

## #116. Prianka Parusnath

### Thesis link: Early Literacy development

#### Communication supporting environments of Grade R classrooms in a rural district of the Western Cape

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#### **Abstract:**

This study aims to describe the communication environment in Grade R classes in a rural district setting in the Western Cape in terms of language-learning environment; language-learning opportunities and language-learning interactions in order to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses. In addition to this, the study aims to explore the relationship between communication environments and school performance in a rural district in the Western Cape as well teacher and classroom variables. In order to do this, an observational tool, the Communication Supporting Classrooms Observational Tool, was used which allowed researchers to document what was happening in the classroom over the prescribed observation period (Dockrell, Bakopoulou, Law, & Spencer, 2010). Before this, the pilot phase of the study allowed researchers to train assistants to use the tool using video recordings as well as to ascertain the tool's applicability to South African classrooms with different languages of learning and teaching. A sample size of 60 classrooms was used in the main phase, consisting of 30 lower performing schools and 30 higher performing schools. The study included all regular learners and regular classroom teachers in the chosen Grade R classrooms in a rural/remote district. Overall, the outcomes of the pilot study were two-fold: (1) The researchers determined that the tool could be used reliably in classrooms where Afrikaans and isiXhosa were the language of instruction due to high inter-rater reliability measured by ICC; and (2) With sufficient training and practical examples, raters can be trained to use the tool effectively. In addition to these outcomes, the results of the pilot study allowed researchers to make useful choices for the main study. The study indicated that the tool was applicable in classrooms where Afrikaans and isiXhosa were the medium of instruction which allowed researchers to include these classrooms in the sample for the main study.

**Reference:** Parusnath, P. 2016. Communication supporting environments of Grade R classrooms in a rural district of the Western Cape. University of Cape Town

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**Full text:** [thesis\\_hsf\\_2016\\_parusnath\\_prianka.pdf](#)



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