

# Teachers' Assessment Strategies for English Home Language Proficiency of Grade 1 Learners from Diverse Backgrounds

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## EDITORIAL DATES

Received: 01 September 2024

Revised: 25 February 2025

Accepted: 02 March 2025

Published: 17 April 2025

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DOI: 10.38140/ijer-2025.vol7.s1.11

**Abstract:** About two decades after the new post-apartheid curriculum was implemented, one of the most significant challenges facing South Africa's Department of Education is the provision of adequate support to teachers so that they may properly carry out assessments in the classroom. Teachers need assistance in using different techniques to meet the diverse learning goals of learners when assessing English HL (Home Language) for students from varied linguistic backgrounds. Furthermore, they should create and implement regular differentiated assessment strategies in their classrooms that will enhance learners' English HL comprehension abilities. This paper examines how Foundation Phase teachers assess learners from diverse backgrounds while learning English as a Second Language. It was conducted at a single school in an urban area within the King Cetshwayo District, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Qualitative data were collected from four purposefully selected teachers who teach Grade 1. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and observations. Data analysis was performed using thematic analysis. The findings of this paper reveal that teachers face challenges with assessing and using appropriate assessment techniques to support their learners and meet their learning needs. The paper concludes that CAPS (Curriculum and Assessment

Policy Statement) should provide clearer and more detailed policy guidance on the assessment of Grade 1 EHL skills. Additionally, the government should consider organising and administering continuous professional teacher development (CPTD) programmes to enable teachers, who were trained decades ago, to stay current on how to effectively assess EHL comprehension skills.

**Keywords:** English home language, assessment, foundation phase, diverse language backgrounds, grade one learners.

## 1. Introduction

Assessment plays an important role in the foundation phase, helping educators refine their strategies to support student development. While various studies (Cheng & Fox, 2017; Govender, 2019; Kanjee, 2020; Alonzo, 2021; Asamoah, 2023) have explored general assessment methods, little research has focused on how Grade 1 teachers assess the comprehension skills of non-native English learners who are taught English as a home language. In the foundation phase, learners are expected to have basic proficiency in their home language to comprehend, listen, and follow instructions (Gardner, 2016). However, most children are introduced to a language of learning and teaching (LoLT) that differs from their mother tongue, requiring teachers to adapt their assessment strategies accordingly (Pretorius & Murray, 2023).

This paper examines the assessment strategies used by Grade 1 teachers working with linguistically diverse learners who begin school unable to read English texts. Research suggests that language difficulties impact reading, writing, and comprehension (Capin et al., 2022), making effective assessment crucial. Since most parents are enrolling their children in English-medium schools despite speaking different home languages (Aunio et al., 2019), teachers should be equipped with appropriate assessment skills and culturally responsive methods. By addressing these challenges,

## How to cite this article:

Mtshali, Z., & Masonto, R. X. (2025). Teachers' assessment strategies for English Home language proficiency of grade 1 learners from diverse backgrounds. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Education Research*, 7(s1), a11. <https://doi.org/10.38140/ijer-2025.vol7.s1.11>

this paper contributes to foundation phase research, emphasising the need for inclusive assessment practices that support diverse learners.

### **1.1 Statement problem**

Assessment is seen as an important process for both learning and teaching and is a regular part of classroom activities. In a diverse nation like South Africa, where there are numerous official languages, assessing English Home Language (HL) may be a challenging endeavour. English is also listed as one of the official languages in the country and is taught in many schools as a HL or First Additional Language (FAL). English FAL is intended for learners whose mother tongue is not English. It focuses on teaching learners essential language skills such as reading, writing, and speaking to enable effective communication in English (Pretorius & Murray, 2023).

