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Research Article

Languages of learning and teaching in multilingual classrooms: educational use of the African languages

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Abstract

Black South African learners are registered in Model C schools to receive their education. The language of learning and teaching is English, whilst these learners' English language proficiency is limited. They come from different urban, townships and rural areas, and their home languages are indigenous languages. The study aims to investigate and describe the challenges facing black, English second-language South African learners and to meet their needs by offering suggestions as to how they could be assisted to learn and achieve according to their full potential. The study used qualitative analysis with interview as the main data gathering tool. The participants were teachers purposively selected from the suggested pilot schools. From the phenomenological analysis the data were gathered by means of a literature review, document analysis, interviews, classroom visits and observations. The study has revealed that the black South African learners in Model C schools are faced by numerous challenges owing to their limited English proficiency, and that they do not meet the requirements to pass their grades. Their inability to cope affects their self-esteem and confidence negatively. The learners do not take risks to participate actively during lessons as they tend to avoid embarrassment and being teased by their peers. The study resulted in formulating guidelines and recommendations that will help meet the challenges faced by black South African learners in Model C schools and support them.

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Introduction

In many parts of the world, including South Africa, teachers are facing new challenges due to rapidly increasing numbers of language and culturally different learners in their classrooms. The teachers are compelled to teach through a language they do not know well (Patten, & Newhart, 2018). The effect of this is that many teachers cannot cope with this situation as they lack the knowledge and skills to deal with such classroom contexts (Dampier, 2014). Without a high level of linguistic confidence in the instructional language, teachers cannot adequately develop their learners' basic communicative skills or their cognitive ability in that language (Akinsola, 2011). There remains a gap in the research on young learners' experiences in today 's multilingual and multicultural first language classrooms. It is this gap in the research that this paper aims to address (Dampier, 2014).

The issue of language in education in South Africa at the turn of the millennium remains heavily contested (Patten, & Newhart, 2018). Apartheid language in education policy infused with unequal language proficiency demands for school learners in the country was replaced in 1997 with a new policy based on non-discriminatory language use and the internationally accepted principle of mother tongue education in the context of a bilingual or multilingual framework (Coskun, 2017). It was designed to guarantee learners the best possible access to and proficiency in another language (English for many learners) alongside the language best known by learners upon entry to school (Maguire, & Delahunt, 2017). The policy has not been accompanied or followed by any significant government-initiated implementation plan (Coskun, 2017). It has, however, been met with several arguments against its implementation

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and these have found their way into publications which are now being used to deflect government's responsibility regarding implementation. Whilst government remains inactive on the matter, the discriminatory policy of the former apartheid government continues to be practised in schools (Msila, & Gumba, 2016).

Despite the worthy aims of protecting and supporting the use of previously disadvantaged languages and using language to promote both unity and diversity in the new South Africa (Dampier, 2014), close scrutiny reveals that the language policies of the new government and the concepts that support them, serve instead to symbolically remove fundamental social realities in contemporary South African society (Msila, & Gumba, 2016).

In recognising the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages, the state must take practical positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages (Msila, & Gumba, 2016). The national government and provincial governments may use any official languages for the purposes of government considering usage, practicality, expense, regional circumstances and the balance of the needs and preferences of the population as a whole or in the province concerned, but the national government and each provincial government must use at least two official languages (Willemse, Thompson, Vanderlinde, & Mutton, 2018).

A Multilingual Classroom: The Basic Problem

By the time children begin school, they have begun gaining confidence in their ability to communicate meaningfully in their mother tongue. They have built a foundation of knowledge and experience through observing and interacting with peers and adults in their community (Maguire, & Delahunt, 2017). The language, knowledge and experience that children bring to school form an important foundation for their learning in the classroom (Dampier, 2014). The educational problem faced by many children from ethnolinguistic communities is two-fold. In the first place, some have no access to education at all (Patten & Newhart, 2018). Those who do have access to school but do not speak the official language when they enter the education system find that their knowledge, experience and language rather than serving as a foundation for learning are treated as a disadvantage (Ramrathan, 2017). Their language skills do not serve them because their language has no place in the classroom. Instead, textbooks and teaching are in a language they neither speak nor understand.

Their learning and problem-solving experiences and their knowledge of how things work in their own culture and social setting do not serve them because the culture of the classroom, the teachers, and the textbooks is that of the dominant society (Patten & Newhart, 2018). The consequences for many children are predictable and have been described in numerous studies, as noted in the quotations that follow: *When approaching the learning of language, we must make a very clear distinction between the intuitive elements of language (understanding and speaking) and the logical elements (reading and writing). Intuitive elements and logical elements of language are learnt entirely differently* (Gilleece, 2015). This is the reason why you will find individuals who understand and speak a language but cannot read and write and vice versa (Patten & Newhart, 2018). The problem lies in the fact that formal pedagogy (as defined by the West and adopted by us) does not recognize this crucial difference (Department of Basic Education, 2016). Having said this, we are still left with the challenge of facilitating intuitive learning in a classroom (Maguire, & Delahunt, 2017). Children who struggle with any language are the ones who have no exposure to that language in their daily lives (Akinsola, 2011).

There are natural processes that occur when we learn our mother tongue or when we learn languages in a multilingual and multicultural environment (Boonk, Gijselaers, Ritzen, & Brand-Gruwel, 2018). How do we bring these into the classroom? Language learning must be considered complete only when understanding, speaking, reading and writing proficiency has been attained (Msila & Gumba, 2016). The progression of learning should also ideally proceed in the same order. An indigenously developed language learning program has demonstrated outstanding results in teaching English to first generation English learners in rural, township and urban areas. The process is described as intuitive, immersive, non-instructional and non-linear (Department of Basic Education, 2016). It mirrors the learning process of the mother tongue (Patten & Newhart, 2018). A learner is immersed into a structured language environment through a variety of interesting activities that are designed to stimulate intuitive learning. There is no overt teaching. The learner is led through different kinds of language experiences (Department of Basic Education, 2016). Language is learnt using the body, through music and through stories.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

This part covers the theoretical framework of this study. Further, the various processes and concepts relevant to this study will be discussed. Our conceptual framework defines multilingual identity formation in terms of learners' active involvement in the language learning process, using the classroom as the site for participative identity (re)negotiation. Here we take an encompassing view of multilingualism, viewing all learners engaged in the act of additional language learning in classroom contexts as multilinguals (Howie, Combrinck, Roux, Tshele, Mokoena, & Palane, 2017), regardless of the number of additional languages or dialects in their repertoires, though they may not identify as such.

