

Art. # 1374, 12 pages, <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v37n3a1374>

Teaching strategies to support isiXhosa learners who receive education in a second/third language

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There are a number of challenges related to teaching in a multi-linguistic classroom. Despite the literature clearly indicating how learners acquire learning, there is still a dearth of material on descriptions of current support provided to learners within the theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. In an attempt to resolve these challenges, this article explores and describes challenges regarding teaching strategies to support isiXhosa-speaking learners in Grade One, whose home language is different from the LOLT in their schools. A qualitative research design was used supported by the exploratory, descriptive and contextual research methods. A sample was selected of Grade One teachers from schools in different socio-economic areas in the Western Cape. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews. The findings provided a clear description of challenges and needs experienced by both the learner and the teacher. Conclusions were made in terms of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. Based on the findings, practical recommendations were made regarding teaching strategies for language support to Grade One isiXhosa learners.

Keywords: Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory; language of learning and teaching [LOLT]; multi-linguistic; teaching and learning strategies; third/second language support

Introduction

According to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996a), every child has the right to receive education in their home language or language of their choice. However, many learners are often placed in schools where the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) is English and/or Afrikaans (i.e. the learner's second or third language). This aspect is viewed as one reason why South African schools show poor academic achievements (National Education Evaluation and Development Unit [NEEDU], 2013:13–14). Banda (2004:11) ascribes the phenomenon of second and third language education to the legacy of apartheid, where English and Afrikaans were perceived as languages with status. On the other hand, Owen-Smith (2010) argues that a learner who cannot access education in his/her home language is disadvantaged, and unlikely to be able to perform to the best of his/her ability and reach his/her full potential. The South African Constitution (Republic of South Africa, 1996a) acknowledges not only eleven official languages to "... redress the injustice of apartheid, emphasising multilingualism and the rights of indigenous languages against English", but also emphasises that "... everyone has the right to receive education in their choice of public educational institutions" (Section 29(2) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996a). However, this acknowledgement of the official languages, together with the child's right to education, pose specific challenges for teachers. It becomes the teacher's role and function to accommodate the diverse needs of learners, including the need for education in their home language. On the other hand, most teachers experience a lack of knowledge and skills regarding the diverse use of languages to be offered as LOLT in the classroom in order to support these learners (cf. Chataika, Mckenzie, Swart & Lyner-Cleophas, 2012; Engelbrecht, 2006; Engelbrecht, Swart & Eloff, 2001). It is clear that the literature shows a lack of material describing the current support provided to these learners. A need to investigate current practices was therefore identified as the research problem, resulting in the following research question: "what challenges do Grade One teachers experience to support isiXhosa learners who receive education in a second/third language?" The present article reflects on the findings of a recent study that attempted to answer this question. However, for the purpose of this article, selected sections of the above-mentioned study will suffice for the discussion here.

Firstly, the background of the research problem will be discussed in terms of a literature review. In the course of this discussion, the theoretical framework that guided the investigation will also be described. Secondly, after the research methodology has been explained, the findings will be presented. Finally, the article will conclude with several recommendations regarding how to address language support to Grade One isiXhosa learners.

Literature Review

Language is the core aspect of many independent cognitive, affective and social factors that shape learning and thinking (Collier & Thomas, 2012:155). It is recognised as the means by which an individual learns to organise

his/her experiences and thoughts (Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2010:5). There is a strong connection between mother tongue education and academic achievement, with a positive correlation between the two, and therefore, the use of language as a method for teaching and learning is important in multilingual societies, such as South Africa (DBE, 2010:5). In reality, a large number of South African learners do not receive LOLT at home, and sometimes, not even their second language (Landsberg, Krüger & Swart, 2011:168). One reason behind this is apparent within the framework of the diverse nature of the South African society, where each ethnic group consists of disparate cultural groups, where different languages or different dialects are used, and that a minimum of eleven languages are spoken in the country (Statistics South Africa, 2013).

Despite the fact that English is not the language of the majority of people living in the Western Cape, the focus on English as the LOLT is based on the DBE's viewpoint that English in South Africa is the medium of communication, and it is still found that a significant number of isiXhosa learners receive education in a second or third language (cf. DBE, 2012, 2013b; NEEDU, 2013:13–14; Statistics South Africa, 2013). Therefore, it can be assumed that isiXhosa-speaking learners in the Western Cape are facing a *language barrier* in the English/Afrikaans classroom.