While Kumator (2017) states that teachers perceive classroom assessment as solely for the purpose of accumulating marks and not for enhancing and improving teaching and learning, Stiggins (2017) argues that teachers continue to hold extremely strong teacher-centred views of assessment, which contradict an outcomes-based assessment system. This is also supported by Heritage (2021), who highlights that most teachers view assessment as just a series of assessments rather than a continuous process used to support learning. For foundation phase teachers, assessing Grade 1 learners from various linguistic backgrounds appears to be a challenge. Additionally, to avoid impeding the growth of the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT), learners who arrive at school unable to speak the LoLT or the FAL should start by mastering the language skills in the LoLT before concentrating on the FAL. The Department of Basic Education (DBE) formulated these arrangements to aid any learner in this situation. Learners in such circumstances will have to undergo customised assessments aimed at affording them the skills similar to those who arrive at school with some familiarity with both the LoLT and FAL.

A learner's level of English proficiency should also be taken into consideration when designing assessment materials, as illegible texts will only be used to assess the learner's lack of vocabulary skills. The assessment techniques used in the foundation phase do not appear to produce favourable results in the three key areas of focus: (1) listening and speaking, (2) reading and phonics, and (3) writing and handwriting. Within this context, the department states that the assessment of home language proficiency ought to deliver language competence that incorporates both the basic academic and interpersonal skills of communication required for learning across the curriculum, with a focus on teaching language proficiency skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. As a result, it is urged that the emphasis be placed on methods of assessment that may assist learners in comprehending the content they are being taught in an LoLT they initially found difficult.

#### ***1.1.1 Purpose of the study and research questions***

This paper aimed to explore the strategies and methods used by grade one teachers to assess English as a home language taught to learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds to determine how these methods may be improved. This paper specifically sought to respond to the research question: What types of approaches do teachers in FP employ when assessing English home language comprehension in learners with various linguistic backgrounds?

## **2. Literature Review**

Assessing English Home Language proficiency in Grade One students from various linguistic backgrounds necessitates a complex approach that uses both formative and summative measures. While traditional assessment methods are designed to measure outcomes, they frequently fail to account for linguistic variety and young learners' diverse literacy experiences. Teachers face the challenge of delivering equitable assessments that reflect learners' actual language abilities rather than their performance under standardised conditions. Shah and Chand (2017) discuss the challenges

teachers encounter in primary education assessment, such as insufficient training and an inflexible curriculum that does not accommodate diverse learners. These restrictions raise questions about whether existing assessment methods accurately reflect a learner's linguistic development. One argument against strict assessment methods is their inability to meet the needs of multilingual learners.

Guo and Yan (2019) underline how learners' perceptions of assessment significantly impact their learning outcomes. If assessments fail to engage learners or make them feel alienated due to linguistic disparities, their proficiency growth is likely to suffer. This indicates that standard assessment methods, which often prioritise summative assessment, may not be as effective in diverse classrooms. Instead, DeLuca, Holden, and Rickey (2024) argue that formative assessment methods such as continuous feedback, peer interactions, and storytelling promote a more inclusive and accurate assessment of learners' language skills. These methods enable teachers to dynamically assess progress rather than rely on static, high-stakes assessments.

Despite the benefits of formative assessment, some teachers still depend on summative assessments due to institutional expectations and accountability demands. Hopfenbeck (2018) criticises the overreliance on standardised assessments, claiming that they do not accurately reflect a learner's linguistic skills, particularly in early schooling. While summative assessments are crucial for assessing general competency, they should not be prioritised over formative strategies, which provide more in-depth insights into learners' language acquisition processes. Mogboh and Okoye (2019) support this claim by demonstrating how formative assessment trends, such as classroom-based observations and personalised feedback, improve language learning, especially for young learners who have varying degrees of English exposure at home.

Assessment culture in schools complicates the efficacy of teachers' initiatives. According to Adie, Addison, and Lingard (2021), a limited assessment culture prioritises tests over learning, restricting teachers' capacity to employ new methods. Schools that promote collaborative assessment, on the other hand, allow teachers to fine-tune their techniques to better meet the needs of their learners. Raudiene (2021) supports this argument by stating that teachers who view assessment as an opportunity for learning rather than merely grading are more likely to use flexible, learner-centred techniques. However, institutional reluctance to change often drives educators to rely on outdated assessment models, even when they recognise their flaws.