In addition, we argue that research in the area would benefit from adopting a multi-theoretical approach in the conceptualisation and investigation of multilingual identity (Boonk, Gijselaers, Ritzen, & Brand-Gruwel, 2018). In this paper a case is made for using the language classroom as a site where learners are offered the agency to develop a multilingual identity. For this to happen we argue that learners need sociolinguistic knowledge in order to understand and explicitly reflect on the languages and dialects in their own and others' linguistic repertoires, whether learned in school, at home or in the community (Boonk, Gijselaers, Ritzen, & Brand-Gruwel, 2018). We see the development of a multilingual identity as potentially important for two main reasons: (*a) if learners adopt an identity as a multilingual, they may be more likely to invest effort in the learning and maintenance of their languages, (b) with increasing mobility and greater diversity in communities and classrooms a multilingual mind set might lead to enhanced social cohesion in the school and beyond* (Department of Basic Education, 2016).

This paper reviews literature that relates to multilingualism and the correct status of indigenous African languages in South African schools. The study starts by stating what the South African constitution stipulates on the issue of languages and their status, as well as their expected functions in social life. The current status of indigenous languages is reviewed alongside that of other official languages which is English and Afrikaans. South Africa is a multilingual country and as such prior to 1994 English and Afrikaans were the only official languages (Department of Basic Education, 2016). There have been many indigenous languages spoken and understood by the majority of South Africans (Prinsloo, Rogers, & Harvey, 2018). It is interesting to note that the majority of South Africans spoke indigenous African languages and Setswana is widely spoken in North West Province which is the smallest but one of the richest provinces in South Africa (Prinsloo, Rogers, & Harvey, 2018). Indigenous languages had been used as languages of communication and as school subjects within provincial borders of this country up to 1994, when this country had its first democratic election (Gilleece, 2015).

It was after then that indigenous languages were accorded their deserving official status. Out of many indigenous languages spoken by South Africans, nine of them were elevated to the same status as English and Afrikaans, to make a total of eleven official languages (Howie, Combrinck, Roux, Tshele, Mokoena, & Palane, 2017). Today the official languages of the Republic of South Africa are Sepedi Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu. Ramrathan (2017) argues that English facilitates communication not only with neighbouring countries, but within the wider context of international discourse. Financial considerations make this language the most feasible medium of instruction after the initial years of primary education (Willemse, Thompson, Vanderlinde, & Mutton, 2018). These considerations include the cost of translating the existing texts into other languages, English and Afrikaans. These are languages in which texts are readily available (Gilleece, 2015).

In recognising the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous languages of South Africa, the state, through the Constitution (1996), undertook to take practical and positive measures to elevate the status of and advance the use of these languages (Statistics South Africa, 2018)**.** The national government and provincial governments would use any official languages for the purposes of government, considering usage, practicality, expense, regional circumstances and the balance of the needs and preferences of the population as a whole or in the province concerned. The national government and each provincial government would use at least two official languages (Howie, Combrinck, Roux, Tshele, Mokoena, & Palane, 2017).

It is clearly stated in the Constitution of South Africa (1996) that the national government and the provincial governments, by legislative and other measures, must regulate and monitor the use of official languages (Prinsloo, Rogers, & Harvey, 2018). All languages must enjoy parity of esteem and must be treated equitably. In order to deal with the issue of languages, the Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB) was established. The sole aim of this body was to:

- Promote, and create conditions for, the development and use of all official languages; the Khoi, Noma and San languages; and sign languages; and
- Promote and ensure respect for all languages commonly used by communities in South Africa. These include German, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Portuguese, Tamil, Telegu and Urdu, as well as languages used for religious purposes in South Africa, like Arabic, Hebrew, Sanskrit, and others. Ramrathan (2017) argues that the structural conditions under which its Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB) legislation (and subsequent amendments to its legislation in 1999) placed it, as well as political pressures which threatened the independence of the board, have rendered the body instrumentally weak (Howie, Combrinck, Roux, Tshele, Mokoena, & Palane, 2017).

The relationship between Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB) and government soured when processes such as the tabling in parliament of the Pan South African Language Board Bill in 1998 unfolded (Slain,

2019). The Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB) was displeased at the fact that it had not been given an opportunity to make known its reservations concerning the amendments (Gilleece, 2015). This undermined the autonomy of the board to such an extent that the first deputy chairperson of Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB), Neville Alexander, resigned from the board in March 1998 as soon as it became clear that its autonomy was under threat. Another important approach to language education policy draws its inspiration from ecological approaches to linguistic diversity (Howie, Combrinck, Roux, Tshele, Mokoena, & Palane, 2017).

Problem Study

One of the most dramatic but unplanned consequences of the political changes that took place after the general elections in 1994 as far as the education sector is concerned was the sudden inflow of African-language-speaking learners into schools which had previously been open only to people classified white or coloured in South Africa (North West Province). For reasons that are not entirely clear to us at Multiracial schools or former whites-only schools, this inflow of learners was not accompanied by a redeployment of appropriately qualified Setswana-speaking teachers, especially to those schools where; Setswana-speaking learners became the majority or a sizeable minority of the school population (Maguire, & Delahunt, 2017).

The consequence of this dynamic was and continues to be a situation in which both teachers and learners are virtually not able to communicate in their relations with each other. Since most of the teachers speak English but hardly any Setswana, and most of the learners have either no grasp or, at best, a very imperfect proficiency in the English language, it is almost impossible for them to interact meaningfully. The result is frustration, disillusionment and increasing racial and ethnic prejudice on all sides.

Indications are that the increasing use of English as Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) in the Foundation Phase at the expense of learners' primary languages negatively affects teaching and learning in many urban schools (Department of Basic Education, 2016). While the teacher's proficiency in the learners' primary language may perfect the situation, comparative research findings show target language immersion of speakers of low-status languages into a high-status language is a way for failure (Bradbury, 2018). More systematic observation is needed to confirm this trend and to grasp its full implications in classrooms that are themselves becoming increasingly multilingual in composition (Patten, & Newhart, 2018).

The current education system is riddled with inequities; language is an obstacle that comes in the way of learning (Patten & Newhart, 2018). Educationists agree that it is best to teach in the child's mother tongue, but the issue is a complex and emotive one (Statistics South Africa, 2018), given the diverse number of languages and dialects in the country and the attendant linguistic prejudice that politicians are eager to exploit for their own gains (Willemse, Thompson, Vanderlinde, & Mutton, 2018). English, considered the passport to social mobility, is meanwhile becoming the preferred language of instruction among parents, many of who even put their children in unrecognized schools only because their signboards say English-medium (Howie, Combrinck, Roux, Tshele, Mokoena, & Palane, 2017).

Method

This study is a qualitative interpretive case study which adopted phenomenology as an approach for the data collection. Phenomenological approach was considered since it seeks to explore, describe and analyse the meaning of individual lived experience (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke, & Braun, 2017); how they perceive it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke, & Braun, 2017). The case study was used as it clearly apprehends the valuable information about the teachers' actual challenges of implementing indigenous official African language as a language of learning and teaching in multilingual classrooms. The case study's unique strength is its competency in dealing with a full assortment of evidence-document, articles, interviews and observations, (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).

