An Examination of the Extent of English Language Support at Home and in School of Mauritian Primary School Children

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Abstract

Indicators of inequality in reading comprehension of Mauritian primary school children were reason to investigate the extent of children's language support at home and in school. A mixed-method design was used to do so. Private-aided ($n = 5$), public ($n = 1$) and ZEP ($n = 1$) schools were visited. Data was collected through questionnaires with parents ($n = 17$), children ($n = 286$) and teachers ($n = 23$). Interviews were held with headmasters and headmistresses ($n = 5$) and MIE students ($n = 4$). Lastly, classroom observations ($n = 8$) were held to investigate the amount of time English spoken in school. Language support occurred both at home and in school. The level of language support at home was considered "medium" for parents and children. High-SES parents scored higher on language support than low-SES parents. No differences in language support at home were found between ethnic groups. Language support in school varied from "medium" to "medium/high" for teachers and from "low/medium" to "medium/high" for children. No differences in language support in school were found between teachers at different school types. However, differences were found for children; language support in public schools was higher than in private-aided and ZEP schools. Language support consisted of routine activities (e.g. reading, storytelling), though there was a lack of exposure and English was not sufficiently spoken in school. Future research could focus on extending sample sizes and on the impact of media. Interventions could be developed to increase children's language support.

Keywords: Mauritian primary schools, reading comprehension, (oral) language development, (oral) language support, inequality

Samenvatting

Indicatoren van ongelijkheid in begrijpend lezen bij Mauritaanse basisschoolkinderen waren reden om de omvang van taalondersteuning van kinderen thuis en op school te onderzoeken. Een "mixed-method" ontwerp werd gebruikt om dit te doen. Privé-ondersteunde ($n = 5$),

openbare ($n = 1$) en ZEP-scholen ($n = 1$) werden bezocht. Gegevens werden verzameld via vragenlijsten met ouders ($n = 17$), kinderen ($n = 286$) en leerkrachten ($n = 23$). Interviews werden gehouden met schooldirecteuren ($n = 5$) en MIE-studenten ($n = 4$). Ook zijn er observaties in de klas ($n = 8$) gehouden om de hoeveelheid Engels die op school gesproken werd te onderzoeken. Taalondersteuning kwam thuis en op school voor. Taalondersteuning thuis werd als "gemiddeld" beschouwd voor ouders en kinderen. Hoge-SES ouders scoorden hoger op taalondersteuning dan lage-SES ouders. Er werden geen verschillen in taalondersteuning thuis gevonden tussen etnische groepen. Taalondersteuning op school varieerde van "gemiddeld" tot "gemiddeld/hoog" voor leraren en van "laag/gemiddeld" tot "gemiddeld/hoog" voor kinderen. Er werden geen verschillen gevonden in taalondersteuning op school tussen leerkrachten van verschillende schooltypen, maar wel voor kinderen. Voor kinderen was de taalondersteuning op openbare scholen hoger dan in privé-ondersteunde en ZEP-scholen. Taalondersteuning bestond uit routine activiteiten zoals lezen en verhalen vertellen, maar er was gebrek aan blootstelling aan de Engelse taal en er werd onvoldoende Engels gesproken op school. Toekomstig onderzoek kan zich richten op het uitbreiden van de steekproef en op de impact van media. Interventies kunnen ontwikkeld worden om de taalondersteuning van kinderen te vergroten.

Sleutelwoorden: Mauritaanse bassischolen, begrijpend lezen, (mondelinge) taalontwikkeling, (mondelinge) taalondersteuning, ongelijkheid

Examination of Language Support in Mauritius

Mauritius aims to become a "culture of achievement and excellence" (MECHR, 2009). Therefore, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources (MECHR) developed a strategy plan for 2008-2020 to transform Mauritius into an intelligent nation state (MECHR, 2009). In this plan, the importance of ensuring that all learners attain high levels of achievement in literacy is emphasized. One important element of literacy is reading comprehension, as reflected in Mauritius' national school curriculum (Ministry of Education, Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research, n.d.). Reading comprehension, in turn, has shown to be positively related to oral language skills (e.g. Nation & Snowling, 2004; Ouellette, 2006; Ricketts, Nation, & Bishop, 2007; Snow, 2002). This means that improving children's oral language skills, would help to improve their reading comprehension, which in turn would help to improve their literacy, this eventually would contribute to the development of an intelligent nation state. Accordingly, the aim of this research is to investigate whether, and how, children's oral language skills are supported in order to achieve Mauritius' goal.

Mauritius is an African island in the Indian Ocean located approximately 500 miles east of Madagascar (Morabito, Carosin, & Vandenbroeck, 2017). With an area of just over 700 square miles, Mauritius is densely populated with almost 1.3 million residents in 2017 (Soper, 2007; Statistics Mauritius, 2017). Mauritius has a history of colonisation; the Dutch were the first to establish a colony on the island, followed by the French and lastly by the British (Soper, 2007). The island gained independence in 1968 (Frankel, 2014). As a result of colonialism, which included slavery and indentured labour, Mauritius became a multi-ethnic society consisting of Asian, African and European cultural groups. These cultural groups can be divided into four diverse ethnic categories: Indians, Creoles (descendants of continental African slaves), Franco-Mauritians (French origin) and Sino-Mauritians (Chinese origin) (Soper, 2007).

Another result of the colonisation is linguistic diversity. Whereas most Mauritians have Creole as their first language, French is the dominant language of everyday interaction. However, English is the official language of state institutions (Bissoonauth, 2011). From the first year of primary school onwards, English is the main language of literacy and the only language through which content matter is mediated (Auleear Owodally, 2010). In addition, it also becomes the medium of instruction from the fourth year of primary school onwards (Auleear Owodally, 2010; Sonck, 2008). The importance of English is emphasized by the Ministry of Education, Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research

(MEHRTESR) to fully contribute to the development and progress of society (MEHRTESR, n.d.).

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is defined as "the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language" (Snow, 2002, p. 11). Children with higher levels of reading comprehension have consistently shown greater levels of academic success in primary and secondary school (Duncan et al., 2007; McClelland, Acock, & Morrison, 2006; Verhoeven, Van Leeuwe, & Vermeer, 2011). Reading comprehension contributes to academic success as most subjects across the school curriculum rely, to varying extents, on reading comprehension (Logan, Medford, Hughes, 2011).

As mentioned, many studies have highlighted the importance of oral language skills for acquiring reading comprehension (e.g. Nation & Snowling, 2004; Ouellette, 2006; Ricketts et al., 2007; Snow, 2002). Oral language skills (hereafter: language skills) refer to speaking and understanding the speech of other people (Hammill, 2004). Children's language skills contribute to their ability to learn in the classroom, interact with peers and consequently develop their reading comprehension (Snow et al., 2014). This is because it helps children connect what they know with the information presented in a text (Cain, Oakhill, & Bryant, 2004). Children who experience oral language difficulties commonly also experience reading comprehension difficulties (Nation, 2005). Research has indicated that especially children of parents with a low socioeconomic status (SES) demonstrate lower language skills (Calvo & Bialystok, 2014). Children who fall behind in their language skills are exposed to a higher risk for lower future employment prospects, which will perpetuate them in a cycle of disadvantage and poverty (Law, Charlton, & Asmussen, 2017).