While these issues persist, novel classroom assessment approaches are emerging as possible alternatives. DeLuca et al. (2024) demonstrate how digital tools and gamified assessments generate engaging and customisable methods for measuring learners' language proficiency. Teachers should avoid high-pressure testing conditions by incorporating assessment into daily learning activities, creating a space where learners can organically showcase their language abilities. Similarly, Raudiene (2021) contends that cultivating a learning-oriented assessment culture enhances language proficiency outcomes by allowing learners to be assessed in a manner that reflects their actual communication skills rather than their test-taking abilities. The debates over how to best measure English Home Language ability in diverse classrooms boil down to whether assessment is a tool for learning or a mechanism for judgment.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

This paper adopts Bronfenbrenner's systems theory, which identifies five systems in the ecosystem: micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chronosystems. This theory analyses how a child develops within the context of the social network that surrounds them. In this study, for a teacher to assess a learner effectively, they must be familiar with the various levels in that learner's life, as each layer contributes to the child's growth and literacy level. According to Bronfenbrenner's theory, there are several "layers" of the environment, each of which affects how a child develops (Landsberg et al., 2016). The

child's growth is accelerated and guided by the interaction of factors in their developing biology, the people closest to them, and the sociocultural environment. Changes or conflicts in one layer will impact the other levels. When examining a child's development, it is essential to consider not only the child and their immediate surroundings but also how those factors interact with the larger environment (Ryan, 2001). Bronfenbrenner (1979:21) defines an ecosystem as the active individual whose life is impacted, either directly or indirectly, by the relationships between the systems. Since these systems or settings (whether direct or indirect) impact an individual, that person is constantly evolving through their behaviours and responses in the ever-shifting ecosystems.

**The Microsystem:** The immediate environment that an individual is placed in is known as the microsystem. Here, they learn about their place in society, their function within it, and other life skills (Ryan, 2001). The relationships and interactions that learners have with their immediate setting are incorporated into the microsystem. The family, school, neighbourhood, and daycare environments represent the different structures that exist within the microsystem. Relations at the microsystem level can impact the learner both positively and negatively. A child's ideas and behaviour can be influenced by his or her parents, and vice versa (Landsberg et al., 2016). When listening to a familiar language in a microsystem setting, people can perceptually distinguish speech sound sequences and reconstruct them to form meaning (Botha, 2022; Landsberg et al., 2005). Therefore, learners who are taught in English require this assistance as they progress in their language learning journey. According to Cummins (2000), it is the teachers' responsibility to teach their learners to respect their shared linguistic identity and cultural knowledge. Teachers should apply this knowledge in a way that encourages learners to produce literary works and works of art, develop new innovative skills, and learn how to respond to social situations that affect them. For the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) to be effective, teachers must socially design their teachings. By treating their learners holistically and utilising the resources at their disposal, teachers enable learners to form meaningful relationships between their families and schools, which facilitates assessment (De Oliveira & Yough, 2015).

**The Mesosystem:** The mesosystem level links the structures of the child's microsystem. Consider the bond involving a child's teacher and his or her parents. To understand the learners and be able to teach and assess EHL based on their level of language proficiency, teachers need background information on their learners through collaboration with parents (Ryan, 2001).

**The exosystem:** The exosystem describes the larger social system that excludes the child. The structures in this layer influence the child's development by interacting with the microsystem surrounding the child (Ryan, 2001). For instance, the work hours of parents or caregivers are included in this layer. Although the child is not directly involved at this stage, he or she senses the implications, whether positive or negative (Ryan, 2001). The exosystem does not require the active engagement of an individual; rather, it involves people who are directly or indirectly connected to the child and can still influence the learner's environment. Changes in the education system, for example, may impact a learner who has no direct connection to anyone within that system (Landsberg et al., 2016). The exosystem can still affect the child's immediate surroundings, including social issues. Moreover, the exosystem can influence the child's environment, such as social dynamics within the family or the child's ability to gain recognition in settings where they have not yet been exposed, including changes in the educational system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