Participants

These methods were conducted with the two Foundation Phase teachers of the urban and township schools. Purposive sampling was used as a strategy of participant selection which assisted in obtaining the two participants for this study (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). The issues of sampling, ethical considerations as well as the limitations that guided the study are also highlighted (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). I chose the participants who are rich in information and more knowledgeable and informative about the languages of learning and teaching in multilingual classrooms in the Foundation Phase classrooms. All teachers were females and usually female teachers have knowledge of dealing with young learners since they are parents themselves. In general, all the teachers were also older in age. They all had a good reputation for teaching in foundation phase, at their respective schools. Both teachers were home

speakers of Setswana and one was Southern Sotho speaking. These two teachers were from well performing schools, Teacher H-52-F has taught in the same school for more than twenty-three years, while Teacher D-48-F had been working in the same school for eighteen years. Their teaching experience ranges from eighteen to twenty-three years. All the teachers have been serving at their schools ever since they started teaching.

Table 1

Participant Structures

No	Participant Code	Age	Gender	Education level	Seniority	Home language	Teaching Experience
1	Teacher H-52-F	52	Female	Primary Teacher's Certificate (PTC), Further Diploma in Education (FDE) and bachelor's degree in educational management	Post Level 1 Teacher	Setswana	23 years
2	Teacher D-48-F	48	Female	Basic Education Teacher Diploma (BETD), Higher Education Diploma (HED), Bachelor Honours in Education (BED).	Post Level 1Teacher	Southern Sotho	18 years

Data Collection

Data collection was done through observations, interviews, document analysis and field notes. Triangulation was applied in the study to enhance the accuracy of data (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke, & Braun, 2017). Data was solicited from comparison of schools in urban areas with English and Afrikaans as medium of instruction and in rural areas with English and Setswana as medium of instruction. Themes and categories emerging from the interviews, document analysis, observations and field notes were identified and briefly analysed.

Semi-Structured Interview Form

As a qualitative researcher I was solely responsible for all data collected. My professionalism and objectivity are of the utmost importance in order to construct the reality. I used semi-structured interviews, open-ended questions were prepared, which allowed the teachers to share and express their views. At times, additional questions were posed to the teachers with the purpose of clarifying answers or obtaining more information on the research topic. This technique allows the collection of rich and meaningful data. The themes and categories emerging from the data, in conjunction with the relevant literature, assisted in answering the research questions:

- How are languages of learning and teaching in multilingual classrooms taught in Foundation Phase classrooms in the North West Province of South Africa?
- What are the experiences and challenges of teachers teaching in a medium that is not their mother tongue?

Observation

I was physically present but remained uninvolved in the situation. I observed how learners and teachers communicated habitually and most effectively, in their home language and in English. The tools I used to collect my observational data were observation checklists and field notes. I observed the language usage of the teacher, content taught, discipline and interaction with learners, preparation, resources used, teaching approach and strategy applied. These observations occurred on a weekly basis for an hour per class for a period of six weeks, observing the how the languages of learning and teaching in multilingual classrooms are taught in foundation phase classrooms in the North West Province of South Africa.

Document Analysis

Which document analysed, who analysed it.

I analysed learners' workbooks for the evidence of work done. Tests or assessment tasks were also studied. Teachers' lesson preparation was perused and related to what was actually happening in class. Adherence to relevant policy documents was considered.

Data Analysis process

I analysed the data by describing the context of each teacher separately, and how they teach, as well as their beliefs regarding language teaching in Model C schools. I looked at the materials they use during teaching, the arrangement of learners' desks and how their classrooms look inside. I also checked each teacher's professional qualifications, age, as well as their years of experience in the teaching profession. After looking at each teacher's data separately, themes

were then extracted from the data by grouping similar codes together. I then started looking for patterns, similarities and differences between them and accounted for them.

Procedure

I conducted a two-month pilot study in April 2018 while I was engaged in my capacity of lecturer with the evaluation of student teachers during Teaching Practice. This provided me with an opportunity to interview home language teachers in the schools. Since Teaching Practice involves classroom observations after each observed lesson, I was able to conduct focus group interviews with both the experienced teachers as well as the student teachers I was evaluating on how they teach languages of learning and teaching in multilingual classrooms. Two focus group interviews were conducted, and each focus group interview lasted for a period of 30 minutes. I conducted two classroom observations. During this fieldwork I spent a week (2 school days) with each of the two participating languages of learning and teaching in multilingual classrooms teachers.

Results and Discussion

The findings reported in this paper are based on two teachers' responses. We report on our findings as to the problems and challenges facing the Languages of Learning and Teaching in Multilingual Early Childhood Classrooms we visited. The coping strategies of teachers and schools are discussed under the relevant sub-headings below:

Problems in English and Afrikaans Medium Classrooms

Teachers in the urban schools, express frustration at a situation in which they cannot communicate effectively with many of their learners. In a situation in which the teacher understands perhaps half a dozen words or phrases in English or Afrikaans, and the learner knows only enough Setswana to follow the most basic instructions and to answer in monosyllables, interaction between teacher and learner is necessarily stunted.

> *Last year I was desperate because I couldn't make the children understand when they came to school. That first term is crucial. They don't understand English and they don't understand classroom instructions (Teacher H-52-F).*

Learners need a lot of scaffolding if they are to say anything at all in their additional language. This makes for painfully slow communication at times. Often, the teacher's perception that learners will not be able to answer in more than one or two words leads to a teacher-dominated approach to learning. A more extreme example of this occurred at School H, where birthday girl Lesedi is called to the front. There follows an uncooperative discussion in which Teacher H does her best to engage Lesedi in discussion by asking her in English about her birthday how she celebrated it, who was there, what presents she got etcetera. Lesedi is unable to respond except to nod or shake her head reservedly to questions frequently requiring only a yes or no response. While the class energetically sings happy birthday followed by; ke boitumelo go wena. Lesedi has not been given the chance to use her primary language Setswana to express herself in this instance. The result is a shortened communication, frustrating on all sides.

Some teachers blame themselves for not knowing enough Setswana. Others blame parents for enrolling their children in English and/or Afrikaans medium schools without considering the educational consequences. Others, again, hold the Department responsible for forcing schools to enrol children irrespective of their home language a cornerstone of the new language policy. Teacher H, for instance, feels it is unfair on both herself and on the children to be facing each other across a language barrier, *Are Setswana-speaking children not hopelessly confused by being denied their mother tongue? she asks*. She says her job is to teach through the medium of English. She speaks of her inward problem, realising that what children need is the educational use of their home language, knowing she cannot provide it. She also recognises that her job would be on the line if a Setswana-speaking teacher were to be appointed at the school.

Discipline and Control

A noticeable symptom of the communication breakdown between teacher and learners in township classes is the occurrence of discipline problems. *As Teacher E explains, `At the beginning of the year I would speak to them and they don't understand. I will have discipline problems.'* These problems derive from the teacher's diminished authority over her charges at a time when they literally do not speak the same language. Teacher E attributes discipline problems to cultural factors.