Language Support through Interaction

Since language skills are important for academic achievement, these skills can be improved through support in various ways (hereafter: language support). According to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory (1986), there are both proximal and distal systems in which language skills can be supported through interaction between children and these systems. Proximal systems, environments that are close to the child, have more influence than distal systems, environments that are further away from the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Therefore, this research will focus on two main proximal systems that can support language skills: the home and the school (Hoff, 2006; Justice, Jiang, & Strasser, 2018; Zauche, Thul, Mahoney, & Stapel-Wax, 2016).

The first important proximal system for language support is the home (Hoff, 2006; Zauche et al., 2016). Parents provide their children with oral language experiences and can contribute to their oral language acquisition with routine learning activities, such as shared book reading, storytelling, teaching letters and numbers and visits to libraries (Burger, 2010; Hoff, 2006; Tamis-LeMonda & Rodriguez, 2008). For instance, several studies have shown that shared book reading is related to gains in children's oral language growth (Gonzalez et al., 2014; National Early Literacy Panel, 2008; Zauche et al., 2016). Such activities are characterized by language use that is rich in vocabulary, complex and informing sentences and interconnected talk, which is generally thought to support language skills (Baker, Vernon-Feagans & Family Life Project Investigators, 2015; Deckner, Adamson, & Bakeman, 2006; Hindman, Wasik, & Erhart, 2012). Therefore, it can be concluded that interaction in the home system is an important strategy in language support.

The school is the second important proximal system for language support (Justice et al., 2018). Existing research has indicated a relation between classroom and teacher factors and academic success (Chatterji, 2006; Pianta, Belsky, Vandergrift, Houts, & Morrison, 2008). In particular, such research points to the importance of interactions among teachers and children as strong indicators of academic success (Early et al., 2007; Schmitt, Pentimonti, & Justice, 2012). This is in accordance with the sociocultural theory that is based on Vygotsky's thought, which states that a large amount of language learning takes place through social interaction. According to this theory, language development can be practiced through social activities (e.g. role play and story-telling) in the context of the classroom (Aimin, 2013). More specifically, children learn through engagement with other children and teachers in joint activities (Walqui, 2008). Those interactions in the classroom are referred to as teacher-child interactions and peer interactions.

Discussion amongst teachers and children can improve academic performance (Duke & Pearson, 2009; Mercer & Howe, 2012). When a child is actively joining the conversation, language skills will be improved (Tammes & Systema, 2012). Therefore, it can be argued that teachers have an essential role in facilitating interaction and supporting language skills (Duke & Pearson, 2009; Walqui, 2008). Language modelling of teachers appears to be closely related to children's development of literacy skills in preschool and to academic achievement, including reading comprehension, in secondary school (Allen et al., 2013; Burchinal et al., 2008; Guo, Piasta, Justice, & Kaderavek, 2010; Mashburn et al., 2008). High language modelling is characterized by conversing with children, asking open-ended questions, repeating or extending children's responses and using a variety of words. There should be a

clear and intentional effort by teachers to promote language use, including explicit attempts to facilitate peer conversations (Justice, Mashburn, Hamre, & Pianta, 2008; Pianta et al., 2004).

Inequality in Reading Comprehension

Despite Mauritius' education goals, there is rising inequality in Mauritius (Bunwaree, 2014). Serious disparities have been found in learning outcomes of children, with reading comprehension being one of them (Chinapah, 2003; Hungi & Thuku, 2010). Creoles are the most marginalised group in Mauritius with regards to education and SES (Carosin, 2013). As mentioned before, SES is an indicator for language skills (Calvo & Bialystok, 2014). According to a British study, children with a low SES are at risk for lower levels of reading comprehension (Law, Charlton, & Asmussen, 2017). This is in accordance with the context of Mauritius where differences are, among others, found by SES and cultural groups. Mauritian children with a low SES, often Creoles, score lower on reading comprehension whereas children with a high SES score higher (Carosin, 2013; Chinapah, 2003; Hungi & Thuku, 2010). This could eventually have long-term implications for both the individuals concerned and society as a whole (Law et al., 2017).

Differences in learning outcomes have also been found between school types in Mauritius (Chinapah, 2003; Hungi & Thuku, 2010). In March 2017, 211 schools were run by the government (hereafter: public schools) and the remaining 92 were run privately, 48 of which were private-aided schools. Private-aided schools are managed by an individual or private organization that receives funding from the government (Smith & Joshi, 2016). The remaining 44 private schools did not receive this funding and were non-aided (Statistics Mauritius, 2018). Schools with special attention for educational disadvantage are referred to as Zones d'Education Prioritaire (ZEP) schools (Kumar & Gurrib, 2008). It is indicated that the quality of educational services of Mauritian preschools can vary, especially those of private preschools (Auleear Owodally, 2010). However, research in Mauritian primary schools in this regard seems to be scarce.

The Present Study

As previously stated, Mauritius aims at becoming an intelligent nation state (MECHR, 2009). Reading comprehension is important to reach this goal and can be supported through language support at home and in school (Duncan et al., 2007; Hoff, 2006; Justice et al., 2018; McClelland et al., 2006; Verhoeven et al., 2011; Zauche et al., 2016). However, there are indicators of inequality in learning outcomes (Chinapah, 2003; Hungi & Thuku, 2010). Given these points, it is interesting to investigate whether, and how, language skills of Mauritian children in primary school are supported at home and in school through interaction in

activities and discussion. Because Mauritius' official language is English, this research will focus on language support in English (Bissoonauth, 2011). Differences in language support between SES of parents, ethnicities of children and school types will be investigated. The research question is as follows: "To what extent are English oral language skills of Mauritian primary school children supported through interactions at home and in school?"

Based on existing literature, it is expected that language support in English is scarce in the Mauritian home environment because French and Creole are mostly spoken at home (Bissoonauth, 2011). Since children of low SES-parents demonstrate lower language skills, it is expected that language support of low-SES parents is lower than of high-SES parents (Calvo & Bialystok, 2014). Subsequently, the expectation is that Creole children receive lower language support compared to other children because of their low SES (Carosin, 2013).

Because language support at home is expected to be low, the main focus in this research will be on language support in the Mauritian school environment. As for the school, it is expected that English is used as the medium of instruction (Auleear Owodally, 2010). Although, there is no expectation about the content and extent of language support in school, since this remains unclear from the literature. Differences in language support are expected between public, private and ZEP schools.

Method

Type of Research

The aim of this research was to investigate whether children's English language skills are supported in both the Mauritian home and school environment, and if yes, to what extent. Therefore, this research is both exploratory and descriptive in nature. Mixed-methods were used to answer the research question.

Participants and Procedure

Permission for access to assigned private-aided primary schools was granted by "Le Service Diocésain de l'Éducation Catholique" (SeDEC), which is a Roman Catholic organization. Permission for access to public schools, including ZEP schools, was granted by the Ministry (MEHRTESR). A total of 7 primary schools were visited, of which 5 private-aided, 1 public ZEP and 1 regular public school. For the representativity of the sample, schools were located in 4 different zones (see Appendix A).