**The macrosystem:** The word "macrosystem" refers to a system that might be viewed as the top layer of the child's environment. This layer lacks a well-defined structure and is composed of cultural beliefs, laws, and behaviours (Chang, 2008). The influence of the larger macrosystem-established principles cascades into the relationships among each level. In this regard, if a culture believes that parents ought to be solely responsible for parenting their children, it is unlikely to provide resources to assist parents. The ability or inability of the parents to fulfil this commitment to their children

depends on the child's microsystem. In South African communities, when chances for individuals are provided in the governmental, economic, and social territories, the macrosystem has a significant influence on parents (Datta, 2000). Because of this, parents seem to be optimistic (Chang, 2008) that their children's ability to communicate in English will ensure a successful career. This is why they believe that teaching English to their children at a young age will improve their learning outcomes (Botha, 2022). Parents are crucial in supporting their children's language acquisition. In order to help their children's language development, parents are essential. Caregivers must realise that using the child's native tongue does not negate the importance of English as the primary language of instruction or replace it. Teachers should urge parents to continue communicating with their children in their mother tongue because it is easier to transfer into another language when the mother tongue has fully developed (Cummins, 2000). In fact, caregivers' frequent use of the mother tongue can help their children continue to improve their English while preserving customs and family heritage (Goldenberg et al., 2013; Botha, 2022).

**The chronosystem:** The chronosystem layer provides a summary of how time functions in a child's surroundings. This system's components can be internal – such as physiological changes brought on by a child's aging – or external – such as the date of a parent's passing. As children grow older, they may respond uniquely to changes in their surroundings and develop greater prediction skills (Ryan, 2001). Teachers need to gather information on these elements to structure teaching and assessment strategies according to each child.

4. Methodology

A qualitative case study research design was employed, involving one primary school in Empangeni, King Cetshwayo district, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The school was specifically selected due to its location in an area with a wide variety of linguistic backgrounds, making it suitable for this study. A case study design was chosen because it is detailed, descriptive, explorative, and aligned with the study's nature and goals. Consequently, the qualitative or interpretative case study approach aimed to enable the researcher to collect comprehensive information from foundation phase teachers of English Home Language (EHL). According to Hancock et al. (2021), when generating data in a case study, one explores a single topic in depth, regardless of the number of respondents. In case studies, researchers investigate (Maree, 2016) and track participants concerning a specific circumstance (Cohen et al., 2018), facilitating an in-depth understanding of the topic (Maree, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018). By focusing on the assessment challenges encountered by foundation phase English Home Language teachers with linguistically diverse learners, this study aimed to provide deeper insights into their practices and experiences in assessing EHL comprehension skills.

This study was conducted in one primary school with isiZulu native learners. Grade one teachers were deliberately selected for the study because they possess the skills, experiences, and knowledge that could assist the researcher in answering the research question (Hennink et al., 2020). One of the unique aspects of this setting was the presence of teachers who were not native EHL speakers but taught Grade 1 EHL comprehension skills to learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds. The demographic data is presented in the table below.

Table 1: Demographic information

| Participants | Age | Gender | Place of birth              | Native language | Qualifications                            | Teaching Experience |
|--------------|-----|--------|-----------------------------|-----------------|---|---------------------|
| PA 1         | 40  | Female | Johannesburg, South Africa  | isiZulu         | Bachelor of Education in Foundation Phase | 7                   |
| PA 2         | 33  | Female | Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa | isiZulu         | Bachelor of Education in Foundation Phase | 5                   |

|      |    |                 |       |   |    |
|------|----|-----------------|-------|---|----|
| PA 3 | 56 | Female Zimbabwe | Shona | Diploma and<br>Advanced Certificate<br>in Education | 16 |
| PA 4 | 54 | Female Malawi   | Tonga | Diploma in<br>Foundation Phase                      | 20 |

This paper used semi-structured interviews and class observation. Data analysis procedures included coding to generate themes from the collected data and transcribing recorded material. Individual teachers were given the opportunity to discuss their perspectives and exhibit assessment procedures for EHL comprehension skills to Grade One learners from varied language origins during the semi-structured interviews.

