the Deaf learners.

#### **4.2.2 Needs analysis**

Prior to the actual implementation and facilitation of the Whole Language approach the three participants and myself reflected and brainstormed the idea of a needs analysis.

The following themes pertain to the needs of Deaf learners:

- **Communication**

- The Deaf learner needs to be comfortable in a mode of communication of his/her choice.
- The learner needs to be able to verbalize his/her thoughts without any interference from the teacher to correct language structure.
- The Deaf learner needs to be given the opportunity to be an active learner and not passive.
- The learner needs to realise that communication is a two way process as listener/"see-er" and speaker/signer.
- The learner needs to realise that communication is taking turns and taking risks.

- **Language Learning**

- The Deaf learner needs access to the printed word.
- The learner needs skills or tools developed to assist in independent reading and writing to suit his/her specific needs.
- While phonic awareness is a problem for most Deaf learners, the learner needs to become skilled in analysing words therefore a need to use sign graphics is part of accessing the printed word.
- The Deaf learner needs to connect sign with print.

- The learner needs to learn language by doing or engaging in activities that contribute constructively to language learning.
- **Resource material**
  - The Deaf learner needs reading material that suits his/her interest and the appropriate developmental stage of his/her life. Too often Deaf learners read books that suit their reading level but are immature and "babyish" for their level of interest.
  - Reading and writing material needs to capture the interest of the learner.
- **Attitude**
  - The Deaf learner needs to develop a positive attitude towards reading and writing.
  - The learner needs to overcome the fear of failure and lack of achievement.
  - The learner needs to gain confidence when engaging in the Language Arts.
  - The learner needs to be encouraged that risk taking can be safe and non-threatening.
  - The learner needs to be motivated.
  - The learner needs to be supported at all times.
  - The learner needs to be rewarded with positive reinforcement.
  - The learner needs to be respected.
  - The learner needs to be a social active person in the process of learning.
  - The learner needs to be empowered.

The needs analysis for teachers revealed the following themes:

- **Communication**
  - The teachers need to communicate their reservations, concerns, rewards, successes, questions and possible findings.
  - In the process of communication the teachers need to respect the speaker and be either listener or speaker at the appropriate times.

- **Support**

- The teachers need support in the implementation and facilitation of Whole Language approach.
- They need to be heard with regard to their fears and trepidation involved in language teaching and learning.
- The teachers need a "shoulder to cry on" as the process is not an easy undertaking.
- The teachers need to know that there is a forum for discussion to act as support for them.
- The teachers need to know that there is trust and respect.
- The teachers need to be empowered.

- **Guidance**

- The teachers need guidance in the Whole Language approach.
- They need to know that there are resources available to assist them in executing the implementation and facilitation of the Whole Language approach.
- As the approach is unfamiliar to them, they need to know that they will be guided and supported every step of the way.

Based on the above themes the study was structured to assist in meeting the needs of the teachers and learners.

#### **4.2.3 Journal entries**

Journal entries were made during observations which took place during the 22 months. The entries provided information about the implementation and facilitation of the Whole Language approach. In the journal entries, the physical setting of the classroom, the feelings and attitude of the teachers as well as insightful incidents with the Deaf learners were noted.

General notes were made in the journal with regard to planning and structuring the classroom, lesson planning and observations.

#### **4.2.4 Documents and Records**

A request was made to review the school records of the Deaf learners. The speech therapist and remedial teacher made the language and reading reports available. Other documents were made available with regard to the school policy on language and the medium of instruction. The curriculum plan was made available as the research deviated from the curriculum plan in the different phases (Foundation and Intermediate).

I was granted access to the records of the Deaf learners' audiograms in order to determine the degrees of hearing losses. The psychologist verbally informed me that the Deaf learners in the study of the implementation and facilitation of the Whole Language approach did not have any added disabilities. The need to determine if there were added disabilities would influence the research in some way creating more variables.

#### **4.2.5 Questionnaires**

The Deaf learners were given questionnaires with regard to reading and writing. The questionnaire provided an overview of what learners were experiencing during the 22 months of implementation and facilitation of the Whole Language approach. Ten 12 years old were given the questionnaires. The following aspects were raised with regard to the questions:

- **Reading**
  - Attitude towards reading
  - Reading problems
  - Frequency of reading
  - Reading skills
  - Types of reading material
  - Support for reading
  - Format for reading (pictures, signs)
  - Approach to reading (aloud, sign) and
  - Reasons for reading

- **Writing**

- Attitude towards writing
- Writing skills/problems
- Types of Writing
- Reading audience
- Frequency of Writing and
- Reasons for writing

#### **4.2.6 Time Frame**

The implementation and facilitation of the Whole Language approach spanned 22 months. During these months information about the philosophy of Whole Language and resource material were gathered, and workshops were conducted to assist in the implementation and facilitation of the Whole Language approach.

- 4 months:**
  - Background information about the Whole Language approach
  - Selection of participants
  - Conduct first interview
- 2 months:**
  - Implementation of the Whole Language Approach
- 1 month:**
  - Conduct workshops
- 12 months:**
  - Hold monthly meetings
- 3 months:**
  - Conduct workshop with Foundation Phase teachers
  - Conduct interviews
  - Administer questionnaires

#### **4.2.7 Data analysis**

Open Coding was used with the transcribed data. Themes emerged and categories were constructed and coded. Categories were clustered. Some of the categories emerging were named because of the orientation of the study, concepts expounded in the literature review and my orientation in the field of deaf education (Merriam, 1998:181). The categories identified were coded by means of cues in order to facilitate analysis and interpretation.

### 4.3 FINDINGS

The findings for this discussion are presented in the form of a table. The categories are the findings of the data analysis. These categories are linked to aspects of the literature review in chapter two which helped to facilitate the integration and discussion of the findings. The following categories derived from the themes will now be discussed.

**Table 4.1: Themes and categories that emerged in the findings**

Themes	Categories
<b>Elements of change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information</li> <li>• Collaboration</li> <li>• Trust</li> <li>• Support</li> </ul>
<b>Social Context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents</li> <li>• School</li> <li>• Community</li> </ul>
<b>Whole Language Practice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theme Cycles</li> <li>• Management (environment)</li> <li>• Teaching</li> </ul>
<b>Whole Language Philosophy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge/Whole Language</li> <li>• Sign Language</li> <li>• Deafness/Language/Whole Language</li> </ul>
<b>Beliefs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers' Insight/Beliefs</li> </ul>
<b>Learner Empowerment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading</li> <li>• Writing</li> <li>• Achievements and Rewards</li> </ul>

#### 4.3.1 Theme 1: Elements of change

This category represents the strategies used to reflect a paradigm shift experienced by teachers and learners. The teachers perceived that change was necessary in order to implement the Whole Language approach. It is stated (Raines, 1995:1) that reflective practitioners make changes because of a state of disequilibrium. Whole Language teachers are in a process of change - of becoming.

The strategies I used encompass the facilitation of Whole Language information. I provided the teachers with an array of resources, such as books, articles, a video,

presentations, workshops and informal discussion groups to facilitate their immersion of Whole Language knowledge.

As the teachers acquired this philosophy, other aspects emerged to allow for the metamorphosis to take place. Collaboration, trust and support are three elements integrated into the move towards change (Short, 1994:167; Goodman, 1991:325).

The researcher's development of collaboration, trust and support was established among the teachers from the beginning but became steadfast during the developmental process of the Whole Language implementation. The relationship of trust, support and collaboration was maintained by the respect shown by all, as being part of a process. There was a desire to change the current situation and teaching approaches to one that would enhance deaf teaching. I continuously encouraged the teachers to own their metamorphosis and realization towards the Whole Language philosophy.

I have to be perceived as an instrument, as opposed to an expert in Whole Language philosophy, to initiate change. I needed to facilitate the exposure of Whole Language successfully in order to expand and enhance the teachers' methodology of teaching and learning.