Filling in questionnaires and participation in interviews was voluntary for all participants. All parents of the participating children signed an informed consent form (see Appendix B). Arrangements with headmasters and headmistresses, and teachers were made so that no classes were disturbed. Students from the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE) were

approached because they will be part of the school system in the future and it was expected that they could give insight in the vision of the MIE towards language support, which determines current practices. Students were approached during class and asked to participate. Headmasters and headmistresses, and students from the MIE gave verbal permission for recording the interviews. Participants could stop at any time during the study.

A total of 286 children from grade 5 ($n = 144$) and grade 6 ($n = 142$) filled in the questionnaires (138 boys, 147 girls) and they were aged 9 to 11 years ($M = 9.90$, $SD = .68$). Based on Western research, children from 7 years onwards should have sufficient cognitive skills to answer questionnaires. Because children's development may differ in the Mauritian context, children from 9 years onwards were selected to increase reliability (De Leeuw, 2011). Parents' questionnaires were filled in by 17 parents (4 male, 13 female) and they were aged 26 to 51 years ($M = 35.88$, $SD = 6.35$). A total of 23 teachers (5 male, 18 female) from grade 4 ($n = 2$), grade 5 ($n = 8$), grade 6 ($n = 9$) and the holistic class with topics such as music and drama ($n = 4$) filled in questionnaires. Teachers were aged 20 to 48 years ($M = 38.13$, $SD = 7.52$). Interviews were held with 5 headmasters and headmistresses (1 male, 4 female) from private-aided schools and with 4 students from MIE (1 male, 3 female). Finally, 8 observations were held in grade 5 and 6 of which 5 private-aided and 1 public ZEP school.

Measuring Instruments

The questions from the questionnaires and interviews were based on previous literature study about language support at home and in school (e.g. Aimin, 2013; Baker et al., 2015; Burger, 2010; Gonzalez et al., 2014; Justice et al., 2018; Schmitt et al., 2012; Zauche et al., 2016). Questionnaires for children and teachers contained questions about both the home and school environment. In the analysis, questions were separated and considered as two different questionnaires. Parents' and children's questionnaires were translated to French for better understanding.

Language support at home.

Questionnaire children. Language support at home was measured with children's questionnaires (see Appendix C). A 5-point Likert scale questionnaire was used to answer 6 questions about children's perceived language support at home. Children had to select 1 out of 5 smileys which ranged from a mad smiley: "I do not agree at all", to a happy smiley: "I agree completely". Moreover, answering options measured the degree of language support: 1) low; 2) low/medium; 3) medium; 4) medium/high and; 5) high.

Cronbach's alpha for the 6-item "language support at home" factor for children was .64. This could be considered questionable; the alpha would increase to .69 if item 1 were

removed. Consequently, this item was dropped from the questionnaire to increase reliability. All subsequent analyses were based on children's responses to the remaining 5 items.

Questionnaire parents. Further, language support at home was measured with parents' questionnaires (see Appendix D). The questionnaire consisted of 2 open questions to investigate whether parents supported language skills and if yes, how they did this, and if not, why not. In addition, parents were asked whether they undertook specific activities to support language skills, and if yes, to explain these activities.

In addition, a 4-point Likert scale was used to answer 6 questions about parents' language support at home. Answering options were: 1) never or hardly ever; 2) monthly; 3) weekly; 4) and daily or almost daily. These options measured the degree of language support: 1) low; 2) low/medium; 3) medium/high; and 4) high.

Cronbach's alpha for the 6-item "language support at home" factor for parents was .72. Although this could be considered adequate for research purposes, the alpha would increase to .78 if item 5 were removed. Consequently, this item was dropped from the questionnaire to increase reliability. All subsequent analyses were based on parents' responses to the remaining 5 items.

Language support in school.

Questionnaire teachers. Language support in school was measured with teachers' questionnaires (see Appendix E). The questionnaire consisted of 3 open questions to investigate whether teachers 1) supported language skills and 2) supported peer conversations, and if yes, how they did this, and if not, why not. In addition, teachers were asked whether they undertook specific activities to support language skills, and if yes, to explain these activities.

In addition, a 5-point Likert scale was used to answer 12 questions about teachers' language support in school. Answering options were: 1) strongly disagree; 2) disagree; 3) neither agree nor disagree; 4) agree; and 5) strongly agree. These options measured the degree of language support: 1) low; 2) low/medium; 3) medium; 4) medium/high; and 5) high.

Cronbach's alpha for the 12-item "language support in school" factor for teachers was .69 Although this could be considered adequate for research purposes, the alpha would increase to .76 if item 10 were removed. Consequently, this item was dropped from the questionnaire to increase reliability. All subsequent analyses were based on teachers' responses to the remaining 11 items.

Questionnaire children. Further, language support in school was measured with children's questionnaires (see Appendix C). A 5-point Likert scale questionnaire was used to

answer 3 questions about children's perceived language support at school. Children had to select 1 out of 5 smileys which ranged from a mad smiley: "I do not agree at all", to a happy smiley: "I agree completely". Moreover, answering options measured the degree of language support: 1) low; 2) low/medium; 3) medium; 4) medium/high and; 5) high. Because the "language support at home" questionnaire for children consisted of only 3 items, scores were not combined to 1 factor.

      Interviews. Better in-depth understanding of language support in school was gained through semi-structured interviews with headmasters and headmistresses and with MIE students (see Appendices F and G). Interviews with headmasters and headmistresses focused on current practices in language support. Interviews with MIE students focused on future practices in language support.

      Classroom observations. Finally, classroom observations were held during the English class to objectively investigate the amount of time English spoken by teachers and children (see Appendix H). To increase reliability, one observation served as a pilot. Hereafter, small adjustments in the time intervals were made to the observation form for more accurate measurements. All classroom observations lasted 25 minutes. Every 30 seconds it was noted if English was spoken by: the teacher, one child, more children, the teacher and one child or the teacher and more children. It was also noted whether it was silent or whether speech was in French or Creole during the time interval.

Data Analysis

      Questionnaires. After collecting the data, answers by parents and teachers to open questions about language support at home and in school were counted and summarized. The three most mentioned ways and activities to support language skills were presented. If the third number was a shared place, four ways or activities were presented.

      Likert scale questions about language support at home and in school were analysed with IBM SPSS Statistics Data Editor 25. Firstly, descriptive statistics were computed. Hereafter, it was assessed graphically and with the Shapiro-Wilk test whether the data of language support at home and in school was normally distributed. The Shapiro-Wilk test was chosen because this test has more power than comparable tests (Ghasemi & Zahedius, 2012; Mendes & Pala, 2003; Razali & Wah, 2011). Language support at home by parents was normally distributed, $p = 2.19$, therefore parametric statistics were used. Language support at home and in school as perceived by children, $p < .001$, and language support in school by teachers, $p = .029$, were not normally distributed. Therefore, non-parametric statistics were used (Field, 2013).