Semi-structured interviews are known for being ideal for studying questions and recognising the perspectives and explanations of participants on subjects under research (Adeoye-Olatunde et al., 2021). Following the fundamentals of qualitative data analysis, the raw data were analysed for emerging patterns (Male, 2016). As a result, throughout the early stages of this interpretive analysis, the researchers remained nearby and engaged with the data, escaping the urge to begin coding or jumping to extensive categorisations of the data as much as possible. Only when the researchers became acquainted with the data did they notice patterns. Specific phrases, words, and sentences served as examples; that is when the researchers began conducting a comprehensive analysis of tiny pieces of data based on the themes that greatly reflected the data collected. During this procedure, the researchers progressed from open coding, which entailed immersing themselves in the data set and detecting developing patterns, to axial coding, which entailed grouping distinct open codes into classes or groups that were then utilised to generate themes and concepts that are theoretical.

4.1 Ethical considerations

The rights of the participants and the integrity of the research process were safeguarded by addressing ethical concerns in this study. Informed consent and voluntary involvement were emphasised, with participants able to withdraw at any time. Pseudonyms were used to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, with only the researchers knowing the participants' real names. Participants were informed about the various components of the study to promote credibility, which also enhanced reliability. Authenticity was achieved using appropriate qualitative approaches to accurately capture the participants' experiences.

5. Results and Interpretation

The paper's goal was to investigate the methods teachers use when assessing EHL learners from various backgrounds. The following themes emerged: reading and writing require additional technical tools and strategies, drilling and modelling, and instant learner correction throughout the lesson.

5.1 Reading and writing require additional technical tools/strategies

‘Comprehension is not an easy task to teach.’ The study demonstrated additional ways to enhance learners' proficiency. Among these proposals was the inclusion of technology in teaching and learning. Throughout the interviews, participants highlighted that technology helped learners comprehend the topic. Furthermore, they claimed that teaching learners to acquire comprehension skills requires patience, as it is time-consuming. Participants mentioned that:

PA1: *Normally, I provide them a worksheet combined with images so they can try to fill in the letters that are missing in the word by identifying them. You may find children occasionally mix up letters, but before things become worse, I need to rectify them as their teacher.*

PA2: *I provide learners with workbooks that ask them to associate words with images. The fact that my learners are familiar with technology and frequently play games on their parents' smartphones is exciting.*

PA3: *I give them a few brief sentences in which to circle the weekly sound to be studied. The ones who were having trouble continue their task by attempting to figure out whether they can recognise the sound.*

PA4: *Usually, .... learners read a word by linking it to the picture on the board. Learners usually look at the picture before they associate the word.*

Livaccari (2013) argues that successful teaching approaches begin with an understanding of what information should be provided across all grades. This strategy can help learners who are unable to write or read. Furthermore, Young (2019) claims that guided reading techniques equip learners with comprehension skills. Once this is achieved, we believe it will provide learners with a clear understanding of a tale by allowing them to visualise it in their minds.

The passage from participant 2 emphasised the significance of technology in supporting learners to read while using their phones. The participant articulated her conviction that technology can considerably enhance learners' knowledge and comprehension. According to Bjekić, Obradović, Vučetić, and Bojović (2014), learners with significant reading impairments should receive special education services and additional instructional support, including assistive technology, to improve text-to-speech, speech-to-text, and spell-checking skills. Teachers ought to utilise technology in the classroom to break down cultural and linguistic barriers while also creating a conducive learning environment (Marcino, 2018). This is facilitated by culturally appropriate education, which emphasises teachers' efforts to help learners from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds uphold their own cultural standards rather than assimilate to dominant cultures (Yoon, 2007).

Culturally appropriate instructional techniques, therefore, outline how English language learners should be taught and assessed so that they are motivated to learn and succeed in the classroom, while considering learners' cultural and societal needs (Yoon, 2007). This approach inspires learners, as it reinforces their identities rather than isolating them from their cultural context as they learn a new language. Participants in this study universally agreed that one effective strategy for teaching oral skills is to emphasise techniques for teaching English HL skills as the primary focus. They stated that presenting such robust and effective tactics is necessary to connect English HL comprehension knowledge to practical methods, which would have a positive impact on the learning process. This instance highlights the potential of teaching English HL learners from a variety of backgrounds.