*P1: I'm tempted to correct the mistakes in the learners' Dialogue Journal. This is so different from the structured language approach.*

*R: Don't worry, correct them in context. Encourage the learners to write. It will come together with time. The main focus is to encourage them to write and later we'll look at the grammar in context. Then it is non-threatening for them and they won't be put off (Interview 3).*

I offered support to the teachers, as they were uncertain and doubtful in initiating the Whole Language approach. Support is necessary when working in an atmosphere of conflicting views on learning and teaching of language (Gersten & Jiminez, 1994:438).

The elements of change assisted during the teachers' paradigm shift from traditional behaviouristic approach to one of constructivism. This change was necessary in order to pursue the Whole Language philosophy. Collaboration, support and trust are foundations upon which to build lasting relationships within a school system (Short, 1994:169). These factors that influence change, require time and mutual respect, as

was established throughout the research, among the researcher and the participants (Doake, 1994:131).

#### **4.3.2 Theme 2: Social context**

Communities of learning have various elements that impact on learning. Within a learner's learning experience, different communities impact on the learner, namely, school, parents and the community at large (McCowan, Driscoll & Roop, 1996:238-239).

In this study the structure of the participating school needs to be seen as a particular system with various departments and positions including the principal, management, teachers, therapists and Sign Language co-ordinators, in order to understand the process of Whole Language implementation and facilitation. This research occurred within an established bureaucracy, grounded in laws and policies of organizational knowledge relating to a network of systems of control, authority and information. These interact internally and externally, on the physical school setting reaching local and national education departments.

I realized that the teachers were a sub-system of the school and needed to remain operational within that context (Peterson, 1996:47). As such I had to acknowledge the limitations, fears and resistance to change to the Whole Language approach initially experienced.

As the Whole Language practice developed and continued over the months, the participating teachers experienced isolation, as they no longer planned with the larger body of teachers, but, rather as a small independent group. While no direct conflict was expressed, there was a sense of isolation.

While there was no clash of knowledge or teaching and learning styles, the other teachers voiced an interest in hearing about the Whole Language approach. This resulted in exposure in the form of an in-service training workshop delivered by the teachers and myself (July 2001).

One of the teachers involved in this study was a head of department that assisted in pursuing the objective of implementing the approach. This teacher, operating at management level, facilitated the smooth running of smaller changes within the school system.

*P 3: At management level I've been keeping the principal informed of the progress and the procedure used in the approach. I had to go to her for the purchase of some resource material and the mounting of display boards (Interview 3).*

This school system does not operate in isolation but in a broader context of a community of Deaf persons and parents. The Deaf community support teachers in the approaches for storytelling and the need for the correct signs. The correct signs would support concept formation in learners. While teachers of the Deaf are not natural Sign Language users, there is a need to rely on the assistance of this community for signing.

*One of the teachers explained how she invited a Deaf adult to assist in the storytelling in the afternoons. She stated that the Deaf adult was very eager and helpful and the children were absolutely delighted to 'listen' to a Deaf person telling a story. She stated that the joy and excitement on their faces were overwhelming. The feedback from the story was very informative (Journal, May 2001).*

The parents, although they were not always supportive of their children and had difficulty in communicating with them, expressed a change in their children when they saw a change in written language. The children were communicating with the parents through print.

*P2: Some of my parents at a P.T.A. informed me that their children are leaving them notes with regard to giving information, requesting something or to state where they are going (Interview 4).*

The school, parents and deaf community played an integral role in the implementation of Whole Language in the school system.

Findings in this category imply that teachers should understand their particular school as a system and realize the impact their role may have in assisting or hindering change. It is vital that the teachers who are "in the process of becoming Whole Language teachers" (Raines, 1995:1) be aware that within their larger systems, their colleagues may have different perceptions of the process of teaching and learning. Teachers also realize that a change in paradigm shift causes resistance, conflicting views and perceptions of theories and may even lead to confrontation with authority.

The need to be aware of systems operating within the school and community allows the teachers in the process of change to predict the responses of the systems, thereby allowing teachers to be knowledgeable of what is to be expected (Clark & Commins, 1993:79). It also allows teachers to be aware of and respect the resistance to change. Within the system are goals and values that are shaken when exposed to Whole Language philosophy. When the teachers of the Whole Language approach are aware of the system theory, they are committed to challenge, change and validate their position. This awareness is necessary so that the teachers remain part of the school system.

### **4.3.3 Theme 3: Whole Language Practice**

Practice is said to express the teachers' beliefs and ideas as s/he transacts with others in a literacy circle (Watson, 1994:605). The teachers in this study initially received reading material to stimulate and provoke the notion of Whole Language philosophy. The discussions also revolved around the activities associated with Whole Language practices. Raines (1995:14; Watson, 1994:604) suggest that some teachers begin by changing their practice. Later they reflect what the changes imply within the theoretical framework of Whole Language. Others begin with the theory and establish the implications of their practice. However, there is no neat compartmentalization of what is theory and what is practice - it is really a dynamic sphere of interactions within the reality of a Whole Language classroom.

Practice welcomes the contributions of others as it provides a 'collective zone of proximal development' for teachers and learners where they can develop cognitively (Vygotsky, 1978:86; Brozo, Brobst & Moje, 1995:71; Scala, 1993:229). The initiation of the approach commenced with storytelling and ended in a transformation of the classroom interior. The practice incorporated organizing theme cycles that collaborated with some of the Outcomes Based Education (OBE) philosophy, especially the programme organizers as well as the learners' view of what they wanted to learn. The approach is meaning-centred and developed internally by the relevant members and not externally by the school curriculum co-ordinator. The theme cycles presented some difficulty as not all the learning areas or choices could be accommodated. Evaluating reading and writing in the Whole Language approach does not follow traditional assessment. This is also found in the OBE philosophy. The practice therefore needed to be altered for the teachers.

*P2: I don't know how to assess the reading and writing in this approach. Previously we used the basal readers to monitor the reading but with the inclusion of other reading books all at different levels it is difficult to evaluate the learners performance. The same goes for the writing. I can't use the old guidelines for assessing the writing (Interview 5).*

*P1: I'm dealing with the benchmarks of the OBE programme and the learners fall short on those levels and I can't use the old guidelines. Evaluation has become a problem for me. I need some guidance (Interview 5).*

I recognized that this was an area that needed specific guidelines and practice, and therefore indicated that this area needed attention.

Within this category the teachers had to develop a better understanding of reading and writing as processes, and to transform various experiences into real practice which could be shared with an audience (Dudley-Marling, 1995:115). As the teachers were engaged in the practice of teaching and learning of language, they demanded a voice in "why and how". As these teachers sharpened their observational skills, they came to trust their own informed choices in the reading and writing processes as well as the management of the classroom and the theme cycles within a meaning-centred curriculum. The rewards and achievements which formed part of this category contributed to the feeling of success that learners are active learners in the developmental process of Whole Language despite the delay still in reading and writing levels.

Teachers borrowed practices from research based on Deaf learners in the Whole Language approach. The positive feedback in reading and writing from a few parents motivated the teachers to continue implementing the Whole Language practices. The teachers' request for the purchase of specific books for the library was granted within a limited budget. As the learners were being enrolled at public libraries, there was an increase in the exposure to a variety of reading materials.

*P 3: My sessions appear to be chaotic. It appears to be untidy. The books are all over the place. The old way I had everyone's attention and then I was aware who was absorbing the information or not. Now I find myself focusing on the small groups and at times getting to the ones who spontaneously ask for my*

*help. I need to think this through carefully. I know it has to do with my classroom management skills (Interview 2).*

I observed that the teachers were struggling with the role of the teacher as facilitator. Within Whole Language, the teacher's role is that of teacher and learner, where as the teacher orientated approach to teaching focuses on the 'lecturing' or imparting of information at strategic times. The realization of teachers is that their role in the classroom is changing and that they are reflecting on the way it has to change. The process of a shift in the approach to teaching has begun.

The implication of this was that to fully understand the literacy process, teachers of reading and writing: need to be readers and writers themselves, thereby sharing the experience. The teachers implemented, borrowed and created their own practices in the implementation of Whole Language as a result of their specific situation with Deaf learners. It is necessary for teachers engaging in the Whole Language approach not only to be immersed in the variety of practices within the Whole Language approach but also to understand the "why" of Whole Language. This is essentially the theoretical framework that separates Whole Language philosophy from a range of language learning theories.