> *The children do tend to listen more to someone from their own cultural background. I think they have more respect for that person. Eventually they learn to respect you. (Teacher E interview).*

What is important to note here is the teacher's perception that language competence, cultural background and discipline are linked. Discipline problems were much in evidence in several of the township schools. Some teachers

are forced to spend an inordinate amount of time controlling the children. In one lesson, Teacher E spends roughly one quarter of her time reprimanding the children, mostly in English, once in Setswana.

In Schools E and H, where Setswana-speaking teaching assistants are present, it often falls to the assistant to reprimand a naughty child. In one 45-minute observation period, Assistant H reprimanded individual learners in Setswana 15 times, this in addition to Teacher H's frequent reprimands.

In line with the South African Schools Act prohibition on corporal punishment, teachers see themselves forced to resort to a range of sometimes innovative, sometimes strict measures to control children. Such controlling takes various forms:

a verbal reprimand; singling out naughty children for special treatment, e.g. sitting in the front of the class, or standing with hands on head when everyone else is sitting;
(threats of) detention

By contrast, discipline appears to be less of a problem at School E township, where the teacher shares a home language with the children and appears to related more easily to them, she also lives where they do in the informal settlement next to the school.

The following example serves to illustrate the point regarding the learning programme of Life Skills at School D, which has done more than most to accommodate Setswana-speaking learners by appointing two Batswana (speaking) teachers. With the help of hand-drawn posters which she has stuck on the board, Teacher D tells the story in English of children who are taken to the school doctor for a routine medical check-up. The story is refreshingly appropriate for featuring Setswana names of children Mpho and Lerato and goes some way towards undermining gender stereotypes by presenting a female doctor who is white in addition to the black female nurse. However, at one-point learners are told that Mpho and Lerato did not understand what the doctor said because they don't understand English. Children are required to repeat this line, as they do all the others. In checking for understanding afterwards, Teacher D says to the learners:

Teacher D: Two children did not understand the nurse; Mpho and Lerato
Teacher D to one learner: Why didn't you understand the nurse? Learner 2 (Neo, not the one addressed by the teacher): They don't speak English.

Teacher D is being accommodating by addressing one of the learners in Afrikaans in checking for comprehension. There is a delicious irony in the fact that a Setswana-speaking learner demonstrates her knowledge of both English and Afrikaans, whereas `Mpho and Lerato' (who are clearly meant to represent Setswana-speaking children in urban schools) cannot understand English. `Mpho and Lerato' are expected to know English; they don't, so they are seen to have a deficiency. Their home language clearly intended to be Setswana is not considered; they are expected to accommodate the school, rather than the other way around. In this way the teaching of life skills, despite the best intentions of the teacher, ends up strengthening deficit models of education.

Coping Strategies in English and Afrikaans Medium Classrooms

Three coping strategies employed by teachers in the English and Afrikaans-medium classes are briefly highlighted below:

It should be noted that while peer interpreting is common to the two classrooms visited, Setswana language, support, and the language-sensitive grouping of learners were observed in only two schools in each case. The question of how representative these latter strategies are, must therefore remained unanswered. Teachers in the urban classrooms use peer interpreting (Language of Learning and Teaching to Setswana) to bridge the largest gaps in oral interaction in the classroom, typically when it becomes clear that the learner has not understood the teacher's question or instruction. The teacher typically calls on the multi-lingual peer to tell her in Setswana (Teacher H) or `What is that in Setswana' (Teacher H). Most teachers admit this is a desperation measure. We observed the strategy several times during numeracy groups, in which those children fluent in both the Language of Learning and Teaching and Setswana were called upon to interpret for their friends who did not follow.

This impromptu peer interpreting appeared to have mixed results, however, and is not without its problems. In some cases, the interpreter enabled the friend to answer the question; at other times, the interpreter appeared to go beyond the call of duty by giving the answer as well, thereby short- circulating the process. In another instance, the multi-lingual learner appeared to have misunderstood the teacher's instruction:

Teacher H: Everyone on the mat. Put down your pencil. What is that in Setswana?
Learner: Beya pene mo fatshe.

Teacher H: Op die mat.

Teacher H appears to want the learner to interpret *everyone on the mat* into Setswana; the learner has misunderstood this. Teacher H confirms this interpretation by repeating the first instruction in Afrikaans. Later in the same lesson Teacher H asks the learners, `What do you call a doctor in Setswana' When the reply comes *(ngaka),* Teacher H gamely takes up the challenge. `Let me see if I can say *ngaka*.' Children clearly enjoy this validation of themselves.

Language Support

Most of the township schools offer some form of language support to weaker learners. At school E, for instance, all Grade 1 children are tested for their English language proficiency at the start of the year. Those most at risk of failure are given extra lessons in English. Two schools have gone further than most in providing for language support for learners and teaching support for teachers. The schools in question make use of bilingual Setswana or English teaching assistants to perfect otherwise obstinate communication problems of a very basic nature in the classroom. In general, the teaching assistants fill in many of the communication and learning gaps arising from the linguistic mismatch between teacher and learners. In both School D and School E, First Language Setswana-speaking children constitute most learners in the respective Grade 1 classrooms, and struggle with the official language of teaching (English). While Teacher D and Teacher E have made some effort to learn basic vocabulary items and phrases in Setswana, neither by their own admission is able to use Setswana for teaching and learning purposes.

School D, through its governing body, has employed a parent full-time since January 2020 to assist Teacher D with her Grade 1 class. Assistant D performs the following tasks on a day- to-day basis:

> *-interpreting teacher talk for the benefit of those children whose English is weak (English to Setswana), in all three learning areas of the Foundation Phase (FP), i.e. Literacy, Numeracy, Life Skills; interpreting learner talk for the teacher's benefit (Setswana to English); reading and telling stories in Setswana to the class, particularly to small groups of Setswana speaking learners; teaching Setswana sounds (phonics) and vocabulary related to the relevant Foundation Phase organiser, such as the family (e.g. mme - mother); providing translations into Setswana to English sentences that make up the collective news book; helping to control the children through a variety of verbal measures in Setswana such as songs, reprimands, instructions related to classroom logistics such as seating.*

Thus, Assistant D has a considerable degree of co-responsibility for the class. From our own observations and the interviews, the working relationship between Teacher D and Assistant D is a good one. They prepare lessons together each day after school, with Teacher D assuming the main responsibility. However, with Teacher D giving the lead in all respects in the classroom, this cannot justifiably be termed a team-teaching situation. Assistant D's lack of formal teaching qualifications may present an additional obstacle to full equality. At present, Assistant D's role as auxiliary is an important one that has made a major difference.

> *Teacher D, I was very desperate at the beginning of last year. Once I found that I had a helper, immediately the situation eased up, because besides the language there is the cultural aspect. The children do tend to listen more to someone from their own cultural background. I think they have more respect for that person. Eventually they learn to respect you. But Assistant D's presence helps. At the beginning of the year I would speak to them and they don't understand. I will have discipline problems. As soon as Assistant D says something, the whole atmosphere changes. Especially in the first few weeks of Grade 1 it is essential to have a helper, a translator (Teacher D-48-F).*

Assistant D's presence in the classroom, then, can be said to have had a humanising effect: it has improved basic communication between teacher and learners and taken the edge off discipline problems resulting from the communication breakdown Teacher D alludes to. In our observation, Assistant D is often seen by the children as a kind parent figure who quite literally understands the hurts and grievances and needs that Grade 1 children voice in the classroom. Her presence has also enabled learners to express themselves more freely when interacting with Teacher D, notably during news time when children are given the chance of relating a news item to the class.