For one to understand what it means to be proficient in another language, it is important to be able to distinguish between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 2000:58). BICS is the ability to communicate about ordinary matters when speaking about everyday situations. The context in which these conversations are taking place can provide many clues, for instance, in the form of facial expressions, as well as pictures and objects, which helps one better understand what is being communicated. The person, therefore, does not only rely on language to construct the meaning of what is being communicated. CALP refers to the academic language that is needed in the classroom to enable the learner to construct the meaning of tasks, and what he or she is reading (Rothenberg & Fisher, 2007:35).

This implies that “scaffolding and explicit language instruction is necessary” to support the learner to master the learning content and the language at the same time (Rothenberg & Fisher, 2007:35). Gibbons (2002:6) asserts that the curricula should aim to integrate the learning content with the particular second or third language. Thus, on the one hand, learners should meet the necessary proficiency level, which includes cognitive academic language skills, to

enable them to learn effectively across the curriculum (Department of Education (DoE), 2000:4). On the other hand, within the framework of inclusive education, the teacher should not expect learners to give up their home language to achieve academic success.

The language policy for schools is guided by principles derived from the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996a) and the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) (Republic of South Africa, 1996b). As a result of the latter, the former DoE adopted the Language in Education Policy (LiEP) in 1997 and further clarified the policy in the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) published in 2002 (DoE, 2002). The main underlying principle is to maintain the use of the home language as the LOLT, especially in the early years of learning, while providing access to an additional language. The LiEP aims to pursue a language policy supportive of conceptual growth amongst learners by establishing “... additive multilingualism as an approach to language in education” (DBE, 2010:6). In further support of the acknowledgement of the importance of the home language in education, the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), previously known as the RNCS, explicitly states that learners' home language be used for learning and teaching wherever possible (DBE, 2013b). Unfortunately, the implementation thereof still remains a problem.

More recently, the DBE has released the proposed Incremental Introduction of African Languages (IIAL) policy for public comment. This new policy was planned to come into effect in 2014, mandating the learning of an African language in all schools (Davis, 2013). However, the pilot project has not yet been fully implemented at all schools in the KwaZulu-Natal Province. In addition, a lack of consultation on the introduction of the programme at schools was experienced (School language project pilot fails, 2014). In this regard, Wright (2012:111) argues that the implementation of language policies in schools is closely linked to the implementation of the South African Languages Bill (Republic of South Africa, 2011). Therefore, it is widely acknowledged that it is not working (Wright, 2012:111). According to Wright (2012:118), “... those involved in this decision weren't even linguists or language planners.” Consequently, there has been very little provision made for African-Language speaking learners, i.e. isiXhosa-speaking learners in schools where the LOLT is other than their home language.

Inclusive education places an emphasis on the accommodation of the diverse needs of learners, including the need for education in their home language. This poses specific challenges for the Grade One teacher who has to ensure that the learner is educated in their home language on the one hand, and cater for the diverse needs of

learners on the other hand. According to Wildeman and Nomdo (2007), the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa is slow and is generally not being implemented throughout all South African schools. They also identify the National Language Policy (NLP) as "... causing a dilemma in the South African classroom," explaining that teachers have a lack of knowledge and skills regarding the diverse use of languages to be offered as the LOLT in one classroom by one teacher. Consequently, as a number of studies confirm, learners develop a language barrier and teachers struggle to accommodate learners within a multilingual and inclusive context (cf. Chataika et al., 2012; Engelbrecht, 2006; Engelbrecht et al., 2001).

Considering the diverse nature of South African society, as well as barriers obstructing access to schools where the home language of especially African language learners, are not used as the LOLT, the need for support to second and third language speaking learners in Grade One has become of paramount importance. Thus, in order to determine the level of support required, the needs of the learner, the competencies of the educator, the readiness of the school, and the education system have to be taken into consideration.