## 5.2 Drilling and modelling

'He and she. The learners' perspective on mastering English comprehension abilities is crucial. Drilling, according to PA1, PA2, PA3, and PA4, emphasises the need for practice, which is necessary for developing communicative skills. The researchers observed teachers making significant efforts in the classroom to model precise word pronunciation. They all spoke during their lessons, demonstrating the use of English HL comprehension skills so that learners could replicate them. The teachers functioned as role models for the learners, who were taught phonics in each of their lessons. Teachers repeated words to learners to ensure that they could hear and pronounce them correctly. The teachers then asked the learners to recite the words multiple times until they were confident that they understood them.

The learners' perspective on mastering English HL comprehension skills is crucial. Drilling, according to PA1, PA2, PA3, and PA4, emphasises the importance of practice, which is vital for success. Many researchers have highlighted the advantages of the bilingual method, claiming that teachers make conscious efforts to assist learners in improving their comprehension skills (Durga, 2018; Enama, 2016). The four participants highlighted:

PA1: *Since English is not their first language, my learners are unable to read it, yet they continue to require to be guided. For my Grade One learners, modelling and drilling are the most effective techniques because even pronunciation has to be achieved properly.*

PA2: *Yho, I use this to assist learners who are learning to read. For my younger learners, repetition is beneficial, so I offer them the opportunity to repeat a single word several times.*

PA3: *Oh no, this approach makes it easier for my learners to understand language. Additionally, their vocabulary grows as a result of practice.*

PA4: *Oh, it's difficult to say a lot regarding reflective image because every learner is different, but for me, drilling helps. Learners frequently mimic their teachers. While I was employing this technique, some learners came to me with a fresh word that had a similar sound. I was happy to observe that they had finally begun to comprehend.*

According to Matamoros-González, Rojas, Romero, Quionez, and Soto (2017), using accessible dialogues and complementary drills when teaching a new language is vital. It helps learners acquire language and practice rules through various drills. Learners develop a new form of linguistic competence, either overtly or implicitly, by listening, imitating, and completing skilled tasks. Participants in this study felt that discussions and drills were stimulating for their learners, who came from various language backgrounds. Teachers also expressed concerns about the lack of ongoing teacher development workshops and transparent teaching and assessment methodologies in CAPS papers for teaching English HL to Foundation Phase learners. They specifically indicated that they discovered available CAPS documentation. The teachers stated that, as non-native English speakers themselves, they felt the current CAPS documents and guidelines regarding the best teaching and assessment approaches for Foundation Phase English HL comprehension skills for non-native speakers of English were inadequate.

However, teachers said they tried their best, including improvising and adjusting where possible. They urged the DBE to issue clearer policies and detailed guidance on how to teach first-grade English HL comprehension skills, along with model lesson plans. According to Killen (2015), promoting interactions that enable opportunities to share novel ideas may be one way to motivate learners to learn effectively.

Indeed, interaction with others seems to enhance learners' comprehension skills. According to Mohammed and Amponsah (2018), learners who do not grasp essential English comprehension skills during the foundation phase are at risk of falling behind, both domestically and globally. The teachers in this study emphasised the importance of reading aloud to the class and repeating words, as this will improve learners' English comprehension at the HL level, making assessments easier. Hammond et al. (2020) reiterate the premise that teachers can teach learners a variety of methods and skills to help them strengthen their prior education through drilling.

### 5.3 Instant learner correction throughout the lesson

'Attention and participation promoted.' If done correctly, correcting learners while reading aligns with the need to provide them with compliments to boost their confidence. The study's participants agreed that active participation and attentive listening helped learners improve their English HL comprehension skills. The educators' perceptions on it were as follows:

PA1: *It is currently challenging for learners to demonstrate comprehension skills in English HL. Oh, definitely. For teachers to assist learners in learning ways for developing the abilities and knowledge necessary for efficient comprehension of reading texts, English HL comprehension skill development is required.*

PA2: *When learners receive peer correction, I may sometimes detect a development in their comprehension of the English language.*