Above all, the-presence and participation of Assistant D has- introduced the home language of most of the children into the daily life of the classroom. During our visits, an estimated 20% to 25% of all teaching time was in Setswana as a result of Assistant D's interventions. While these are not always planned, and hence do not constitute a systematic dual-language approach, they nevertheless have the effect of challenging School D's official English-only Language of Learning and Teaching policy. One of the more innovative self-made materials we came across was a bilingual (English and Setswana) news book in Teacher D's class. Every day the teacher adds one sentence (in English) generated from interaction with the children. The sentence is translated into Setswana by Assistant D, written into the book. Children regularly have the chance to read (i.e. recite from memory, following the teacher) the book. Here both languages are

validated in an integrative way; bilingualism is promoted, and children literally hear their own voices in Setswana and see it in print.

At School E, Assistant E fulfils a range of tasks largely like those performed by Assistant D, at School D. These include interpreting from English to Setswana for the learners' sake, and occasionally interpreting back from Setswana into English for the teacher's benefit. Assistant E also helps check learners' individual work, reinforcing concepts Teacher E has introduced to the class. On occasion, when Teacher E is unable to be in class, Assistant E takes over this despite her lack of formal training.

> *When I'm not here, they tell me she's taking over. Maybe it's because I'm setting a good example, she's doing what I would be doing. She's actually very good, even though she's not qualified, (Teacher E Interview).*

Two further aspects of Assistant E's work should be mentioned here. The first is that she` spends only approximately half her time in Teacher E's Grade I class - usually the first two hours of every day. The second half she spends in the other Foundation Phase classes (Grades 2 and 3) assisting in similar ways, where her Setswana and English bilingualism is most needed. What does Teacher E do when her Assistant has to leave for another class?

> *Then I do things where I don't have to talk much, where children must do more, such as writing. Or sometimes I'll read stories to them, even if they are in English. Some of them can follow by now, (Teacher E Interview).*

By the teacher's own admission, she is limited in her activities by the absence of her assistant. There can be no clearer indication of the need for ongoing language support in such (multilingual) situations.

A second feature of School E is that Teacher E and Assistant E have evolved an approach to dual language teaching that can usefully be termed duplication or doubling up. Almost everything Teacher E says in English to the class is repeated by Assistant E in Setswana. This occurs particularly when new concepts are introduced, or when known ones are revised, or when instructions are given. For example, Teacher E asks, `How many days of the week?' At a nod from her, Assistant E interprets almost immediately, malatsi a beke ke a makae? One effect of this repetition is that children have two chances, of understanding everything of importance the first time in English, the second in Setswana, the First Language of the majority.

The lesson also takes longer than it would have done if only one language had been used, although this is clearly a price the teacher is happy to pay in exchange for increased comprehension on the part of her learners:

> *The duplication is not really a problem. Especially with Outcomes Based Education: you don't have to go where you want to, but where the child goes. They don't have to be able to add up to 10 by a specific time... Particularly with the interpreting - it may look as if it takes a bit of time, but it helps the time. Once you reach the next grade things will go more quickly with the next teacher, (Teacher E interview).*

Apart from the time it takes, systematic duplication of instructions appears to have the serious consequence of undermining Teacher E's authority in the classroom. Children tune out to Teacher E's instructions and questions in English because they know that these will be repeated in Setswana by Assistant E. When the latter is not their communication becomes very difficult, and Teacher E relies on peer interpreting to convey the most basic information. While this type of dual - language teaching clearly requires some co-ordination in class, it does not necessarily entail joint preparation.

> *We don't really prepare lessons together. Assistant E knows what I do, we simply fit in with each other, (Teacher E interview).*

Assistant H testifies to enjoying the work, for which she is not formally qualified, although she admits to having difficulties with interpreting at times:

> *...sometimes it's very difficult to translate because you forget the word in Setswana or just don't know the word totally in Setswana.*

Unlike Teacher E, Assistant E lives in the township from which most of the children come adjacent to the school. This gives her access to the parents and provides Teacher E with a ready source of information about children's home backgrounds. As Assistant E says, `I always report back to the teacher after I have visited the children at home. Assistant E also plays an important role in translating letters to parents into Setswana.

For Teacher E, an interesting finding to have emerged from the presence of Assistant E is that she has been able to distinguish between language problems, on the one hand, and learning problems, on the other.

> *But it is not only a language question. Some of the children have serious teaming*
>
> *difficulties... No matter what Assistant E and I might do, it simply does not get through to them,* (Teacher E interview).

In our own observation this statement is hard to corroborate. We do not necessarily agree that the form of dual-language duplication practised by Teacher E and Assistant E is making the best use of existing resources. A more effective language distribution in the school day might well make a substantial difference to most learners' motivation and performance. This, in turn, would tend to point towards teaching methodology as a critical factor in affecting learning outcomes including individual bilingualism and would question a too-ready acceptance of learning difficulties amongst children.

Team Teaching

The first two years involved a team-teaching approach where the teachers worked on strategies for making sure that what was being taught was comprehensible to all the children. A challenge has been to get both teachers to treat each other as equals, so that Teacher E becomes as a Setswana speaking role model for the children and staff alike. Another has been to get the Setswana speaking children to feel comfortable enough to use Setswana for educational purposes in the classroom. The first year of the programme, captures both the sense of initiative the two teachers began to develop as they explored working together as well as the self-confidence, she saw being engendered in the Setswana speaking children through this process:

> *Teacher D and Assistant D also tried team teaching at the same time. She would have a group of Setswana speakers and I would have the English speakers. We would use a chant with a sequence of pictures relating to a story. A discussion (in each group, Teacher D Assistant D) about the pictures would follow, encouraging the children to speak out more freely e.g.*

"Naledi what do you think is happening in the picture numbered 4?" They would then listen to me telling the story. After this the groups would then formulate their own story, using the pictures as a guideline. The two groups then get together and a few children from each group would read their story. I would normally ask a Setswana speaking child to translate their story to the English speakers. This, I always find interesting because most Setswana speakers' hands would arrow up, to volunteer to translate. This just shows that their confidence is boosted by them getting the concepts and ideas in their mother tongue.

Shortly after Assistant D began work, one of the class teachers began to complain that *the presence of a Setswana speaker and use of Setswana in the classroom, was taking up too much of her time, and was preventing her from teaching the basics to the children.* Her attitude was the exact opposite of the other teacher (Teacher E), and by the end of the first term, *we agreed that it was best to cease engagements with that class.*

Several teachers do not want to get involved with the language issue. Unexpressed fear of losing their jobs if Setswana should become a medium of teaching and learning in school, and a more generally negative attitudes to the value of African languages contribute to a fair amount of hidden racism among staff members in many ex-white and coloured schools. Dynamics such as this will be challenging the education system for some time to come.