Thereafter, One-way-ANOVA was used to statistically compare significant differences in mean scores of language support between parents with a different SES. SES was measured with education level: primary and secondary school represented a low SES, whereas higher education presented a high SES (Shaw & Spokane, 2008). The Kruskall-Wallis test was used to statistically compare significant differences in mean scores of language support between children among themselves and between children and teachers at different school types. To investigate which groups showed significant differences in group means, post-hoc analyses were done with Tukey's HSD (parametric) and Mann-Whitney (non-parametric). Effect sizes of significant differences were calculated with guidelines from Cohen (1988): $\eta^2 = .01$, $r = .1$, $d = .20$ is small, $\eta^2 = .059$, r = .3, d = .50 is medium, $\eta^2 = .138$, $r = .5$, $d = .80$ is large. All tests were performed with a significance level of $p < .05$ (see Appendix I for explanation tests).

Interviews. Interviews with headmasters and headmistresses and students were separately transcribed and analysed with coding program NVivo. Subsequently, themes arose that indicated to what extent language skills were supported.

Classroom observations. Results of the classroom observations were counted and summarized, followed by percentage calculations to indicate to what extent language skills were supported.

Results

Language Support at Home

Language support by parents. Firstly, it was investigated whether, and to what extent, language skills were supported by parents at home. In addition, differences in language support between parents with a different SES were investigated. In total, 13 parents supported language skills, whereas 4 parents did not. Hereafter, numbers between brackets indicate how often the statement was mentioned. The most mentioned ways for language support were: conversation in English (3), doing English homework (2), encourage the child to describe things in English (2) and reading (2). Reasons not to support language skills were: I do not speak English (2) and the child does not want to (1). In addition, 12 parents undertook specific activities to support language skills, whereas 5 parents did not. The most mentioned activities were: telling small things in English (4), questions and answers in English (4) and reading (3) (see Appendix J for complete overview).

For parents, language support at home was medium ($M = 2.84$, $SD = .78$). Descriptive statistics have also been computed for parents with a different SES (see Table 1). Hereafter, ANOVA was statistically significant, indicating that interaction at home was influenced by SES, $F(2, 13) = 8.17$, $p = .005$, $\eta^2 = .557$ (see Table 1).

Post hoc analyses with Tukey's HSD revealed that parents with higher education as highest education level ($M = 3.53$, $SD = .37$) showed significantly higher language support than parents with primary school ($M = 2.00$, $SD = 1.41$, $d = 1.87$) or secondary school ($M = 2.53$, $SD = .44$, $d = 1.86$) as their highest education level. Differences between parents with primary and secondary school as their highest education level were not significant.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Parents with a Different SES

	Primary school (*n* = 2)	Secondary school (*n* = 8)	Higher education (*n* = 6)	Sig.
Language support at home	*M* = 2.00 *SD* =1.41	*M* = 2.53 *SD* = .44	*M* =3.53 *SD* =.37	.005*

* *p* < .05

Language support as perceived by children. Secondly, it was investigated whether, and to what extent, language skills were supported at home as perceived by children. In addition, differences in language support between children with different ethnicities were investigated. Children's perceived language support at home was medium ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 1.06$). Descriptive statistics were also computed for ethnic groups (see Table 2). Hereafter, the Kruswall-Wallis test was statistically non-significant, indicating that there were no differences between the perceived language support of ethnic groups, $H = 5.11$, $df = 4$, $N = 275$, $p = .276$ (see Table 2).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Children with Different Ethnicities

	Creole (*n* = 199)	Indian (*n* = 67)	French (*n* = 3)	Chinese (*n* = 2)	Other (*n* = 4)	Sig.
Language support at home	*M* = 3.06 *SD* = 1.05	*M* = 3.37 *SD* = 1.07	*M* = 3.13 *SD* = 1.30	*M* = 3.70 *SD* = .71	*M* = 3.70 *SD* =1.09	.276

Language Support in School

Language support by teachers. Thirdly, it was investigated whether, and to what extent, language skills were supported by teachers in school. In addition, differences in language support between teachers at different school types were investigated. In total, 21 teachers supported language skills, whereas 2 teachers did not. Hereafter, numbers between brackets indicate how often the statement was mentioned. The most mentioned ways for language support were: questions and answers in English (8), reading aloud in English (5) and "Communication Skills" classes (4). Reasons not to support language skills were: I do not speak English with children (1) and no explanations possible in English (1). In addition, 19 teachers undertook specific activities to support language skills, whereas 3 teachers did not. One teacher did not answer. The most mentioned activities were: reading aloud in English (8), English monologue (5), interaction in English (5) and role play in English (5). Finally, 17 teachers supported peer conversations, whereas 5 teachers did not. One teacher did not answer. The most mentioned ways to do this were: English questions and answers in pairs (4), role play in English (3) and group communication in English (3) (see Appendix K for complete overview).

For teachers, language support at home was medium to medium/high ($M = 3.89$, $SD = .34$). Descriptive statistics have also been computed for different school types (see Table 4). Hereafter, the Kruswall-Wallis test was statistically non-significant, indicating that there were no differences between language support by teachers at different school types, $H = 3.84$, $df = 2$, $N = 22$, $p = .175$ (see Table 3).

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of Teachers at Different School Types

	Private-aided ($n = 15$)	Public regular ($n = 3$)	Public ZEP ($n = 4$)	Sig.
Language support in school	$M = 3.98$ $SD = .25$	$M = 4.00$ $SD = .18$	$M = 3.45$ $SD = .44$	.175

Language support as perceived by children. Lastly, it was investigated whether, and to what extent, language skills were supported in school as perceived by children. In addition, differences in language support between children at different school types were investigated. Children's perceived language support in school was medium/high for item 8: "My teacher wants to speak English with me" ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 1.28$) and for item 9: "My teacher wants me

to speak English with the other children in the classroom" ($M = 4.26$, $SD = 3.10$). This was low/medium for item 7: "My teacher wants to speak French or Creole with me" ($M = 1.80$, $SD = 1.20$). Descriptive statistics have also been computed for different school types. Hereafter, the Kruswall-Wallis test was statistically significant for item 7, $H = 20.07$, $df = 2$, $N = 281$, $p = <.001$, $\eta^2 = <.001$ and item 9, $H = 19.33$, $df = 2$, $N = 280$, $p = <.001$, $\eta^2 = <.001$, indicating there were differences in the perceived language support of children at different school types (see Table 4). Item 8 was statistically non-significant, $H = 5.11$, $df = 2$, $N = 285$, $p = .0.78$.

Post hoc analyses with Mann-Whitney for item 7 revealed that children in public regular schools ($M = 2.45$, $SD = 1.44$) perceived significantly higher language support than children in public ZEP schools ($M = 1.55$, $SD = .91$, $r = .29$) and private-aided schools ($M = 1.63$, $SD = 1.08$, $r = .27$). Differences between children in public ZEP and private-aided schools were not significant.