*P2: According to Whole Language there is no place or use for basal readers. But I cannot let go of the basal readers. The series we are using are compiled of little stories and are graded. I would like to continue with the readers and include 'free-reading'. I'll use the big books and the library books at times (Interview 5).*

Participants one and three indicated likewise. I established some of the reasons for this. There is a need for basic vocabulary development that is common to the hearing learner but which is delayed in the Deaf learner. The average hearing child enters school with a vocabulary whereas the Deaf learner is always 'playing catch up'. The basal readers also provide sentence structures that are short, simple and repetitive. The readers are also predictable.

I questioned the use of the basal readers as this is in contradiction to the process of Whole Language. As stated previously, the Whole Language approach is a top-down view, rather than a bottom-up view. It may be suggested then that the framework of Whole Language, paired with basal reader support, not exclusively a top-down or a bottom-up process but rather an interactive process that involves both processes as

they are needed. It is also suggested that as the teachers are new to the philosophy of Whole Language, they hesitate to let go of the security of the basal readers. The other reason may be that they are in conflict between the Whole Language and a practical approach that has had limited success. It has also been stated that to become a Whole Language teacher, the teacher undergoes a process of relevant and slow changes.

Teachers need to experience the freedom to take risks in implementing Whole Language practices. A demonstration of successful practices motivates the teachers to have a better understanding of the theoretical basis of Whole Language.

#### **4.3.4 Theme 4: Whole Language philosophy**

This category is linked to the understanding of the development and acquisition of language in hearing and Deaf learners, the knowledge of Sign Language acquisition of a visuo-spatial language and the theoretical basis of language teaching and learning within a Whole language classroom.

Generally, teachers do not have easy access to books and educational papers or articles regarding the theory of the aforementioned areas. Sometimes their own experiences in learning to read and write have not made them active readers and writers who constantly seek knowledge through books or journals. My role therefore was to assist in this area of acquiring material suitable regarding the theoretical aspects of Whole Language philosophy.

It is essential to reaffirm the knowledge of language acquisition of Deaf learners in Sign Language and a spoken language, as Deaf learners are constantly engaged in bilingualism. For the implementation of Whole Language the theoretical basis of language learning and teaching is fundamental, as it is the foundation of the philosophy. In teaching the Deaf, the four aspects of language learning focus on listening/seeing; speaking/signing; reading and writing. It is necessary to conceptualize the two modalities that are operational and that they represent two distinctive languages where one language has no written form (Reynolds & Titus, 1990:48). The switching from sign to spoken and written languages is complex and teachers need to keep focused as to what is the target language at all times. A firm understanding of the theory of language learning and teaching contributes to the practice of Whole Language.

*P1: I'm concerned about the language policy. There should be a change in the language policy to indicate the method/approach needed to deal with the teaching and learning of language to accommodate the signing aspect. I know this approach is suitable for the bilingual approach of signing and written English (Interview 3).*

*P3: I feel there are no clear guidelines as how to teach language now that we have included signing (Interview 3).*

I encouraged the teachers to continue with the approach so as to determine the success or failure of implementing an approach that was so different to the current methods in use.

Theory is often met with a lack of interest and enthusiasm to understand a process, but in the Whole Language approach it provides a knowledge base for a practice in the philosophy. In this study the acquisition and construction of a knowledge base for teachers was met with some difficulty as it was in conflict with traditional deaf teaching approaches.

In this research the initial steps were taken by exposing relevant reading material by teachers of the Deaf. Actual accounts of their successes in the Whole Language approach assisted the participants as informal researchers in the classroom. These accounts were highlighted, and linked to the theory of Whole Language philosophy.

By forming a teacher support group the participating teachers were reading a range of professional literature, sharing information with others and requesting further books. Later, journal articles, books and a Whole Language video were introduced. These resources were provided as the need arose. Through this process teachers were beginning to formalize their own knowledge base of the Whole Language approach.

The teachers posed questions, doubts and concerns throughout the research. The suitability of Whole Language for Deaf learners was mentioned. There were concerns expressed regarding learners with weak English/Afrikaans language abilities, those with processing problems, learners who have difficulty in linking print with signs and others with social and emotional difficulties that complicate learning in the Whole Language philosophy. These problem areas allowed teachers to explore the theory, gaining some guidance to the problems presented.

These findings suggest that teachers who reflectively engage with the theory are engaged in "a series of steps of perceiving, behaving and becoming" (Raines, 1995:1). It is said that Whole Language teachers redefine themselves, gain a voice and have an opportunity to muddle through Whole Language but also self-correct through the theoretical basis and beliefs. Becoming a Whole Language teacher is a life-long experience because it is a process that these teachers are committed to.

Knowledge or theory of how children learn in general and how they learn to read and write is very different to the views of teachers who follow the behaviourist way of thinking. The beliefs and principles of Whole Language philosophy support the theoretical framework of this study.

#### **4.3.5 Theme 5: Beliefs**

"Educational change depends on what teachers think, believe in and do. It's as simple and complex as that" (LeNard & Delk, 1995:20). It is therefore necessary to believe in something in order to make changes. The belief system is an aspect of the Whole Language philosophy. It may be perceived as the cornerstone of the philosophy. Whole Language practice is supported by the beliefs underlying the guidelines and principles of the philosophy.

Teachers who were originally involved in the traditional approaches to learning and teaching undergo a gradual shift or change within the belief system of Whole Language. In this study, the teachers altered their understanding of their belief system. Teachers experienced a change in the belief system when they themselves felt empowered.

There was opportunity for the teachers to discuss in detail the beliefs about learning and teaching within the Whole Language philosophy. I encouraged the teachers to observe, create and try out the teaching strategies that supported the principles and beliefs of Whole Language. At times I assumed the role of mentor, guiding teachers in the belief system. The need to understand the belief system is essential to incorporate a different teaching style but also to create an awareness of misconceptions or myths that may arise with the approach.

As the teachers gained confidence and took risks in the teaching practice, the belief system was to gain "roots" in the knowledge of the Whole Language philosophy. Finding release in old beliefs is difficult and change is often met with resistance.

Often teachers want to incorporate old beliefs with the principles of the Whole Language approach. This is essentially not a negative aspect until one is completely comfortable and confident in the alternative approach. This is evident in the study, and indicated the need for support and collaboration amongst the teachers. Once teachers realize that the two approaches are incompatible, they arrive at a comfortable level at which to operate within the Whole Language philosophy. It was obvious that change of this nature would not take place after a few workshops, watching a video or reading Whole Language material. Hall and Loucks (in Doake, 1993:266) suggest that there are different levels of use for any new innovation that people experience. They identify and operationally define eight levels, namely, non-use, orientation, preparation, mechanical use, routine, refinement, integration and lastly renewal. It is at the renewal stage that the teachers in this study embraced the belief system of Whole Language approach.

Doake (1993:266) suggests that teachers need to be given the opportunity to study the depth of Whole Language theory and implementation, vocalize and discuss the beliefs about the literacy processes. Through the formation of an understanding of the theory of Whole Language philosophy, the teachers were able to continue in the implementation of the Whole Language approach with confidence and support.

It can be deduced then, that change in the teachers' belief system impacts on the role they played in the classroom, in the school system and as active learners themselves. On examining their beliefs they were able to conceptualize the theory and practice of this philosophy. The transition to acceptance of the belief system empowered the teachers in dealing with issues such as the curriculum, assessment and their own teaching and learning strategies. The sense of empowerment and confidence was evident once the teachers fully professed to change in all areas theory, practice and beliefs.