Language of Learning and Teaching the Drive for English

In all the urban schools the home language is the Language of Learning and Teaching at Grade 1 level. Some teachers are aware that it is the best way to educate learners. In School D the teacher quoted an example of a learner who was withdrawn from the school to go to a former coloured school, who had since come back because the parents realised that he was not coping. Generally, learners are ahead in these schools in comparison to multilingual urban schools because of the use of the mother tongue, and as the teacher to School D mentioned, because she uses the mother tongue, she can stretch her learners to the fullest. She does not feel that they are too young for anything, and when she-does stretch them the learners surprise her.

Despite urban schools' adherence to the home language as the main Language of Learning and Teaching in the Foundation Phase, there is increasing pressure to introduce English into the curriculum the earlier, the better. Often English is randomly introduced in an oral form at Grade 1 level and there seems to be no clear guidelines as to how much teaching and learning should be done in the home language and how much in English. As a result, teachers rely on their intuitions as to when and how much English to introduce in the Grade 1 classroom.

By way of illustration, in School E the teacher uses mostly Setswana in her Grade 1 class. However, English is also used to teach key concepts in numeracy, such as the operational signs tlhakanya (plus), and numbers from 1-20; life skills concepts such as the parts of the human body (Setswana and English, e.g. tlhogo (head) also chanted in an English rhyme: (*Head and shoulders, knees and toes...),* the five senses drilled in English. e.g. `I hear with my ...?' `Ears'), family names (e.g. mother, brother, sister), for example, and months of the year are derived from the English name, e.g. `June'. A considerable proportion of the print environment is in English (posters - commercial and home-made), while labels on classroom objects appear in two languages, e.g. lobati (door), letlhabaphefo, (chalkboard).

By way of contrast, numeracy practices in the township schools demonstrate the benefits of mother-tongue instruction, i.e. the educational value of the home language in the teaching and learning of concepts. Most of the time

teachers use the question and answer method to teach numeracy. Word sums are discussed in the home language and children are encouraged to count mentally (in their heads). In one class learners have no problem with counting from 1-50; impressively, some even manage it backwards. In School D, Teacher D explains the meaning of the multiplication concept in Setswana, moving from addition to multiplication. Learners could work out several sums which we thought were rather difficult for Grade 1. The teacher explained that the learners have no problem understanding because their language is known to them. Sometimes the teacher uses Setswana because there are some children who have Setswana as a home language.

Multilingualism, Language Varieties and Pronunciation

In the urban schools, learners are exposed to a few African languages besides Setswana, in such a way that they do not know at times that they are using a Sepedi or Sesotho word. The problem with this is that the teachers want the learners to speak their home language without mixing it with any other. In School F the teacher was asking learners to describe what they saw in some pictures of the OBE workbook. One picture was that of a lefesetere (window) and one learner bravely said `ke bona lefesetere' (I see a window). The teacher was quick to correct the learner. She said that lefesetere is not a Setswana word. Another learner said ke- window. The teacher again told them that is still not a Setswana word. In the end one learner said letlhabaphefo and the teacher was satisfied with the answer. This insistence on the standard variety does not appear to encourage multilingualism, however; nor would not help in the development of African languages. Teachers want learners to speak African languages correctly without using any borrowed words, or other words from other African languages that refer to the same thing.

In School E the teacher mentioned that her main problem was with the learners who mixed Setswana and isiZulu. She said as soon as she realises that a learner has weak Setswana then she will make sure that she gives her as much attention as possible. According to her the learners are immersed in isiZulu environment, so their parents have sent them to School E so that they can learn isiZulu and even though she has some learners who speak isiZulu she uses Setswana most of the time. She tries though to accommodate the Zulu speakers because she can speak Setswana, but then she said just like us who spoke a language other than Setswana and we could understand what was going on in the classroom, even the Setswana speakers understand.

The teacher at School E appeared to accommodate some of the Zulu speakers, even though it is a Setswana school. One day she was teaching about boys and girls and then she drew pictures to show what they looked like. She then came to us to ask for their Zulu spellings. Even when she gives individual learners attention, *she says that I must speak Zulu to this one because she has forgotten Setswana.* I suppose she is doing this subconsciously. She would not speak to the Setswana learners in Zulu, probably for the same purist reason mentioned earlier.

In the schools where there are learners who speak a language other than the one that is used as the medium (Schools D and E) the teachers have communication problems. For example, when the teacher tries to teach vowels e.g. -o-, it becomes difficult. The OBE workbook the teacher has been supplied with assumes that -o- will be pronounced the same in all languages, yet this is not the case. In some African (Nguni) languages for instance, it is pronounced -u-.

The same applies to the pronunciation of some consonants. In Teacher E's language lesson, for example, the syllable - li- is pronounced -di- but then the teacher has to accommodate some of the learners who speak Sesotho, and who pronounce the syllable as it is. Other sounds which pose problems are -r- and -g-. Learners at times transfer the Setswana or Sotho pronunciation of this sound to English. Another word where learners tend to transfer pronunciation is `three' and in School E for instance, the teacher took some time trying to teach her learners not to say `free' instead of (three). Even the teacher herself struggles to pronounce this sound, but because she is the model for the leaners, they will accept what she says is right. Closely related to this problem is one about accents. For instance, in Setswana learners find it difficult to pronounce the syllable `the', transferring their Setswana pronunciation `de'.

Problems Common to All Classrooms Visited

Literacy and the Phonics Focus

Teachers testified that of the three learning programmes for the foundation phase, literacy, and phonics presented the most problems. Every teacher spends large chunks of her time on literacy activities which centre around the phonics philosophy of sounding out letters and words and in the process moving from part to whole via pattern drills, both orally and in writing. A typical example would be for the teacher to ask children to identify initial sounds, middle sounds and final sounds in semantically unconnected words such as man, cat, bag, wag, sing, six, ten, bang, pot (in English), or to ask children to come up with their own words featuring a particular letter such as -g-, e.g. gana, gama, gasa, gafa (in Setswana). Children are immediately bored to distraction by the repetition of sounds and letters, and the effort of bringing the two together in decontextualised settings.

What is physically clear to the observer is the unbearably slow pace at which learning happens when phonics is taught, especially in additional language environments. Boonk, Gijselaers, Ritzen, & Brand-Gruwel (2018) note that even First Language users of Language of Learning and Teaching often have difficulty with phonics. This problem is exacerbated in English Second Language contexts, since English is only approximately 70% phonically regular and many of the most frequent words (e.g. the, once, enough) and even some names (e.g. John, Johana) cannot be decoded by sounding out the letters that make up the words. In our observation, all the teachers in the township schools experienced difficulties when teaching phonics. It is hard work and yields low return. The merits or otherwise of a phonics-dominated approach to print are not at issue here (Boonk, Gijselaers, Ritzen, & Brand-Gruwel, 2018).