For item 9, Mann-Whitney revealed that children in public regular schools ($M = 4.71$, $SD = .78$) perceived significantly higher language support than children in private-aided schools ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 3.65$, $r = .28$). Differences between children in public regular and public ZEP schools ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 1.54$) and between children in private-aided and public ZEP schools were not significant.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics of Children at Different School Types

	Private-aided	Public regular	Public ZEP	Sig.
Item 7	$n = 199$	$n = 60$	$n = 22$	
	$M = 1.63$	$M = 2.45$	$M = 1.55$	<.001*
	$SD = 1.08$	$SD = 1.44$	$SD = .91$	
Item 8	$n = 200$	$n = 62$	$n = 23$	
	$M = 3.98$	$M = 4.42$	$M = 4.26$	.078
	$SD = 1.35$	$SD = 1.00$	$SD = 1.14$	
Item 9	$n = 195$	$n = 62$	$n = 23$	
	$M = 4.14$	$M = 4.71$	$M = 4.00$	<.001*
	$SD = 3.65$	$SD = .78$	$SD = 1.54$	

Note. Item 7 is "My teacher wants to speak French or Creole with me. Item 8 is "My teacher wants to speak English with me". Item 9 is "My teacher wants me to speak English with the other children in the classroom".

* $p < .05$

EXAMINATION OF LANGUAGE SUPPORT IN MAURITIUS

Language support by headmasters and headmistresses.

Speaking English. The first theme from interviews with headmasters and headmistresses covered topics about "speaking English", which consisted of children and teachers speaking English. In general, headmasters and headmistresses believed that speaking English is a good way to support language skills and they tried to integrate English in daily life. Examples to do this were: English greetings, English morning assemblies and teaching children the basics in English (e.g. good morning, asking to go the toilet). However, difficulties with speaking English were also mentioned because children were only comfortable in French and Creole. Consequently, headmasters and headmistresses did neither encourage children nor teachers to speak in English because children would not understand the instructions. Another reason was that primary schools were exam-oriented and that the focus was mainly on written work. One teacher mentioned that there should have been more attention for oral work with children: "Me, I should engage, encourage the, those who set out the exam papers to give some more marks in oral work. That the pupils, are encouraged, to do oral work. They should have a conversation with the pupils and then grade them and give them marks, something like that. Then pupils will be encouraged to learn English."

Exposure. The second theme contained statements about a lack of exposure to the English language, at home and in the classroom. According to headmasters and headmistresses, children were not sufficiently exposed to English at home and exposure in the classroom was only 50 to 75 minutes per day. Due to the exams, there was no time for more exposure. Media was indicated as a good tool to support language skills. Some children would use YouTube to learn English. However, exposure through TV would be in French and Creole. Therefore, one headmistress mentioned that she encouraged children to listen to the news in English and to use the media library.

Activities. The third theme for supporting language skills was "activities". Here, headmasters and headmistresses mentioned that there was not much time for English activities because Mauritius is exam-oriented. Nevertheless, mentioned was that the curriculum, as developed by the Ministry of Education, included poems, songs, stories and role-play in English. Furthermore, mentioned activities were: describing the day with pictures, making English sentences and having "English weeks" in which children and teachers should only speak English. In addition, much attention was given to reading: "We give them a book, each year … But this is one book only. My aim was to get them involved in English, to practice English. So, I give one book each year." It was said that if children read in English, the teacher could explain the text and therefore children would understand the language better.

EXAMINATION OF LANGUAGE SUPPORT IN MAURITIUS

Language support by students MIE.

Activities. The first theme that occurred from the interviews with students of the MIE consisted of "activities". English activities such as reading, watching TV shows and videos, singing songs, doing theatre, describing pictures, writing and playing memory games were discussed during the interviews to support future language skills. Such activities would gain interest of children, making learning English easier. Students also mentioned that recently the subject "Communication Skills" was implemented in primary schools in which children practice language skills through activities.

Motivation of children. The second theme that arose from the interviews was "motivation of children". The students would support language skills by motivating children. This could be done by making learning English fun, which was connected to the aforementioned activities. If children would like the activities they were doing, they would show more interest and motivation and therefore they would learn easier. A second way to motivate children, was through raising awareness of the importance of learning English: "Because the children, they are like … "what am I going to do with that? It's boring. How is it going to be useful for me tomorrow?". And then I have to explain to them you know, the job market and all. There are things that you are not aware of right now. But believe me, you are doing it for your own good."

Speaking English. The third theme covered topics about speaking English during the day. All students agreed that speaking English with children would help them to improve their language skills and that this should start from the lower grades, so that the students could scaffold the English of children. Helpful tools that were mentioned were: using simple words, speaking English during the assemblies and developing a culture of speaking English. Two students also mentioned that peer conversations would be difficult. Therefore, it was their job to create a "cool atmosphere" in which children would not feel shy to speak English.

Inspiration. The last theme discussed by students was about developing themselves to support language skills in the future. They studied a lot of theory and they did research on other pedagogics. One student mentioned that he gained inspiration from talking to other teachers, for instance on the use of media. Also the internet was considered a source of inspiration: "… Americans State English also helps me a lot in terms of resources. I've also got resources from…, I think it's education.com. You got lots of resources over there as well. Plenty of resources from different teachers."

Interaction in English. Classroom observations revealed that moments of silence or speech in French or Creole occurred most frequently (60.1%), followed by moments of

English spoken by the teacher (29.04%). Moments where English was spoken by children or combinations of teachers and children showed lower percentages (see Table 5).

Table 5

Percentages English Spoken in the Classroom

School	Grade	Teacher	Child	Children	Teacher and child	Teacher and children	Silence or speech in French/Creole	Total
A	6	17	4	3	0	3	19	46
B	5	25	2	1	0	0	22	50
B	6	14	3	2	1	0	30	50
C	5	22	1	4	0	1	22	50
C	5	20	0	5	0	2	23	50
E	6	2	0	0	0	0	48	50
F	5	4	0	6	0	0	40	50
G	6	11	2	1	0	2	34	50
Total		115	12	22	1	8	238	396
%		29.04	3.03	5.55	0.25	2.02	60.1	100

Note. Observation moments were held every 30 seconds for 25 minutes. Observation at school A lasted 23 minutes. For information about schools see Appendix A.

Discussion

The aim of this research was to investigate whether, and how, language skills of Mauritian children in primary school are supported at home and in school through interaction in activities and discussion. In addition, differences in language support were investigated, based on parents' SES, children's ethnicities and school types. This is relevant because Mauritius aims at becoming an intelligent nation state, yet inequality exists in learning outcomes. Part of this inequality occurs in reading comprehension, which is an important predictor for academic success. Reading comprehension could be enhanced through language support at home and in school.

Language Support at Home

Language support at home was higher than expected. Most parents indicated to support language skills and language support was medium for both parents and children. An explanation for this unexpected finding could be that parents are currently more involved with

children's education, since this is a goal of the recently implemented strategy plan (MECHR, 2009). Language support by parents consisted of English interaction in activities (e.g. reading, storytelling). Previous studies have shown that such routine activities can be beneficial for gains in children's language skills (Burger, 2010; Gonzalez et al., 2014; National Early Literacy Panel, 2008; Tamis-LeMonda & Rodriguez, 2008; Zauche et al., 2016).

In line with the expectation, high-SES parents scored significantly higher on language support than low-SES parents. This finding is an addition to existing knowledge on this topic; it could explain findings of previous research that found lower language skills in children of low-SES parents than of high-SES parents Calvo & Bialystok, 2014).