PA3: *Correcting learners in the classroom helps them develop their understanding, pronunciation, and concentration. Some that are fast also correct the peer group member as I am correcting the others.*

PA4: *I normally correct them as I read because it makes it easier to spot the errors right away. Since you are aware, learners have to be corrected constantly even when they seem to be playing.*

When learners make spelling mistakes, the teacher might interrupt them and correct them directly, according to Fattah and Saidalvi (2019). Whenever learners have trouble understanding a word, the teacher says the word aloud, encouraging learners to practice listening to one another while reading. However, according to Murrirdza (2019), not all errors need to be fixed, as some result from the natural development of English HL comprehension abilities. Additionally, some corrections are determined by the objectives of the activities (Murrirdza, 2019). In fact, for some learners, receiving corrections frequently can be both distracting and discouraging.

In this paper, the teachers endorsed the idea that feedback and corrections are crucial, as they provide learners with an opportunity to demonstrate their progress while also boosting their motivation. Furthermore, the study's participants believed that approaches were needed to enhance their classes' training of English HL comprehension skills, such as correcting learners to improve their skills and fostering creativity. In this regard, the study's teachers agreed that learners' opportunities will expand once they acquire English HL comprehension skills. Klapwijk (2015) mentions the EMC technique as an active, planned instructional structure.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study explored the assessment strategies used by Grade One teachers to evaluate English Home Language (EHL) comprehension skills among learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds. The findings highlighted key challenges faced by teachers, including limited assessment techniques, inadequate training, and a lack of clear policy guidance from CAPS. Despite these challenges, teachers employed various strategies such as worksheets, technology integration, drilling and modelling, and immediate correction during lessons to enhance learners' comprehension skills. The study emphasises the need for more structured and inclusive assessment practices that cater to learners with different linguistic backgrounds. Teachers play a crucial role as facilitators of learning, and their ability to adapt assessment methods directly influences learners' success. Therefore, continuous professional teacher development (CPTD) programmes, updated policy guidelines, and technology-driven assessment approaches are essential for improving EHL assessment. The insights from this study can contribute to refining assessment methods and ensuring that all learners, regardless of their linguistic background, receive the necessary support to develop strong English comprehension skills.

The authors agree that these recommendations will significantly enhance teachers' skills and abilities in EHL assessment. These recommendations come from teachers, who are the actual implementers of the curriculum. They suggest:

- The DBE should collaborate with teachers to identify appropriate assessment methods for the foundation phase. Hosting frequent workshops that address specific issues learners face in developing phonemic awareness and reading would assist teachers in using the correct assessment methods for EHL learners from diverse backgrounds.
- CAPS should provide concise policy guidance on the assessment of Grade One EHL comprehension skills, incorporating the use of technology.
- The government should consider organising and administering continuous professional teacher development (CPTD) programmes to enable teachers who were trained decades ago to stay current with effective methods for assessing EHL comprehension skills.

- Teacher understanding of the value of adopting various assessment methods can promote classroom skills that lead to higher learner achievement.
- Teachers should design and regularly use effective and distinctive assessment approaches in their classrooms to enhance EHL comprehension abilities.
- A significant number of studies should be conducted to test the aforementioned assessment methods through experiments and surveys to determine which ones will improve comprehension skills and assist learners in acquiring the English language.

## 8. Declarations

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualisation (Z.M. & R.X.M.); Literature review (Z.M. & R.X.M.); methodology (Z.M. & R.X.M.); software (N/A); validation (Z.M. & R.X.M.); formal analysis (Z.M. & R.X.M.); investigation (Z.M. & R.X.M.); data curation (Z.M. & R.X.M.) drafting and preparation (Z.M. & R.X.M.); review and editing (Z.M. & R.X.M.); supervision (N/A); project administration (Z.M. & R.X.M.); funding acquisition (N/A). All authors have read and approved the published version of the article.

**Funding:** This research did not receive any external funding.

**Acknowledgements:** The Authors declare no acknowledgements.

**Conflict of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Data Availability:** The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. Access will be granted to researchers who meet the criteria for data sharing established by the institutional review board or ethics committee.

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