What is important to note is the difficulties teachers in linguistically diverse classes encounter with phonics, especially in English, but also in Afrikaans. A complicating factor here is that of pronunciation. When a child calls out `Jam Alley' and the teacher understands this to have been `Germany', pronunciation becomes an issue: the unexpected for the teacher flattening of the -a- vowel results in a momentary miscommunication. In this context phonics becomes synonymous with a variety of standard spoken South African English, and takes little, account of children's own pronunciation. Thus, on occasion pronunciation becomes an issue in the multilingual classroom, when teachers feel that it may confuse children with their spelling if not checked. Teacher D is quite explicit that this is the reason, whereas Teacher E implies it when correcting children's pronunciation of *tin*, which to her sounds like *teen,* (feel and fill, meat and meet).

Since the learning area of literacy is dominated by phonics very little time remains for stories. Stories often become gap-fillers at the end of the day once the real work has been done and children are restless. For stories serve to quieten children down. For example, Teacher D says she reads one page of one story to her class per day, at the end of the day when children cannot concentrate anymore. In the township schools, there are often no books for children; and even when there is a story book or two, it is the teacher who reads to the children. While all teachers make some use of stories, their potential for literacy learning remains largely unfulfilled. As Slain (2019) points out, hearing and telling stories has shown itself to be the single most effective approach to promoting literacy in young children in South Africa and elsewhere. Approaches to literacy in the urban schools are similarly characterised by a move from part to whole. Teachers typically start by teaching vowels, then single consonants, double consonants, and finally complete words. At the start of the year a heavy emphasis is placed on writing patterns so that children learn how to hold a pen. In most of the schools that we visited, learners were mostly taught to identify vowels and consonants. We observed very little reading activity and very little writing. Most of the time the teachers use the question and answer method and the lessons were done orally.

Teachers in the urban schools at least have the advantage of sharing the same home language/s with the children. While pattern drills are the order of the day (e.g. copying the letter -r- many times neatly between the lines of a worksheet), the use of children's home languages coupled with more learner-centred methods occasionally facilitates a more creative lesson in which children are enabled to express themselves. During a reading lesson at School E the teacher translated a story written in English, The Little Red Hen, into Setswana. She employed role play in the home language which added greatly towards understanding the story. It was interesting to see learners choose the roles they want to play, instead of the teacher assigning them.

In School D the teacher uses the breakthrough method to teach reading and writing. Children are made to form their own sentences and thereafter use them to practise writing. They construct and read the sentences as opposed to reading or copying what has been prepared by somebody else. This makes space for creativity and imagination because learners can pick words and make sentences. Small groups are also formed to give learners individual attention and each learner is supposed to go to the front and write his/her own sentence. The teacher insists that when children read words, they should point at them. She emphasises that reading should not just be singing, learners should separate the words.

However, poor teaching methods often undermine intended outcomes of literacy lessons even when the home language is used. In School E, for example, we observed a lesson where the teacher was teaching learners how to write the letter -d-. She drew a picture of a duck and used it to illustrate how the -d- was to be written. She explained the concept in Setswana and emphasised that the *duck* should face the front and its tail should be at the back and its feet should be long. The method was a little confusing because when the learners attempted to write their own *-d-* on the board, they tried to decorate it in imitation of the teacher's illustration. The teacher's strategy was to take those ahead to teach them first; she said they would help to teach the slower ones. The rest of the class was watching and not concentrating on what she was doing. When the first group was called to come and write on the board, they still did not know how to write the ***-d-.***

Teaching Methods

In teaching all the above, teachers most of the time teachers use the question and answer method. The teacher is still considered all knowing, and learners come to school to listen to what the teacher must teach them. Even though in some of the schools we visited the teachers and learners all spoke one language (Setswana, Sesotho, or Sepedi, respectively), there were some communication problems that we observed. In School D the teacher was teaching the learners to make a distinction between left and right and she said that *`the right hand is the one that you use when you eat.'*

On a more general level, while it was not the intention of the research to evaluate teachers' performances it proved impossible to avoid noticing that on the whole teachers fared poorly as facilitators of learning. Notwithstanding constraints such as large classes and the demands of the new curriculum, teachers generally do not measure up against the following guidelines of what we considered to be good practice: *acknowledging the different languages and dialects in the class (language awareness); working with existing multilingualism in the classroom, i.e. drawing on learners' existing languages as learning resources; managing learning in groups; creative use of learning materials; enabling cognitively demanding learning to take place.*

Children are consistently underestimated by teachers in terms of their cognitive or intellectual capacity. This was most evident where Language of Learning and Teaching is not an obstacle i.e. in the township classrooms but extends to urban classrooms also and includes reading, writing and numeracy lessons, where in some cases children after 8 months of schooling were still adding up 2+2. Even in those relatively privileged classrooms with only 30+ learners, the teaching approach was invariably teacher-centred and allowed for very little initiative on the part of the children. It is clearly a case of outdated teaching approaches that have not been challenged thoroughly enough and asks awkward questions of the teaching methods and literacy approaches passed on by teacher education colleges in the last decade. For longer serving teachers, in-service provision in the last few years has clearly also failed to change ingrained practices in this regard. While teachers exert themselves to the utmost, often under extremely trying conditions, learners are rarely fully engaged. The result is a tragic waste of human potential (Statistics South Africa, 2018). While much teaching happens, very little learning appears to occur. However, teachers should not be made the scapegoats for this systemic failure, which clearly requires a systemic response (Boonk, Gijselaers, Ritzen, & Brand-Gruwel, 2018).

School Language Plans and Policies

Our final round of visits confirmed an earlier impression namely that none of the schools had consciously aligned their language plans, policies and practices with the new Language- in-Education Policy, which by that stage had been made public for more than a year. All schools do have a language policy of sorts, even if by default. However, this appears to have evolved more in response to, realities on the ground over the past few years, such as staff language proficiency and parental preference for high status languages, than as a result of any contextualisation of the new Language- in-Education Policy.

Concretely, none of the schools was able to state that they had arrived at a new integrated policy for language/s of learning and teaching, languages as subjects, languages of administration, assessment, and staffing. Several of the teachers interviewed indicated, that the school had not-yet received a copy (Schools D & E), or that teachers were left to decide on their own language plan (School D) within the general guideline of maintaining the mother tongue in the Foundation Phase while introducing English orally (in Grade l) and in writing (in Grade 3). One School (F) has had a consultation, but this has thus far led nowhere due to the absence of a constitution for the school. Of the urban schools, Schools D and E have moved some way towards promoting multilingualism via the Setswana-speaking language support staff, and by appointing two bilingual (First Language Setswana speaking) staff members, respectively.