Unexpectedly, there were no significant differences in language support between ethnic groups. This means that children from all different ethnic backgrounds scored similar on language support. A possible methodological explanation are the sample sizes. The sample of Creole ($n = 199$) and Indian ($n = 67$) children were larger than the sample of French ($n = 3$), Chinese ($n = 2$) and other ($n = 4$) children. Because of this, it may be more difficult to measure significant differences. Presumably, no differences were found between Creole and Indian children, because 5 out of 7 participating schools were run by SeDEC (private-aided), schools aimed at disadvantaged children (P. Nadal, personal communication, February 21, 2019). It could be that Creole and Indian children in these schools have similar home environments and therefore show similar language support at home.

Language Support in School

Almost all teachers indicated to support language skills; language support was medium to medium/high for teachers and medium/high (item 8 and 9) and low/medium (item 7) for children. Teachers supported language skills through English interaction in activities (e.g. role play, monologue, reading aloud). This is in accordance with previous literature, which stated that language development can be practiced through such social activities (Aimin, 2013). The majority of teachers supported peer conversations, which could be beneficial for language skills because children learn through engagement with other children and teachers in joint activities, which can increase children's language use (Justice et al, 2008; Pianta et al., 2004; Walqui, 2008). These findings indicate that language support does occur in the school system, which could be beneficial for children's language development.

Unexpectedly, there were no significant differences in language support between teachers at different school types. A possible explanation is that teachers gave socially desirable answers because there should be attention for language support at all school types (MECHR, 2009). Research has indicated that participants are likely to give socially desirable

answers, especially on paper questionnaires (Fang, Prybutok, & Wen, 2016). Again, another possible methodological explanation is the size of the samples used. The sample of private-aided teachers ($n = 15$) was larger than the sample of public ($n = 3$) and ZEP school ($n = 4$) teachers, making it more difficult to measure significant differences.

Partly corresponding with the expectation, significant differences between children at different school types were found for item 7 and 9, but not for item 8. Children at public schools received higher language support than children at private-aided (item 7 and 9) and ZEP schools (item 7). These results suggest that differences in quality of educational services also exist in primary schools. An explanation for the non-significant differences on item 8 ("My teacher wants to speak English with me") could be that English should be the medium of instruction at all school types in Mauritius, resulting in all teachers speaking English, to a certain extent, with children (Auleear Owodally, 2010; Sonck, 2008).

Further, language support was perceived lower by headmasters and headmistresses than by teachers. Headmasters and headmistresses indicated that teachers and children did not speak English enough, that there was not enough exposure to English and not enough time for activities. Reasons for this were difficulties with speaking English and a lack of time due to Mauritius' exam-orientation. Nevertheless, speaking English, exposure to English and several routine activities were believed to support language skills. This is in line with previous research that indicated the importance of conversation to improve language skills (Tammes & Systema, 2012). Despite the lack of time, some activities were performed (e.g. poems, songs, stories and role-play), which could be beneficial for children's language development according to studied literature (Aimin, 2013). The varying findings could be explained by differences in perspectives on the actual situation. These findings indicate that language support does not occur enough in the school system according to headmasters and headmistresses.

Findings from interviews with students from the MIE indicated that they would support language skills through activities to motivate children and through speaking English, which is known to be beneficial (Aimin, 2013; Tammes & Systema, 2012). In addition, they were consciously engaged in self-development. These results suggest that the MIE gives attention to language support through activities and motivation, speaking English and to self-development of students.

Despite the aforementioned importance of speaking English and the expectation of using English as medium of instruction (Auleear Owodally, 2010), French and Creole were spoken most frequently in the classroom (60.1%), followed by English spoken by the teacher

(29.04%). This objective perception suggests that children do not often speak English in school, although this could improve academic performance (Duke & Pearson, 2009; Mercer & Howe, 2012).

Limitations and Recommendations

As previously mentioned, a limitation of this research is that the sample sizes of French, Chinese and other children were quite small compared to the sample size of Creole and Indian children. Nevertheless, it could be argued that this is representative for Mauritius' population distribution, because the Indian and Creole group are the largest ethnic groups in Mauritius (Frankel, 2014). Furthermore, 5 out of 7 schools were private-aided schools, which does not correspond with the actual distribution of schools in Mauritius. However, the generalisability has been enlarged because of the magnitude of the overall children's sample. In addition, data was collected in different zones throughout Mauritius and at different school types, making the sample more generalisable as well. Future research could investigate more French, Chinese and other children, possibly by investigating more public and ZEP schools.

Another limitation is that the effect of digital media in language support was not investigated in this research. Today's technology is increasing the range of digital media, which changes the landscape of childhood (Dore, Zosh, Hirsh-Pasek, & Golinkoff, 2017). Research showed that digital media can have both a negative and positive impact on children's language development (Dore et al., 2017). Nevertheless, the home and the school were investigated, which are important systems in language support (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). In these systems the variety of participants (children, teachers, headmasters and headmistresses, parents, students) was broad, which increased the reliability of this research. Future research could investigate the impact of media in language support of Mauritian primary school children.

A strength of this study is its mixed-method design. Language support was measured in a variety of ways; with questionnaires, interviews and observations. This gave insight into the quantity of the occurrence of language support and gained understanding in local practices. This design provides a stronger basis for their implications for children's development than one method alone would do (Harkness & Super, 2015). Additionally, this was the first research that investigated language support in Mauritian primary school children.

For professional practice, these findings could be used to develop interventions to improve language support at home and in school. Especially the language support of low-SES parents should be improved. Also, teachers should be trained to speak more English with children and to let them speak more English in school. Lastly, the focus on exams in schools

should decrease in order to provide more time for language support. This could be established through a constructivist learning approach in the classroom, in which teachers do not directly transfer the information to children; but they guide and help children to reach the information and to construct it, for instance through guided (cooperative) activities (Beck & Kosnik, 2006; Bryant, Kastrup, Udo, Hislop, Shefner and Mallow, 2013). In this way children would be able to gain their own language experiences (Pitsoe, 2007). A meta-analysis revealed that 50 out of 53 studies found a positive effect for a constructivist approach on academic achievement, especially low-SES children, which are Creole children in the Mauritian context (Ayaz & Sekerci, 2015; Carosin, 2013; Kirkland, Manning, Osaki, & Hicks, 2015).

Conclusion

Language support improves language skills, which is beneficial for growth in reading comprehension. In Mauritius, children's language skills are supported both at home and in school. The level of language support differed between perceptions of parents, children, teachers and headmasters and headmistresses. Differences in language support were found for SES of parents and partly for children at different school types. Language skills were supported through routine activities, but there was a lack of exposure to English and English was not sufficiently spoken in school. This suggests that there is room for improvement in the level and the interpretation of language support in Mauritius. Findings could be used to develop interventions to increase language support and, consequently, children's academic performance. The current use of English should be reconsidered in order for Mauritius to become a "culture of achievement and excellence".

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Acknowledgements

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Appendix A

Information About Schools

Table A1

Specifics About School Types and Location (Zone)

School	School type	Zone
A	Private-aided	3
B	Private-aided	2
C	Private-aided	1
D	Public	4
E	Private-aided	3
F	Private-aided	4
G	Public ZEP	3

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Appendix B

Informed Consent Children (English Version)

Informed consent student questionnaire

Authorization letter for questionnaires for primary school students.