To shed light on the above, the researcher planned to consult current research pertaining to language as a barrier to learning, second and third language as the LOLT in South African schools, with a specific emphasis on the foundation phase, and the role and function of Grade One teachers to support second or third language speaking learners. A literature search was conducted by accessing databases such as Sabinet, Eric, and Ebscohost. Ackerman's study (2005) focused on issues related to education teacher policies, while Bardel and Falk's study (2007) addressed the role of the second language during the acquisition of a third language. Dalton, Mckenzie and Kahonde (2012) and Engelbrecht (2006) reflected on the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa, while Lenyai (2011) specifically focused on language barriers in the foundation phase in schools in disadvantaged areas. Tshotsho (2013) reflected on the mother tongue debate and South African language policies. These studies did not provide descriptions of current practices by foundation phase teachers in support of second and third language speaking learners. Myburgh, Poggenpoel and Van Rensburg (2004:573) investigated the experiences of second and third language speaking learners in 2002, and found that teachers were not always aware of the discrepancies between the content of what was taught and how the learner understood it.

Honing in on the Western Cape, the reality is that, in practice, a large number of learners are still

receiving education in a second or third language. Furthermore, the lack of information regarding current practices by educators to support second and third language speaking learners set the stage for the focus of this article. The need to identify the teaching strategies for language support to Grade One second and third additional language learners was therefore identified.

Theoretical Framework

Piaget's theory of cognitive development as well as Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism were used to describe the acquisition of vocabulary in a second language. According to Erikson's stages of *psychosocial development*, the learner in the foundation phase is in the fourth stage of development, where 'industry versus inferiority' is the main developmental task to be mastered. During this developmental stage, *cognitive development* proceeds rapidly. Learners can process more information faster and their memory spans are increasing. They are moving from pre-operational to concrete-operational thinking (Piaget & Inhelder, 1973; Woolfolk, 2007:69). With the view of second and third languages in education as a learning barrier, the researcher was interested in a theoretical framework related to *how learning* occurs. Thus, the focus was on Vygotsky's learning theory (1978) embedded in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1994:37). Vygotsky's theory maintains that interactions with others (i.e. a direct result with the ecosystem) are a product of, or result from, specific mental structures and processes, and therefore places an emphasis on the role of language in cognitive development (Woolfolk, 2007:31, 42). Woolfolk (2007:73) illustrates Bronfenbrenner's theory as consisting of different layers in which the learner functions (i.e. his/her environment). In line with this theory, the needs of second and third language speaking learners should be supported within each layer. The learner lives within a microsystem, inside a mesosystem, embedded in an exosystem, all of which are a part of the macrosystem (Woolfolk, 2007:73). The final layer is the chronosystem (Santrock, 2006:52).

To sum up, Vygotsky's theory indicates the important role of language in learning and cognitive development. Scaffolding is a form of support related to the learning process. It is based on the needs of the learner with the aim of supporting the learner to achieve learning goals (Sawyer, 2006:23). It implies that the teacher is challenged to select relevant tasks related to the learner's specific learning needs and the developmental skills that need to be mastered. The teacher must also be able to anticipate errors and provide guidance in this regard. In addition, the scaffolding should be directed at all the different layers within

which the learners function, as described by the ecological systems theory (Graves, Graves & Braaten, 1996:15).

Method

The researcher made use of a qualitative research design, while implementing the exploratory, descriptive and contextual research method. These methods enabled the researcher to address the research problem and answer the research question by focusing on the research aim, which pointed to the following: 1) The need to explore the use of teaching and learning strategies for language support to isiXhosa learners receiving education in a second/third language in Grade One; 2) the need to describe the use of teaching and learning strategies for language support in Grade One; and 3) the focus on the context of the foundation phase, in particular, Grade One. By means of the purposive sampling technique, the researcher intentionally selected eleven Grade One teachers in the Western Cape region who have second and third language speaking isiXhosa learners in their classrooms, and where the LOLT is either English or Afrikaans (cf. Creswell, 2009:125). The sample size for this study reached a point of data saturation after eleven interviews (Grinnell, Williams & Unrau, 2010:162). The researcher made use of semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions that guided the data collection process. This allowed participants to fully explore the meaning they attributed to the research question (Marlow, 2011:164).