Recommendations and Conclusion

The implications for the improvement of teaching and learning both in linguistically diverse and in linguistically homogeneous classrooms and schools, are clearly numerous, and the challenges enormous if the aims and objectives of the new language- in-education policy and of the new curriculum are to be realised (Statistics South Africa, 2018). Many of these implications and challenges have already been identified and explicated more fully by, amongst others, (Boonk, Gijselaers, Ritzen, & Brand-Gruwel, 2018) and by the national Department of Education through its recent Implementation Plan (1998), Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2011), who between them have produced a small but growing repertoire of strategies for use in particularly multilingual primary school classrooms (Slain, 2019).

At Classroom Level

For teachers at classroom level, the biggest challenge would be to shift their beliefs about, and attitudes towards, the African languages, and to use these as learning resources across the curriculum and throughout schooling. African languages should come to be viable codes for learning at all levels. Most immediately, teachers in multilingually

composed classrooms should create forms of language awareness appropriate to their situation. Doing an informal survey of the languages, learners speak, and finding space to play, with the different languages, would only be the first steps in affirming them, and thereby their speakers. Many of the suggestions listed by (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017), are relevant here, such as collecting stories and books and other resources in the languages that learners speak and encouraging children to use their home languages in the classroom (Gilleece, 2015). Forms of cultural awareness could fruitfully complement such language awareness campaigns. To combat growing xenophobia and promote tolerance, such awareness programmes could be extended to urban schools, particularly those which have admitted black newcomers from other African countries.

The attitudinal shift required of speakers of African languages is even more profound if bilingual and multilingual learning is to flourish. Teachers in urban, classrooms should be encouraged to regard the mother tongue or home language as the main vehicle for cognitive and emotional growth, certainly in the General Education phase (Grades 1-9), Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2011). Amongst other things, this means promoting literacy practices and doing (written) assessment in African languages beyond the Foundation Phase. It is vital that children learn to read and write at cognitive demanding levels in their home languages across the curriculum, and to have the choice of being assessed in their home language from Grade 4 upwards.

Teachers in linguistically diverse classrooms should also be encouraged to explore the grouping of their learners in linguistically sensitive ways that encourage co-operative learning via peer interpreting. It is vitally important that African language speaking children not be stigmatised by being segregated into their own groups throughout the school day. Furthermore, teachers in such classrooms should rope in parents and other volunteers as teaching assistants wherever possible, particularly in order to bridge intractable language-related communication problems.

At School Level

Many of the steps indicated above will only become fully possible once a school develops its own language plan in keeping with the new Language -in- Education Policy and the new curriculum and finds ways of monitoring its realisation and supporting teachers in doing so. School management through the governing body plays a pivotal role in this regard and will have to convince parents of the merits of using the home languages as vehicles of learning plus transition to English and/or Afrikaans, amongst other things. Additional aspects schools should be considering include the following:

- Conduct a language survey to determine the home languages of learners and parents' preferences.
- Organise training for peer interpreters in schools where teachers and significant numbers of learners do not have a language in common.
- Appoint language volunteers, e.g. from the ranks of retired teachers or parents.
- Share resources with neighbouring schools by clustering (minimally twinning) - this could lead to an exchange or sharing of teaching materials; marking loads; exam & test question-papers; language (and other) expertise.
- Introduce Setswana as a subject in urban schools.
- Appoint Language of Learning and Teaching speakers of African languages urban schools, not only for teaching Setswana as a subject but as class teachers (Foundation Phase) and subject teachers (Intermediate Phase upwards).
- Introduce family literacy classes or courses.
- Link up with Non-Governmental Officials to promote quality education and teachers' reflective teaching practice. Mechanisms need to be found to encourage English- and Afrikaans-speaking teachers to do conversational courses in the most relevant-African language.

In addition, primary school teachers should be targeted for English enrichment lessons in order to meet the demands on teaching their learning programmes and subjects through the medium of this language. While the need is greatest amongst Language of Learning and Teaching speakers of African languages (i.e. teachers in township classrooms), many Language of Learning and Teaching) Afrikaans-speaking teachers in the Foundation Phase and upwards who have been compelled to teach through the medium of English should also be included. All subject advisers concerned with the township schools should be competent users of the relevant African language. Teachers feel strongly that unless existing English and Afrikaans-speaking subject advisers are replaced by Setswana-speaking (or isiZulu-speaking, where relevant) counterparts, subject advisers will continue to have very little to offer the township schools.

At Teacher Education Level

The promotion of multilingualism in re-service and in-service courses is crucial to the enterprise of facilitating multilingual learning. Non-Governmental Officials could and should liaise with other role-players (e.g. via the In-

service Providers' Coalition) in bringing pressure to bear on the provincial and national education authorities to restructure Inservice Training and Post Training service in accordance with the aims outlined above. Also, a coherent new set of language requirements for teachers teaching in public schools needs to be developed following the scrapping of the requirements for teachers. Teacher education courses will need to be aligned with these. The goal should be to enable all teachers to teach competently through the medium of two languages.

In partnership with the relevant provincial education authorities, teacher in-service providers should be offering courses in which the intersection of multilingualism with Curriculum 2005 is systematically explored. Various key constituencies should be identified (Boonk, Gijselaers, Ritzen, & Brand-Gruwel, 2018). Besides teachers and principals, these would include subject advisors and circuit managers. The provincial language managers envisaged by the national Department of Education in its Implementation Plan for the new Language- in-Education Policy will require structured assistance from Non-Governmental Officials and other providers (Ramrathan, 2017).

The development and distribution of appropriate learning support materials such as textbooks, stories, charts and posters, amongst other things, in the African language (or in two or more languages) remains an urgent undertaking. Some work has already been done at Foundation Phase level. This needs to be developed and extended to the greater demands of subject (or learning programme) specific teaching from the Intermediate Phase upwards. It would also be important to monitor the quality and relevance of the many materials that publishers are taking directly to the schools.

Finally, a national terminology databank for the African languages should be set up in partnership between national and provincial education departments, publishers and writers of learning support materials, academics and other stakeholders. The goal would be to collect and make available terms currently being coined by teachers and other practitioners in the Nguni, Sotho, Venda and Tsonga languages, for purposes of acquisition. It is crucial to complement corpus planning from above units with spontaneous corpus planning from below in order to legitimise and extend the use of African Languages in high status schooling domains such as content-subject teaching and textbooks.

Limitations of Study

The article was extracted from my doctoral study. Due to logistical and financial constraints, this study was limited to two foundation phase schools and eight foundation phase teachers in North West Province of South Africa. The inclusion of more schools from different geographic contexts teaching different indigenous South African languages would have extended this study. Also investigating the teaching of learning languages in multilingual classrooms across all the grades is essential in order to have a deeper understanding of multilingual teaching in South African schools. The period available to conduct this study was also a limiting factor on the depth and scope. It should be noted however that the result of this qualitative study cannot be generalised but may be transferred to similar cases.

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Related research

Phajane, M.H. (2020). Mother Tongue Language as Medium of Instruction and Promotion of Multilingualism: The South African Language Policy. *Journal of Critical Reviews, 7*(14), 98-107.

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