This letter of authorization informs parents of fourth- to sixth- grade students. This form will be used as permission for the participation of these children in research on attitudes towards the English language support.

Attached, you will find the relevant information and the letter of authorization.

FOR INFORMATION

Introduction

My name is Hilde Zwitserloot, a student of a Master's program (Youth, Education and Society) in the Netherlands. In order to be able to complete my study, I am doing research in Mauritius. The purpose of this questionnaire is to investigate the extent to which children's oral language skills are being supported at home and in school.

With this in mind, we would be very grateful if you would allow your child(ren) to complete the questionnaire in class. The questionnaire will consist of two parts. The first part will be about more general information, such as the child's age and grade. The second part will be about language support at home and in school. The first part will consist of 6 questions and the second part will consist of 9 questions. There will be a few open questions in the first part, but questions in the second part will be answered by choosing a smiley.

Importance

It is desirable for students to participate in this research by completing the questionnaire, in order for me to get an answer to my research question.

The research will focus on the English language and to what extent this is supported at home and in school. Because the research is about children, it is important to asses children's view about this topic in order to create a realistic overview about the current practices towards language support.

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Duration

Filling out the questionnaire will take around approximately 30 minutes. Since it will be done in class, we will not need additional time.

Confidentiality

The questionnaire will be entirely anonymous and we will have no way to identify the students. The only required information by this questionnaire will be the grade of the child. Any other information provided by your child will not be disclosed. Any information received will be analysed in general and will be interpreted as a percentage in the report.

Voluntary participation

It is you who will decide whether your child will participate in this research or not. If you give your child permission to participate, but during the questionnaire he/she feels uncomfortable with one or more questions, he/she will have the right to not finish the questionnaire.

If you have any questions or if you would like to have more information on this research, you can contact the school.

If you agree to your child's participation in this research, we would be grateful if you would sign the certificate below.

We thank you in advance for your cooperation.

LETTER OF AUTHORIZATION

I confirm that I have read the letter above. I have had the opportunity to ask questions, and these were answered. I therefore give my child permission to complete the related questionnaire in class.

Name of child: _____

Name of parent: _____

Signature of parent: _____

Date (day, month, year): _____

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Appendix C

Questionnaire for Children (English Version)

Part A. General information

A1. What is your age? _____

A2. What is your gender?

❏ Male   ❏ Female

A3. Where do you live (in what city/village)?_____

A4. What is your ethnicity?

❏ Creole (Afro-Mauritian)   ❏ French (Franco-Mauritian)

❏ Indian (Indo-Mauritian)   ❏ Chinese (Sino-Mauritian)

❏ Other: _____

A5. In what grade are you now? _____

A6. What is the religion of your family?

❏ Hinduistic   ❏ Muslim

❏ Christian   ❏ None

❏ Other: _____

Part B. English language

For the following statements, please select the smiley that best fits your opinion.

😠 = I do not agree at all   🙂 = I agree

☹️ = I do not agree   😃 = I agree completely

😐 = I am neutral

D1. I speak French or Creole with my parents.

😠	☹️	😐	🙂	😃

D2. I speak English with my parents.				
😠	🙁	😐	🙂	😃

D3. My parents tell me stories in English.				
😠	🙁	😐	🙂	😃

D4. My parents teach me letters in English.				
😠	🙁	😐	🙂	😃

D5. My parents teach me numbers in English.				
😠	🙁	😐	🙂	😃

D6. My parents visit the library with me.				
😠	🙁	😐	🙂	😃

D7. My teacher wants to speak French or Creole with me.				
😠	🙁	😐	🙂	😃

D8. My teacher wants to speak English with me.				
😠	🙁	😐	🙂	😃

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D9. My teacher wants me to speak English with the other children in the classroom.				
😠	🙁	😐	🙂	😃

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Appendix D

Questionnaire for Parents (English Version)

Part A. General information

A1. What is your age? _____

A2. What is your gender?

❏ Male

❏ Female

A3. What is your city of residence? _____

A4. What is your ethnicity?

❏ Creole (Afro-Mauritian)

❏ Indian (Indo-Mauritian)

❏ French (Franco-Mauritian)

❏ Chinese (Sino-Mauritian)

❏ Other: _____

A5. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

_____

A6. What is your current occupation? _____

A7. What is your current relationship status?

❏ Married

❏ Widowed

❏ Divorced

❏ Separated

❏ Domestic partnership

❏ Single

A8. What is your religion? (*Hinduistic/Christian/Muslim/None/Other*)

❏ Hinduistic

❏ Christian

❏ Muslim

❏ None

❏ Other: _____

A9. How many children do you have? _____

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A10. What is the gender of your children? _____

A11. What is the age of your children? _____

Part B. English Language

For the first question, please select the option that fits best.

B1. What is your level of speech in the English language?				
Very poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent

B2. What is the number of children's books that you have at home?

❏ 0-5

❏ 5-15

❏ 15-20

❏ 20-25

❏ More than 25

D3. Do you make an effort to support your child's oral English language skills?

❏ Yes (Continue with question D4)

❏ No (Continue with question D5

→ If no, please state why not:

→ If yes, please state how:

_____

_____

_____

_____

*D*4. Do you undertake activities with your child to support his/her English oral language skills?

❏ Yes

❏ No

→ If yes, please state what activities:

_____

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_____

_____

_____

For the following questions, please select the answer that best describes the frequency of time you spent with your children on these activities to support the **English language**.

D5. I speak French or Creole with my child.			
Never or hardly ever	Monthly	Weekly	Daily or almost daily

D6. I speak English with my child.			
Never or hardly ever	Monthly	Weekly	Daily or almost daily

D7. I tell stories to my child in the English language.			
Never or hardly ever	Monthly	Weekly	Daily or almost daily

D8. I teach my child English letters.			
Never or hardly ever	Monthly	Weekly	Daily or almost daily

D9. I visit the library with my child.			
Never or hardly ever	Monthly	Weekly	Daily or almost daily

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Appendix E

Questionnaire for Teachers

Part A. General information

A1. What is your age? _____

A2. What is your gender?

❏ Male

❏ Female

A3. What is your city of residence? _____

A4. What is your ethnicity

❏ Creole (Afro-Mauritian)

❏ Indian (Indo-Mauritian)

❏ French (Franco-Mauritian)

❏ Chinese (Sino-Mauritian)

❏ Other: _____

A5. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

_____

A6. What is your religion?

❏ Hinduistic

❏ Christian

❏ Muslim

❏ None

❏ Other: _____

A7. What grade(s) do you teach? _____

A8. What is the age range of your students? _____

A9. What type of teaching qualification did you obtain?

_____

A10. How long have you been a teacher? _____

Part B. English language in the classroom

For the first question, please select the answer that fits best.

D1. What is your level of speech in the English language?

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Very poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent

D2. What is the number of children's books you have in the classroom?

- ❏ 0-10
- ❏ 11-25
- ❏ 26-50
- ❏ 51-100
- ❏ More than 100

D3. Do you make an effort to support student's oral English language skills?