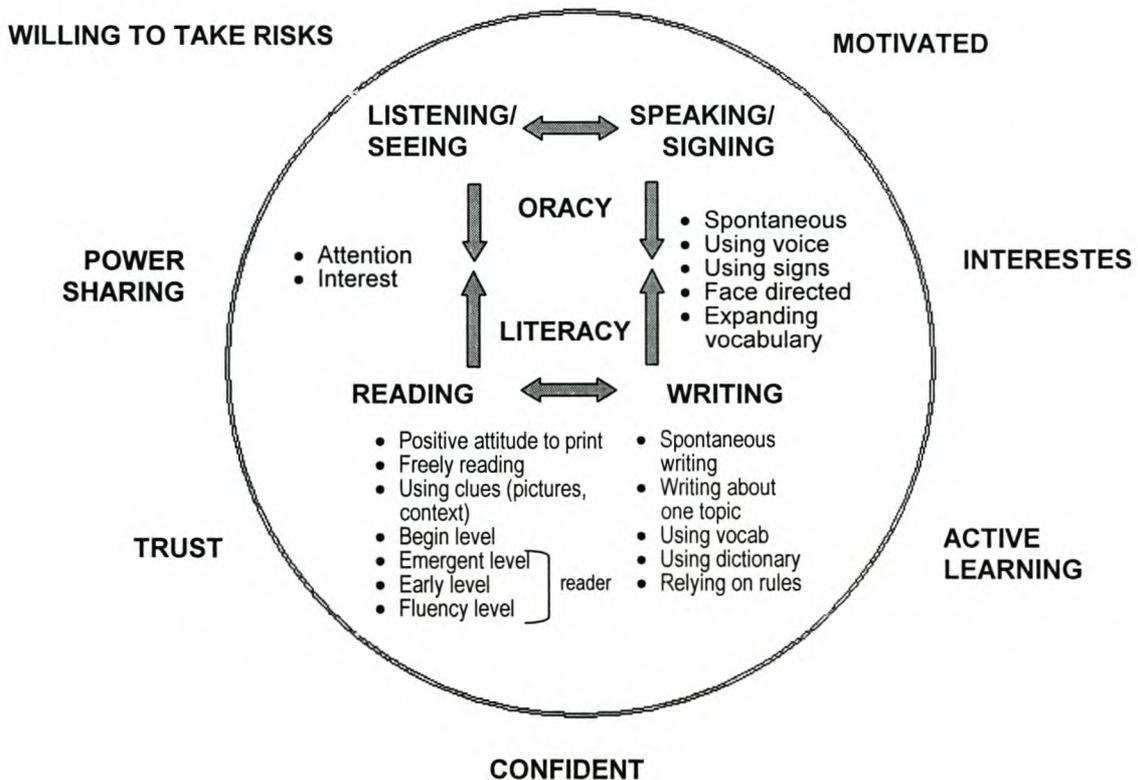
By examining their beliefs, teachers confront their concerns, doubts and fears until they reached a level of where possible solutions to their queries were found. Through the acceptance of the belief system, the teachers in this research could express with confidence their willingness to take risks, and be in a supportive, collaborative relationship with colleagues who believe in the principles of Whole Language. It was the culmination of theory, practice and beliefs, the three

dimensions suggested by Watson (1999:619) that allowed the teachers in this study to redefine their roles as teachers in the philosophy of Whole Language.

**4.3.6 Theme 6: Learner empowerment**

Deaf learners' attitudes towards reading and writing are as important as their abilities. Furthermore, it cannot be assumed that they go hand in hand. Gaining enjoyment and being able to comprehend the printed word provide the learners with a sense of empowerment in tasks that may ordinarily present stumbling blocks for them (French, 1996:19). The implementation and facilitation of the Whole Language approach has allowed the Deaf learner to develop certain qualities which assist in learning. Attributes such as confidence, risk taking, interest, power sharing, trust, motivation, and active learning help the Deaf learners to explore the language systems in a positive way as illustrated in Figure 4.1. These attributes contribute to literacy development in that it meets the difficulties experienced in language learning head on. With these qualities the Deaf learner becomes an emergent reader and writer.

**Figure 4.1: Units in open coding**



*P3: A learner in my class wrote me a reminder because I had not returned one of his books on dinosaurs. I thought his approach quite creative and he was pretty comfortable writing to me. The context was authentic and he used his writing skills effectively (Interview 3).*

Participants two and three indicated that learners were beginning to write notes to each other and also the class teacher. A parent indicated that her son wrote a note to his father reminding him to attend the school meeting (Journal May 2001).

*P2: I'm concerned about the reading delay. Despite my efforts, the learners are beginning to enjoy reading but the level of reading has not increased significantly as yet. I'm worried. Maybe my expectations were that the gap between the chronological age and reading level would decrease (Interview 5).*

*P1: My children are reading much better but the level of reading is still delayed (Interview 5).*

*P3: I don't see a great change in the level of reading but I do see a change in the approach to tackling reading and the attitude is positive (Interview 5).*

The three participants expressed their concern that reading was still being delayed after months of intervention. I recognised the concern and because these learners are often severely delayed in reading due to the language delay, I anticipated that their progress would initially be slow. I therefore indicated that the approach is effectual as changes are being made.

*P3: My children are still making some of the same mistakes while writing. There is a change in their approach to writing. It is a positive one but the same errors keep reoccurring (Interview 4).*

*P2: I'm struggling with the tenses and prepositions in the structuring of sentence (Interview 4).*

Again, I recognised the concern of the teachers but indicated that time and consistent use of the approach of Whole Language approach would improve the literacy level of the learners.

Results from a questionnaire given to the learners indicated that the participating Deaf learners read more often: during the school day, they developed habits of reading at night, and some even read with a parent. The learners also expressed an

interest in reading a wide range of books such as comics, novels, short stories, the newspaper and magazines.

The interpretation of the questionnaire indicated that more than fifty percent of the learners experienced difficulty in reading and writing. Eighty percent of the learners however enjoyed reading and writing and reported that they generally had a clear idea that they wrote for a reading audience. All of the learners indicated the types of problems they were experiencing which is an indication that they are meta-linguistically aware of problems and could provide possible solutions independently. All learners also indicated that they engaged in reading and writing on a daily basis at school and at home which is a reflection of one of the Whole Language philosophy beliefs: you learn to read by reading and you learn to write by writing. The learners also indicated that they were engaged in authentic writing such as notes, cards, letters and short stories for a real audience such as their parents, classmates, teacher, principal and the school.

Deaf learners responded in the following way when asked on the questionnaire why they read and what they read.

*L1: I like to read comics. It makes me laugh sometimes. I read the newspaper, I want to know what is happening in the country. (Questionnaire)*

*L2: I read for information. Information is important. I also like fiction books. (Questionnaire)*

*L3: I enjoy reading. I like non-fiction books. (Questionnaire)*

Deaf learners were also asked about writing how often they wrote, what they wrote and why they wrote.

*L4: I write short stories, notes and make cards. I write to pass. (Questionnaire)*

*L5: I write notes, letters and make cards. I write when I study. (Questionnaire)*

Many of the learners indicated that they read books with fewer pictures and therefore became more dependent on the printed words for clues and information. They also indicated that they were reading with a parent or asked a parent for assistance, more often. Finally, learners indicated that when they read they used sign and very few used their voices when reading. Writing was mainly done in the form of letters, notes and cards, which are functional literacy skills.

## 4.4 SUMMARY OF INTERPRETATIONS

*"Whole Language teachers and researchers share a belief in the capabilities of Deaf children ... the kinds of 'a-ha' moments that occur when children are allowed to learn their language in a natural, environment  
(Schleper, 1993:14).*

Several findings can be drawn from this study, which aimed to identify and describe the factors involved in the process of implementing and facilitating the Whole Language approach.

### 4.4.1 Factors influencing the teachers' acceptance of the Whole Language approach

The factors influencing the teacher acceptance of the Whole Language approach is closely linked to a supportive environment, namely the educational authorities within the school and other colleagues. Support is shown through empathy, listening, respect and mutual trust, all elements for a basis for a sound relationship between the participants and the rest of the school. A supportive environment also allows the teachers to take risks when implementing and facilitating the Whole Language approach. By being supportive and also creating a small support group, it creates a space for all concerned to meet and discuss or question prevailing practices and explore alternative strategies in the implementation and facilitation of the Whole Language approach.

