

Home Language versus First Additional Language Instruction: A Comparison of Grade 3 Rural Learners' Reading Comprehension in South Africa

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ABSTRACT This study seeks to investigate how the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) affects learners' reading comprehension. Two primary schools were chosen, one where the home language (IsiXhosa) was the medium of instruction from Grade one to three, with English as a taught subject or First Additional Language and another school where English (First Additional Language) was the medium of instruction from Grade one, with the home language (IsiXhosa) as a taught language were purposively selected for this study. An English language reading comprehension test and IsiXhosa reading comprehension test were administered to 95 Grade 3 learners from the two schools. A t-test was used in this study to determine whether the reading comprehension mean scores of the two groups for both tests differed statistically significantly. The results indicated that there was a significant difference in IsiXhosa reading comprehension between learners in the two schools in favour of the learners who were taught in the mother tongue/ home language as medium of instruction. With regard to the English reading comprehension test, the results indicated that there was a significant difference in the reading comprehension scores in favour of the learners in a school where English was used as medium of instruction from Grade 1. This study concluded that learners perform better in reading comprehension test in the language that is used as medium of instruction irrespective of whether the language is a home language/mother tongue or First Additional language/second language.