- ❏ Yes
- ❏ No

→ If no, please state why not:

→ If yes, please state how:

_____

_____

_____

_____

D4. Do you make explicit attempts to facilitate peer conversations in English?

- ❏ Yes
- ❏ No

→ If no, please state why not:

→ If yes, please state how:

_____

_____

_____

_____

D5. Do you undertake activities with students to support their English oral language skills?

- ❏ Yes

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❏   No

→ If yes, please state what activities:

_____

_____

_____

_____

For the following statements, please select the answer that best fits your opinion.

D6. I make room for silences in the classroom.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

D7. I give verbal and non-verbal listening responses in English.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

D8. I don't ask questions "in succession" in English.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

D9. If necessary, I ask open and inviting questions in English.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

D10. I occasionally make a provocative statement.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

D11. I converse with students in English.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

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D12. I ask open-ended questions in English.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

D13. I repeat students' responses in English.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

D14. I extend students' responses in English.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

D15. I use a variety of English words in the classroom.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

D17. I make explicit attempts to facilitate peer conversations.				
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

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Appendix F

Semi-Structured Interview Headmasters and Headmistresses

- Permission recording + guaranteeing anonymity

- Introduction research (explaining oral language skills)

- Interview questions

  - What is your view about speaking English in the classroom?

    1. Between teacher/child

    2. Between peers

  - Do you make an effort to support oral language skills in English?

    1. Any activities? Why?

    2. Discussion? Why?

  - If you could do anything right now to improve the English oral language skills of students, what would it be?

    1. Recommendations?

- Any questions? Thank you!

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Appendix G

Semi-Structured Interview Students MIE

- Permission recording + guaranteeing anonymity

- Introduction research (explaining oral language skills)

- Personal questions

  - Could you tell me something about yourself? Age/origin/year of study/what would you like to become?

- Interview questions

  - What is your view about speaking English in the classroom?

    1. Between teacher/child

    2. Between peers

  - How would you make sure students have a good level of oral English language skills?

    1. Any activities? Why?

    2. Discussion? Why?

  - Is there attention for supporting oral language skills in English at your study? If yes, in what way?

  - If you could do anything right now to improve the English oral language skills of students, what would it be?

    2. Recommendations?

- Any questions? Thank you!

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Appendix H

Classroom Observation Form

Observation form English language spoken

Subject:	School:
Amount of children in the classroom:	Grade:
Date:	Docent:

Time interval	Teacher	Children	Child	Teacher and child	Teacher and children	Silence or French/Creole
00.30						
1.00						
1.30						
2.00						
2.30						
3.00						
3.30						
4.00						
4.30						
5.00						
5.30						
6.00						
6.30						
7.00						

Note. This is a shortened version. Time intervals were continued for up to 25 minutes.

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Appendix I

Explanation Statistic Tests SPSS

Shapiro-Wilk: The Shapriro-Wilk test is a statistical test to see if the data is normally distributed. The data is not normally distributed when $p < .05$, in this case the null hypothesis will be rejected.

Parametric: Parametric statistics assume that the data is normally distributed.

Non-parametric: Non-parametric statistics assume that the data is not normally distributed.

One-way-ANOVA: The one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) is a parametric method used to determine whether there are any statistically significant differences between the means of two or more independent (unrelated) groups.

Kruskall-Wallis: The Kruskal–Wallis test by ranks is a non-parametric method used to determine whether there are any statistically significant differences between the means of two or more independent (unrelated) groups.

Tukey's HSD: The Tukey HSD test is used to compare differences between two independent groups when the data is normally distributed.

Mann-Whitney: The Mann-Whitney U test is used to compare differences between two independent groups when the data is not normally distributed.

Cohen effect sizes: Effect size is a statistical concept that measures the strength of the relationship between two variables on a numeric scale. In this research, guidelines from Cohen were used to determine the strength.

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Appendix J

Overview Open Questions Language Support by Parents

A total of 13 parents made an effort to support to the oral language skills of children.

Ways parents supported oral language skills:

- Conversation in English (3)

- Doing English homework (2)

- Encourage child to describe things in English (2)

- Reading (2)

- Writing in English (1)

- Explaining English stories (1)

- Live books (1)

- Watch movies in English (1)

- With the internet (1)

- With a dictionary (1)

A total of 4 parents did not make an effort to support the oral language skills of children.

Reasons why parents did not support oral language skills:

- I do not speak English (2)

- The child does not want to (1)

A total of 12 parents undertook activities to support the oral language skills of children.

Activities that parents undertook:

- Telling small things in English (4)

- Questions and answers in English (4)

- Games (2)

- English word meaning (2)

- Reading (3)

- Reciting poems (1)

- Playing English riddles (1)

- English songs (1)

A total of 5 parents did not undertake activities to support the oral language skills of children.

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Appendix K

Overview Open Questions Language Support by Teachers

A total of 21 teachers made an effort to support the oral language skills of children.

Ways teachers supported oral language skills:

- Questions and answers in English (8)

- Reading aloud in English (5)

- "Communication Skills" classes (4)

- Role play in English (3)

- Communicate in English (3)

- Peer conversations in English (3)

- Story telling in English (3)

- Encourage students to ask for permission in English (2)

- Discussion on topic in English (2)

- Poem recitation in English (1)

- Use some vocabulary words in English (1)

- Participate in English classroom activities (1)

- Let children introduce themselves in English (1)

- Building English sentences based on pictures (1)

- English day (1)

- Encourage students through praises (1)

- Making simple statements in English (1)

- Presentations in English (1)

A total of 2 teachers did not make an effort to support the oral language skills of children.

Reasons why teachers did not support oral language skills:

- Don't speak English with children (1)

- No explanations possible in English (1)

A total of 17 teachers made an effort to support peer conversations between children.

Ways to support peer conversations:

- English questions and answers in pairs (4)

- Role play in English (3)

- Group communication in English (3)

- Group work in English (2)

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- English day (2)

- Speak to the class in English (1)

- Trough cooperative learning in English (1)

- Oral activities (1)

- Stimulus activities (1)

- Reading newspapers (1)

- Encourage conversation in English (1)

- Speaking English during the break (1)

- Helping pupils with English words (1)

- Encouraged to ask questions in English (1)

- Listening to stories in English (1)

- Specific activities on peer conversations in the syllabus (1)

A total of 5 teachers did not make an effort to support peer conversations between children.

Reasons why teachers did support peer conversations:

- Too difficult for children to speak in English (3)

- I never tried (1)

One teacher did not answer this question.

A total of 19 teacher undertook activities to support the oral language skills of children.

Activities that teachers undertook:

- Reading aloud in English (8)

- English monologue (5)

- Interaction in English (5)

- Role play in English (5)

- Presentation in English (3)

- English songs (2)

- Making sentences using pictures (2)

- Games (2)

- Speaking on a theme (2)

- Discussion in English (2)

- English listening skills (1)

- Group work in English (1)

- English story telling (1)

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- English questions and answers in pairs (1)

- Performing in front of students (poem, singing) (1)

- English day (1)

- Drama classes in English (1)

- Quiz (1)

- Orally answering questions in connection with reading comprehension (1)

A total of 3 teachers did not undertake specific activities to support the oral language skills of children.

One teacher did not answer this question.