Using Tesch's (1990) eight steps of qualitative data analysis, the data was analysed in a structured and systemic manner by both the researcher and an independent coder. The steps followed include: 1) reading the transcripts and identifying sentences that answer the research question; 2) selecting the first transcript and reading through it again; 3) generating a list of main topics; 4) assigning codes to the topics and sub-topics and placing these next to the appropriate segments of the text; 5) grouping the topics according to themes and writing a descriptive paragraph for each theme; 6) identifying sub-themes that emerge from the main themes; 7) converting the sub-themes into categories, and then lastly; 8) discuss and describe the themes and sub-themes (cited in Creswell, 2009:186).

The descriptive validity of the data was ensured by means of interviewing techniques, the method of data recording and the use of the independent coder. The theoretical validity necessitated that a literature control be done after the themes, sub-themes and categories were identified. Lastly, the evaluative validity was ensured by drawing conclusions from the analysed data, the literature control, and the theoretical framework of

Vygotsky's learning theory embedded in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory.

With regards to the ethical aspects of this research study, participation was voluntary, and informed consent was a prerequisite for commencement. Measures were taken to ensure that no harm was inflicted on the participants. In addition, anonymity, confidentiality and privacy were safeguarded as far as possible.

Findings

The findings provided a clear description of the challenges experienced by both the learner and the teacher, current strategies that are employed by teachers, as well as resources and support utilised by teachers. The following seven major themes were identified by the researcher, the researcher's supervisors, and the independent coder:

Theme 1: Reasons for placing learners in a class where the LOLT is different from their mother tongue

Theme 2: Challenges for the learner

Theme 3: Challenges facing the teacher

Theme 4: Strategies employed by the Grade One teacher

Theme 5: Resources utilised by the Grade One teacher

Theme 6: Available support systems

Theme 7: Recommendations to inform further practices

Due to the limited space available, attention will be given to the most important findings outlined below, so as to address the research question posed in this article. The **first finding** demonstrated that Grade One learners experience a number of challenges in their language education due to receiving education in a second/third language. The data highlighted that learners do not understand the LOLT, and that this language barrier is a reason for failing and/or a lack of progress.

In terms of learners who do not understand the LOLT, the research participants were of the opinion that there is a challenge for isiXhosa learners, who were not educated in their mother tongue during their early years of education (referring to Grade R). As a result, these learners had poor language proficiency in their mother tongue, which impacted on their ability to grasp the LOLT when they entered Grade One (cf. Landsberg et al., 2011:168; Maake, 2014). In addition to the fact that exposure to English in Grade R did not prepare the learners sufficiently for Grade One, the participants indicated that some learners were not exposed to the LOLT prior to entering the Grade One classroom, where the LOLT was different from their mother tongue. The participants described the challenges learners facing such a language barrier experience, and asserted that they are not sufficiently able to master the LOLT to support learning and teaching (cf. Browne, 2007:30).

Another noteworthy aspect is that the LOLT of some learners is not the second language to be mastered, but the third language. These learners

experience specific learning challenges, for example, struggling to follow instructions. On the one hand, the learners do not understand the words, and on the other hand, the pronunciation of certain words known to them is different from what they have heard prior to Grade One. The participants shared two contributing factors to the learners' challenges to master the LOLT, namely: 1) a lack of exposure to the LOLT outside the classroom; and 2) a lack of community resources to provide further exposure that would support learning and teaching, where the lack of exposure, according to the participants, means that learners do not have an opportunity to practice the second or third language in which they are being educated. Participants explained that a lack of community resources results in reduced access to support and opportunities to practice the LOLT outside the classroom. Furthermore, there appears to be a lack of information regarding the availability of and accessibility to community resources and how it could support the second/third language speaking learners.

With regards to language barriers that are viewed as a reason for failing and/or lack of progress, participants reported that isiXhosa learners were unable to progress because they could not understand instructions, and therefore, they first had to master English before they could start to effectively engage with the learning material (cf. Owen-Smith, 2010).

The **second finding** focused on challenges that Grade One teachers experience when they support isiXhosa learners who receive education in a second/third language.