The process of change towards a Whole Language philosophy requires a change in use of teaching strategies as well as establishing a relationship of collaboration, trust and support between the researcher and the participants. The formation of Whole Language philosophy begins with the implementation of practices experienced by other practitioners and therefore they are borrowed practices. These practices resulted in successful responses with the Deaf learners and this in turn allowed for the formation of theory for the teachers. Once the teachers realized that the implementation and facilitation of the Whole Language approach was a process and not a 'quick fix' to underlying language problems of the Deaf, they were able to address the process in a holistic manner. The teachers needed to internalize all aspects of the Whole Language approach (theoretical framework, philosophy, and belief system). When the Deaf learners showed positive interaction by engaging in

the reading and writing process, it provided the teachers with a feeling of trust and belief in the approach. The teachers were constantly checking the new information of the Whole Language approach against the old rules of a behaviourist approach to teaching and learning of language. This was a natural process for the teachers. At this stage, it was necessary to be supportive, and to collaborate with other teachers who were implementing the Whole Language approach. The teachers who were experiencing doubt gained strength from the support, collaboration and trust of others. As the Deaf learner is in the process of constructing meaning so too are the teachers who are participating in the Whole Language approach.

#### **4.4.2 Problems teachers experience in the implementation and facilitation of the Whole Language approach**

- **Teaching practice**

The problems experienced are primarily linked with past teaching strategies for the teaching and learning of language. It is difficult to let go of traditional teaching styles and this is what the participants experienced initially.

The drilling or training of spelling, basal reading programmes and correcting syntax out of context presented problems. The teachers needed to realize the teaching and learning of language in the Whole Language classroom.

- **Classroom management**

In the implementation and facilitation of the Whole Language approach classroom management and the curriculum planning are two main aspects to consider. The classroom organisation creates the context within which Deaf learners work. Curriculum planning is done in consultation with the Deaf learners. This presents a change in attitude and an approach of sharing in the planning of what is to be taught and learned. For teachers this is problematic as they were trained in a traditional way of teaching learners. To have learners 'have a say' in what forms part of curriculum is a daunting and courageous task and requires a change in attitude and a clear understanding of the process involved in the Whole Language approach.

- **Barriers**

While the participants gained permission to explore the implementation and facilitation of the Whole Language approach, it was granted provided that it would be

concluded within a certain time period. This created a barrier by the authorities in the school as change is difficult and it requires time.

Another barrier is the severe language delay that the Deaf learners in this study experienced. The implementation and facilitation of the Whole Language approach, did not make a significant difference in the reading and writing levels of the learners during the time period allowed. The discrepancy between the chronological age and the reading and writing level of the Deaf learner requires extended time for the implementation and facilitation of the Whole Language approach.

#### **4.4.3 The literacy development of the Deaf learner**

As previously stated, the literacy level (in English/Afrikaans) of the Deaf learner did not increase significantly. However, as a result of the implementation and facilitation of the Whole Language approach other aspects which contribute towards literacy development emerged.

- **Learner empowerment**

While learner empowerment is an aspect in the practice of the Whole Language approach, it also liberated the Deaf learners. The Deaf learners gained much from the implementation and facilitation of the Whole Language approach, as they experienced a sense of achievement and reward during this process. The Whole Language approach provided a vehicle to access the printed word. The exposure of the approach allowed the Deaf learners to use both languages (Sign Language and English/Afrikaans) effectively in the different language systems. The emphasis of syntax and spelling taken away allowed the Deaf learners to focus on meaningful interaction with the printed form of language. As the learners gained confidence in this approach, they were motivated and were willing to take risks. Risk taking is essentially a difficult exercise as the Deaf learners are very aware of the limitations (i.e. poor English/Afrikaans language level). The Whole Language approach gave rise to emergent and early reading levels and some even reached the fluency level in reading. In writing the Deaf learners wrote for specific audiences and the activity became spontaneous.

The 'a-ha' experience of the implementation and facilitation of the Whole Language approach was when Deaf learners actively engaged in the teaching and learning of a language which they acquired through the visual representation, namely on the lips

and on the hands (Lip-reading and Sign Language). I gained a positive view of the development of literacy in Deaf learners. I reflected on the growth of the Deaf learners in the Whole Language approach and avoided a deficit laden view of what they still could not do. Through the implementation and facilitation of the Whole Language approach the Deaf learner engaged in a holistic natural approach to learning language, that is the acquisition and development of language in a supportive environment. I am therefore now able to echo (Schleper, 1995:5-8) "The Whole Language approach works ... and I've proof".

When Deaf learners were asked with a questionnaire why they read and write, the comments were as follows:

*L1: I learn to read because reading will make me pass. I want to pass.*

*L2: I learn to write to communicate with other people. I don't use my voice. I sign.  
Not everyone can sign.*

#### **4.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Although the research of the implementation of Whole Language is significant to understanding the acquisition of language and language learning and teaching with Deaf learners as well as the impact on educational changes, there are various limitations. Since the format of the research only looked at three teachers as respondents with twenty Deaf learners (eight to twelve years old), the results cannot be generalized to all teachers or learners.

Resource material pertaining to Deaf learners and the Whole Language approach was not readily available. This limited the research as the researcher and her colleagues therefore had to work with limited selection of resources available, modifying them to suit the needs of the teachers and learners as the implementation developed.

#### **4.6 IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

- Outcomes Based Philosophy and the Whole Language philosophy both share a constructivist approach. A comparative study could be conducted to determine similarities and differences between the two philosophies. Another study could focus on the role of language on the curriculum (eight learning areas) as language is the foundation and vehicle of all learning.

- Questions raised about assessment in OBE and Whole Language, could be explored to determine guidelines for OBE benchmarks and how it may relate to the Whole Language approach.

#### **4.7 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Teachers who wish to implement the Whole Language approach should bare the following in mind:

- Carefully examine the system contextually before initiating implementation and facilitation of the Whole Language approach and anticipated reactions from existing systems;
- Apply the theory, practice and beliefs of the Whole Language philosophy;
- Allow participating teachers to interact;
- Create an atmosphere of trust, support and collaboration among teachers;
- Provide sufficient time during implementation and facilitation to reflect on positive responses;
- Recognize that the Whole Language approach is a process;
- Include a facilitator to assist in the implementation of the process; and
- Begin with younger learners until the whole school is part of the process.
- Recognize that the implementation and facilitation process requires time, set long term goals.

#### **4.8 CONCLUSION**

Basic training has prepared me for teaching language in a structured approach, as the Deaf learner needs to acquire language in order to learn. I have used these approaches for a number of years. These methods have been proven and some Deaf learners have been successful in learning to read and write adequately.

A few years ago I came across an article in the Perspectives in Education and Deafness where a teacher of the Deaf expressed her enthusiasm of the Whole Language philosophy while working with profoundly to severely Deaf learners and how this approach had worked well with Sign Language and English. I was immediately captivated by the approach. It appeared to be an exciting way to learn

and teach language. To this day I see my teaching career in two stages of metamorphosis - a cocoon stage and the butterfly stage. In the cocoon stage I taught language in a very insular manner, focusing on the functions of language and developing the lexicon of the Deaf learner. These lessons were skill based. My butterfly stage is the encounter with Whole Language philosophy. This approach has given me the opportunity to be free of the constraints that hamper my understanding of language learning. Realizing that the learner is able to construct meaning from print, is an important element in accepting the philosophy of the Whole Language approach. The butterfly stage has allowed me to explore the Whole Language approach and cast aside the basal readers and to rather select reading books Deaf learners enjoy. Small group projects and individual projects have allowed the learners and myself to gain a sense of freedom in what we are trying to achieve. The achievements and challenges experienced in the last few years have broadened my understanding of the Whole Language approach and has enriched my Language Arts teaching.

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## **APPENDIX A**

**EXAMPLES OF RAW DATA IN SEMANTIC UNITS** → **CODING PROCESS** → **CODED THEMES – CLUSTERING** → **CATEGORIES**

**SECOND INTERVIEW APRIL 2000**

"... signing in the story." (line 20)

60

Trs use sign language

**DEAF LEARNER**

"I feel I'm able to justify why I'm doing this ... in the long run the child gains from this experience." (line 78-79)

49

Trs feel empowered

**BELIEF**

"I'm having difficulty projecting the outcomes of my areas of language and other subjects (history, geography), as I need to do the O:BE." (line 87-88)

46

Concern about OBE (C2005) and WL

**SOCIAL CONTEXT**

**THIRD INTERVIEW JULY 2000**

"My children have joined the library." (line 75)

55

Parents assist learners

**SOCIAL CONTEXT**

"... children and myself are finding out so much, ... we are creating meaning ... They are thinking about what they know, want to know and sometimes what they've learned." (line 106-107)

58

Trs gain confidence in the implementation of WL

**BELIEF**

## **APPENDIX B**

**EXAMPLES OF RAW DATA IN SEMANTIC UNITS**

**CODING PROCESS**

**CODED THEMES – CLUSTERING**

**CATEGORIES**

**DATA SOURCE: RESEARCHER'S JOURNAL OCT-NOV 1999, JAN-JUNE 2000 + JULY 2001**

<i>"I've noticed the complexities in the class ... each child has different language needs."</i> (28 Oct 1999)	18	Special language teaching	<b>DEAF LEARNERS</b>
<i>"... lack of support from parents. They are not signing to their children."</i> (15 Nov 1999)	23	Parents not supporting	<b>SOCIAL CONTEXT</b>
<i>"I've observed how the teachers are organizing themselves to sign stories in different ways. I've observed team teaching."</i> (16 March 2000)	31	Trs support each other	<b>SUPPORT COLLABORATION</b>
<i>"I've mentioned the concept of theme cycles and how it may work for the areas of learning."</i> (13 April 2000)	33	Trs introduce theme cycles	<b>THEMES</b>
<i>"I've discussed the progress of the children. 6 ... say that the learners were interacting much better now. They are taking books home to read."</i> (18 May 2000)	35	Learners interacting with each other and books	<b>RISK TAKING TRUST CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT</b>
<i>"Teachers explained that the learners were enjoying the reading and writing - ... an improvement in the attitude towards reading and writing."</i> (19 June 2000)	50	Trs receive positive responses from learners	<b>SUCCESS</b>
<i>"I explained that the teachers should not worry about the mistakes. The learners will learn to correct the errors in context."</i> (21 June 2001)	39	Researcher provides support	<b>SUPPORT</b>
<i>"We held a workshop. What a success! I think the knowledge is firmly cemented."</i> (July 2001)	67	Present knowledge to foundation phase teachers	<b>KNOWLEDGE</b>

## **APPENDIX C**

EXAMPLES OF RAW DATA IN SEMANTIC UNITS	CODING PROCESS	CODED THEMES – CLUSTERING	CATEGORIES
<b>RESPONDENT 1</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Reading time – 30 mins.</i></li> <li>• Print in environment</li> <li>• Arranged room – reading writing/corners</li> <li>• Used school library</li> <li>• Deviated from regular approach</li> </ul>	64 56 53 54 29	Reading daily Immersed in print Trs change classroom School library used Trs expressed need for change	<b>READING</b> <b>PRACTICE</b> <b>CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT</b> <b>READING</b> <b>SOCIAL CONTEXT</b>
<b>RESPONDENT 2</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading and writing daily</li> <li>• Storytelling regularly</li> <li>• Everything revolves around conversation</li> <li>• Working in groups</li> <li>• Print in the environment</li> <li>• Extensive use of public and school libraries</li> <li>• Planning with other trs</li> <li>• Changed time-table</li> </ul>	64 64 67 65 56 65 30 69	Reading daily Reading daily Tr observes change Co-operative learning Immersed in print School library used effectively Time-table changed Trs integrate areas of learning	READING READING SUCCESS EXPERIENCE SUPPORT PRACTICE READING SUPPORT CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT
<b>RESPONDENT 3</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading daily</li> <li>• Used storytelling</li> <li>• Grammar lessons in context</li> <li>• Spelling in context</li> <li>• Print all over</li> </ul>	64 64 83 83 30	Reading daily Reading daily Trs plan together Trs plan together Timetable changed	READING READING SUPPORT SUPPORT CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

## **APPENDIX D**

NAME: Learner 2  
DATE: 11 September 2007

READ THE QUESTIONS CAREFULLY.

PUT A CIRCLE AROUND THE ANSWER. THERE MAY BE MORE THAN ONE CIRCLE AROUND SOME ANSWERS.

IF YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE QUESTION, PLEASE ASK FOR HELP.

1. Do you like to read?

Yes      No      Sometimes

2. Do you have difficulty reading?

Yes      No       Sometimes

3. If you have difficulty reading, is it because ...

You do not know the words;

You do not understand what it is about (understand the topic).

4. When you do not know a word, do you ...

Ask some who knows;

Look for clues;

Leave the word out and continue reading;

Use a dictionary.

5. When do you read?

Everyday

At night

Once a week

Over the weekend

Never

6. Where do you read?

At school

At home

At church

7. When you read, do you

Read alone

Read with a parent (mommy or daddy)

Read with a brother or sister.

8. Do you like books with ....

Only print (words) and no pictures

Lots of pictures and few words

Few pictures and lots of words

Only pictures

9. What types of books do you like

Fiction

Non-fiction.

10. Do you read...

Aloud (voice only)

Aloud and sign.

Sign only

Silently

11. Do you read for ....

Pleasure/enjoyment

Information

Because my teacher says so

Because my parents make me

12. What do you read?

Newspaper

Magazines

Comics

School reading book

Library books

Short stories

Novels

13. Do you like to read stories...

About people

That make you laugh

That frighten you

Make you happy

About things you have seen

You have heard before

Make you sad

For information

From picture books

From tradition

From poems

About magic / fantasy

About space  
From television  
From fairytales  
About mysteries

14. Do you like books where there are signs?

Yes      No      **Sometimes**

15. Do you think the signs help you?

Yes      No      **Sometimes**

16. Do you like books where you can tell what will happen next (predict)

**Yes**      No      Sometimes

17. How many books do you read in a month?

.....**five**.....books

18. Do you belong to a library?

Yes      **No**

19. Are there books, magazines, newspapers, comics, etc. in your home?

**Yes**      No

20. Who reads in your family?

.....**Mommy and Daddy**.....

21. Do you think you should read? Why?

.....**Yes, because to enjoy reading,**.....  
.....**to make me laugh,**.....  
.....**reading will help me pass,**.....  
.....

NAME: Learner 1

DATE: 10/9/01

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READ THE QUESTIONS CAREFULLY.

PUT A CIRCLE AROUND THE ANSWER. THERE MAY BE MORE THAN ONE CIRCLE AROUND SOME ANSWERS.

IF YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE QUESTION, PLEASE ASK FOR HELP.

1. Do you like to write?

Yes

No

Sometimes

2. Do you have difficulty with writing?

Yes

No

Sometimes

3. If you have difficulty with writing, is it because...

You do not know how to spell ✓

You do not know about the topic ✓

You cannot write it in English

You are afraid to make mistakes

4. When you do not know how to write something, do you

Ask someone who knows

Use a dictionary

Change your sentence ✓

Leave it out

5. When do you write?

Everyday ✓

At night

Once a week

Over the weekend

Never

6. Where do you write?

At school ✓

At home

At church

7. When you write, do you ...

Write alone ✓

Write with a friend in class

Write with your parent

Write with a brother or sister

8. Do you like to write about .....

- The things you have done (experienced)
- The things other people have done (experienced)
- The things you have read in books or magazines ✓

9. Do you write for ...

- Enjoyment ✓
- To entertain others
- To talk about your feelings
- To give information ✓
- To ask (make requests)
- To tell how to do something (instruct)
- To thank someone

10. Do you like to write...

- Short stories
- Letters ✓
- Notes ✓
- Advertisement
- Cards ✓
- Recipe

11. To whom do you like to write?

- Your parents
- Your teacher ✓
- Teachers in the school ✓
- Classmates
- Your family
- The principal
- Other children

12. Before you begin writing, what do you do?

think  
Word map  
Write

Write the order in which you do your writing.

13. When you have finished writing, do you....

- Read over your work ✓
- Hand it the work without checking
- Rewrite the story after checking for mistakes.

14. Are you afraid to make mistakes in your writing?

Yes      No      Sometimes

15. Do you use the information from the themes in your writing?

Yes      No      Sometimes

16. Who writes at home?

Sister and mommy.....

17. Does signing help you with your writing?

Yes      No      Sometimes

18. When you know the sign, do you know the English word?

Yes      No      Sometimes

19. Do you think you should learn to write? Why?

yes, to study.....  
yes, to pass.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

## **APPENDIX E**

## A LIST OF CODES AND THEMES THAT EMERGED DURING DATA ANALYSIS

01. Programme and curriculum planning in the Outcome based philosophy.
02. Theme work, the same in all grades.
03. Language and the needs of the Deaf learner.
04. School system, H.G.D. organization.
05. Teachers working in groups.
06. Teachers not meeting with other teachers of the Deaf in other schools.
07. Variety of Deaf learners (pre-lingual, post-lingual).
08. Oralism and the Deaf learner.
09. School philosophy.
10. Traditional teaching approaches.
11. Introducing Total Communication as a modality for medium of instruction.
12. Hearing teachers and signing in Total Communication.
13. Sign Language a natural language.
14. Sign Language for conceptualization.
15. Problems in Literacy with the Deaf learner.
16. Teachers expressed the need for change.
17. Teachers read material on the Whole Language approach.
18. Specialized teaching for Deaf learners.
19. The lack of parental involvement.
20. Teachers' perceptions of the complexities of deaf teaching.
21. Teachers request books on the Whole Language approach and Deaf learners.
22. School structure and policies -language medium, modality, etc.
23. Parents unable to communicate with Deaf learners.
24. Lack of a language programme throughout the school.
25. Speech therapist mentions the need for language development and intervention.
26. Teachers and researchers collaborate to implement the Whole Language approach.
27. Researcher facilitates teacher's exposure to the Whole Language approach.
28. Teachers query suitability of Whole Language for their learners.
29. Teachers express fears for the change.
30. Teachers fear the change in the timetable and curriculum.
31. Teachers support one another in the initial steps of the implementation of the Whole Language approach.
32. Deaf learners respond by questioning throughout the storytelling.
33. Teachers introduce theme cycles in the Whole Language approach.
34. Learners experience difficulty in working collaboratively and independently.
35. Learners interact with each other.
36. Learners interact with books in the Whole Language approach.
37. Researcher provides suitable material on language structure (grammar) and spelling for the Deaf in the Whole Language approach.
38. Concern about language structure and the need to be taught deliberately.
39. Researcher provided support for the worries in deaf teaching.
40. Whole Language reading practice introduced.
41. Whole Language writing practice introduced.
42. Teachers support each other during the change.
43. Difficulty in choosing suitable material for learners.
44. Teachers use Sign Language in the Whole Language approach.
45. Teachers and researcher support each other during the implementation of the Whole Language approach.
46. Concern about C2005/OBE and the Whole Language approach.
47. OBE and the Whole Language philosophy.
48. Assessment in OBE and the Whole Language approach.
49. Teachers feel empowered in the Whole Language approach.
50. Teachers receive positive responses from Deaf Learners.

51. Teachers enthusiastic about the Whole Language approach.
52. Change in seating of Deaf learners.
53. Teachers change classroom environment.
54. School library is utilized effectively.
55. Parents assist in enrolment of learners at public libraries.
56. Teachers immerse the classroom in print.
57. Teachers concerned about the learners being weak in language.
58. Teachers believe in Whole Language principles.
59. Teachers gain confidence in the implementation of the Whole Language approach.
60. Teachers shift from traditional to constructivistic approach.
61. Teachers trust, support and collaborate with one another.
62. Teachers feedback on learners' reading.
63. Teachers introduce a reading period daily.
64. Teachers observe learners engage in co-operative learning.
65. Teachers keep basal reading programme in the Whole Language approach.
66. Teachers observe learners' enthusiasm for writing.
67. Learners' reading improves but still delayed.
68. Teachers experience difficulty in integrating all subjects/learning areas in theme cycles.
69. Whole Language and assessments.
70. Teachers isolated from other teachers.
71. Learners language difficulties affect the writing process - editing.
72. Learners respond to reading and written language tasks with confidence.
73. Spelling integrated with Whole Language.
74. Teachers and learners select suitable themes.
75. Teachers support the Whole Language approach.
76. Teachers accept the beliefs, principles and practice of the Whole Language approach.
77. Teachers motivated to continue with the Whole Language approach.
78. Parents responded positively to the Whole Language approach.
79. Teachers expressed a need for a Whole Language approach.
80. Reading material assists in the Whole Language methods.
81. Teachers and researcher build a trusting relationship.
82. Teacher and researcher present the Whole Language approach workshop to Foundation Phase teachers.
83. Teachers plan together for the Whole Language practice (methods).
84. Teacher apply the Whole Language approach the conversation.
85. Teachers integrate language structure (syntax) in context in the Whole Language approach.
86. Teachers implement all aspects of the Whole Language methods.
87. Learners take risks in all areas of language.
88. Teachers report positive responses from learners in writing activities.
89. Teachers receive positive reinforcement.
90. Learners are confident.
91. Teachers take risks in the Whole Language approach.
92. Teachers suggest Whole Language implementation for Pre-school.
93. The teachers request reading material especially Whole Language methods for Deaf learners.
94. Atmosphere and a caring classroom in Whole Language programme.
95. Learners show respect and trust to one another.
96. Basal readers in conflict with Whole Language reading principles.
97. Basal reading programme and Deaf readers need basic vocabulary.
98. Lack of structure in the Whole Language approach.
99. Reading material for learners that was interesting and age appropriate.
100. Support offered to Foundation and Intermediate Phase teachers - management.
101. Support from all Foundation and Intermediate phase teachers.
102. A request to implement the Whole Language approach to the whole school.

## **A LIST OF CATEGORIES BASED ON THE CODES AND THEMES**

### **CATEGORY: MANAGEMENT**

- 01. Programme and curriculum planning in OBE philosophy
- 30. Teachers fear change in the time-table and curriculum.
- 48. Assessment in OBE and the Whole Language approach
- 52. Teachers change seating arrangement of the Deaf learners.
- 53. Teachers change classroom environment.
- 56. Teachers immerse classrooms in print.
- 69. The Whole Language approach and assessment.
- 83. Teachers plan together for the Whole Language approach.
- 94. Atmosphere and caring classroom in the Whole Language approach.
- 96. Basal readers in conflict with the Whole Language approach.
- 97. Basal reading programme and Deaf readers need basic vocabulary.

### **CATEGORY: WHOLE LANGUAGE AND THE DEAF LEARNER**

- 03. Language and, the needs of the Deaf learner.
- 07. Variety of Deaf learners and language levels.
- 15. Problems in Literacy with Deaf learners.
- 18. Specialized teaching for Deaf learners.
- 20. Teachers' perceptions of the complexities of deaf teaching and Whole Language.
- 28. Teachers query suitability of Whole Language for their learners
- 51. Teachers enthusiastic about the Whole Language approach.
- 57. Teachers concerned about weak learners and language in Whole Language approach.
- 77. Teachers motivated to continue with the Whole Language approach.
- 84. Teachers apply the Whole Language approach.
- 87. Learners take risk in all areas of language.
- 88. Teachers receive positive feedback of receptive and expressive language performance.

### **CATEGORY: TEACHING PRACTICE**

- 43. Difficulty choosing suitable material for learners.
- 44. Teachers observe learners engage in co-operative learning.
- 52. Teachers change seating arrangement of Deaf learners.
- 53. Teachers change classroom environment.
- 56. Teachers immerse the classroom in print.
- 70. The Whole Language approach and assessments.
- 84. Teachers apply the Whole Language approach to conversation.
- 85. Teachers implement all aspects of the Whole Language approach.
- 91. Teachers take risk in the Whole Language approach.
- 94. Atmosphere and a caring classroom in the Whole Language programme.

### **CATEGORY: SOCIAL CONTEXT-SCHOOL, COMMUNITY & PARENTS**

- 04. The school system and H.O.D. organisation.
- 05. Teachers working in groups.
- 06. Teachers not meeting with other teachers of the Deaf in other schools.
- 08. Oralism and the Deaf learners.
- 09. School philosophy.
- 11. Introduce Total Communication as a modality for medium of instruction.
- 12. Hearing teachers and signing in Total Communication.
- 19. Lack of parental involvement and support.
- 21. School structure and policies - language modality and medium of instruction.

- 23. Parents unable to communicate with learners.
- 24. Lack of language programme throughout the school.
- 29. Teachers express fear of change.
- 45. Concern about C2005/OBE and the Whole Language approach.
- 46. OBE and Whole Language philosophies.
- 54. Parents assist; in the enrolment of learners at public libraries.
- 70. Teachers isolated from other teachers.
- 92. Teachers suggest the Whole Language approach, implementation for the Pre-school level.
- 100. Support from the management of the school.
- 102. A request to implement the Whole Language approach to whole school.

### **CATEGORY: TEACHERS' BELIEFS**

- 49. Teachers feel empowered in the Whole Language philosophy.
- 58. Teachers believe in Whole Language principles.
- 59. Teachers gain confidence in implementation of the Whole Language approach.
- 60. Teachers shift from traditional to constructivistic approach.
- 75. Teachers support the Whole Language philosophy.
- 77. Teachers motivated to continue with the Whole Language approach.
- 98. Lack of structure in the Whole Language approach.

### **CATEGORY: THEORY AND KNOWLEDGE**

- 17. Teachers read material about the Whole Language approach.
- 22. Teachers request books on the Whole Language approach and Deaf learners.
- 26. Teachers and researcher collaborate to implement Whole Language approach.
- 27. Researcher facilitates teachers' exposure to the Whole Language approach.
- 37. Researcher provides suitable material on language structure and spelling for Deaf learners in the Whole Language approach.
- 76. Teachers accept beliefs, principles and practice of Whole Language approach.
- 93. Teachers request more reading material on Whole Language approach and Deaf Learners.

### **CATEGORY: READING**

- 36. Learners interact with books in the Whole Language approach.
- 40. Whole Language reading practice introduced.
- 54. School libraries utilized effectively.
- 62. Teachers feedback on learners' reading.
- 63. Teachers introduce reading period daily.
- 65. Teachers keep basal reading programme in the Whole Language approach.
- 67. Learners' reading improve but still delayed.
- 80. Reading material to assist in the Whole Language approach.

### **CATEGORY: WRITING**

- 41. Whole Language writing practice introduced.
- 66. Teachers observe learners' enthusiasm for writing.
- 71. Learners' language difficulties affect the writing process - editing.
- 72. Learners respond to reading and writing language tasks with confidence.
- 73. Spelling integrated with the Whole Language approach.
- 85. Teachers integrate language structure (syntax) in context of the Whole Language approach.
- 88. Teachers report positive responses from learners in writing.

### **CATEGORY: THEME CYCLES**

- 02. Theme work, the same in all grades.
- 33. Teachers introduce theme cycles in the Whole Language approach.
- 68. Teachers experience difficulty in integrating all subjects/learning areas in theme cycles.

- 74. Teachers and learners select suitable themes.
- 99. Reading material selected for the learners that was interesting and age appropriate.

#### **CATEGORY: SUPPORT**

- 31. Teachers support one another in the initial steps of implementing the Whole Language approach.
- 39. Researcher provided support for worries of deaf teaching.
- 42. Teachers support one another during the change.
- 45. Teachers and researcher support during the Whole Language approach, implementation.
- 78. Parents respond positively to WL approach.
- 78. Teachers express a need for a WL support system.
- 100. Support offered to Foundation and Intermediate teachers.
- 101. Support from all Foundation and Intermediate phase teachers.

#### **CATEGORY: COLLABORATION**

- 16. Teachers express a need for change.
- 61. Teachers trust, support and collaborate with one another.
- 62. Teachers and researcher present the Whole Language approach workshop to Foundation phase teachers.

#### **CATEGORY: TRUST**

- 81. Teachers build trusting relationship with researcher.
- 95. Learners show respect and trust to one another.

#### **CATEGORY: ACHIEVEMENTS AND REWARDS**

- 32. Deaf learners respond to questioning throughout storytelling.
- 50. Teachers receive positive responses from Deaf learner.
- 90. Learners are confident.

#### **CATEGORY: INFORMATION**

- 07. Variety of Deaf learners (pre-lingual, post-lingual).
- 25. Speech therapist mentions the need for language development and intervention.

#### **CATEGORY: SIGN LANGUAGE**

- 13. Sign Language a natural language.
- 14. Sign Language for conceptualization.
- 44. Teachers use Sign Language in the Whole Language approach.

## **APPENDIX F**

## Dialogue Journal

13:08:01

On Friday I went to Goudini Spa. Mommy, Daddy, Thakirah and Ravi all went in our kombi. We drove over a mountain. The kombi shake. I am afraid. Mommy say "Don't worry". We stay at Goudini Spa.

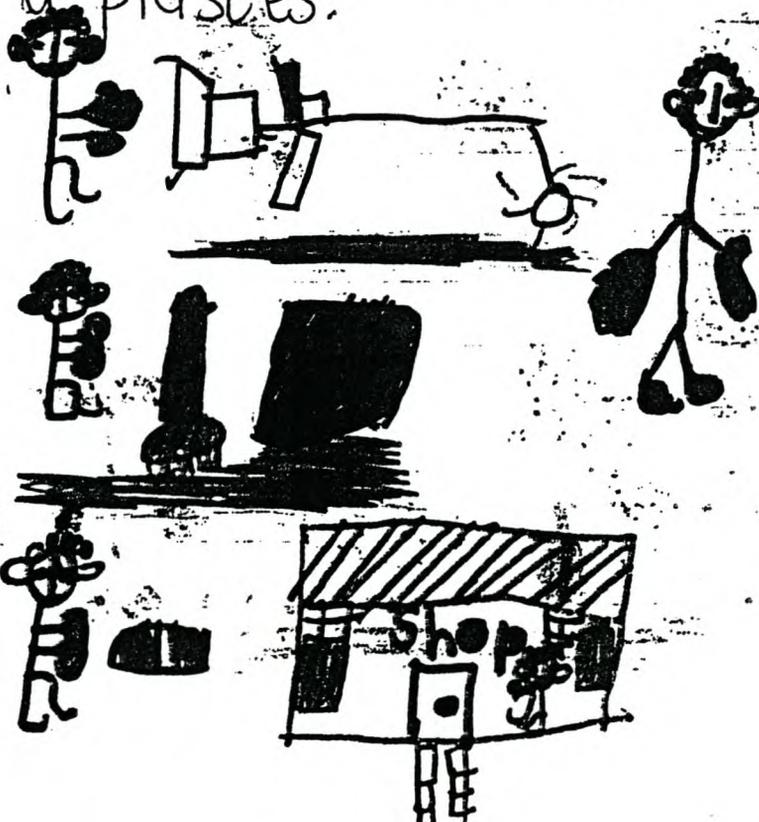
On Sunday at two o'clock we leave the chalet. I ride my bicycle, play tennis, rollerblade and swim at Goudini Spa. I am tired. I enjoy myself.

Why did you go to Goudini Spa? I've not been to this place. Does it have a hot spring? I like hot springs because the hot water relaxes me. By the way, why were you afraid in the kombi?

We go to Goudini Spa because it was Mommy's birthday. Mommy was tired. She wanted to rest. Yes, there is a hot spring. I don't like it. It makes me hot. I was afraid. The wind blow strong on the mountain. Car Shake.

Saturday 6 July 2001

- 1 The garden man cut the grass.
- 2 I swept up the grass and put it in a bag.
- 3 I hurt my hand.
- 4 I went to the shop and buy a plastes.



Monday 15 July 2001

1. I stay home because rain and wet.
2. I played rugby in the sand.
3. I put away the bottles.
4. I off my sock is dirty.