1. The **one challenge** that Grade One teachers experience is the limited time that is available. As a means of dealing with this challenge, participants indicated and referred to "forcing" the learners to learn in a second or third language, due to limited time, instead of making use of different teaching strategies and encouraging the learner to use English as much as possible, while still acknowledging their home language. They attributed this aspect to the fact that teachers already have limited time to cover the curriculum (cf. Hoadley, 2015; Wildeman & Nomdo, 2007; Wyse & Jones, 2008:249–251). The participants expressed a concern that it becomes an even greater challenge and more time consuming when teaching current subjects to the second and/or third language speaking learner. As a result, more teaching time—which is already limited—needs to be spent in order for them to grasp the learning material.
2. The **second challenge** that some Grade One teachers experienced concerned the need for communication between the parent(s) and the teacher. The participating teachers mentioned their need to reach out to parents for their support regarding the challenges experienced in the classroom (cf. DoE, Republic of South Africa, 2008). In this case, the participants identified two factors that disrupt communication between the teacher and the

parent, namely: 1) a language barrier; and 2) a lack of parental involvement.

According to the participants, the language barrier appears to prevent or limit both oral and written communication between the teacher and the parent. This, in turn, has a significant effect on communication, understanding, and relationship-building between parents and teachers. Consequently, some parents do not understand the various methods used to teach English as a second and/or third language to their children (cf. Waterman & Harry, 2008:5–6).

The participants also explained that some parents of second and/or third language learners are not involved in the education of their children and that they do not speak the LOLT at home (cf. Waterman & Harry, 2008:4). One participant, however, reflected on how some parents do support the teacher and the learner, and that this notably contributed to addressing the cultural differences that influenced the teaching and learning process (DBE, 2013a).

3. The **third challenge** that teachers experienced in their teaching strategies to render support to isiXhosa learners who receive education in a second/third language was a lack of formal support and access to resources that are necessary for the learners' progress. The participants specifically referred to two challenges in particular, namely, a lack of training and professional support, as well as functional teaching and learning aids.

In addition, the participating teachers stated that they are not receiving any training or professional support from the DBE to enable them to adequately address the second and/or third language learner (cf. Child, 2013; DBE, 2013a). Consequently, teachers have a lack of knowledge and skills regarding the diverse use of languages to be offered as a LOLT in one classroom by one teacher. Thus, teachers in current practice teach the LOLT without acknowledging the isiXhosa-speaking learners' mother tongue (cf. Chataika et al., 2012; DoE, 2001:25; Engelbrecht, 2006; Engelbrecht et al., 2001; Hoadley, 2015).

The **third finding** differed from the previous two findings, which highlighted the challenges experienced by the learners and their teachers. However, the third finding attempted to address the research question, namely, "what challenges do Grade One teachers experience to support isiXhosa learners who receive education in a second/third language?" Therefore, the participants made the following four recommendations to inform further practice.

1. The **first recommendation** that the participants made was for additional support from the DBE regarding training opportunities, resources and learning support professionals. They stressed the need for training opportunities to support learners, language and mathematics, as well as practical ways to involve parents to help them be able to support the isiXhosa learner (cf. Landsberg et al., 2011:72). Some participants identified assistants as an invaluable supportive resource, and recommend-

ed that the DBE also support in this regard (cf. Hoadley, 2015:13; Landsberg et al., 2011:22). Furthermore, the participating teachers recommended that teachers should identify a language barrier as soon as possible and refer the learner for extra support at an early stage (cf. DoE, 2001:19). However, this recommendation requires assistance from learning support professionals. They further suggested that isiXhosa learners receive assistance from the learning support professionals within a group, as well as individually.

2. The **second recommendation** highlighted the importance of Grade R as a foundation and recommended that Grade R should be considered as an important aspect in the language development of the isiXhosa-speaking learners. The participants further emphasised the importance of a firm grasp of the mother language prior to entering the school system (cf. Landsberg et al., 2011:168; Maake, 2014). Participants also recommended that the second/third language learner attend Grade R when he/she is exposed to the LOLT (English) before entering Grade One. However, they also briefly indicated that parents are not always able to afford this option (cf. South African Human Rights Commission/UNICEF, 2011:2–11).

The recommendations regarding Grade R as a foundation to support second/third language learners in the Grade One classroom were provided in terms of two categories, namely: 1) prior experience and exposure to the Language of Learning and Teaching; and 2) involving parents with the decision to place a child in a class where the Language of Learning and Teaching is different from the home language.

The participants recommended that prior exposure to the LOLT ought to be considered as beneficial to the learner's understanding of basic instructions when they enter Grade One (cf. Gardner, 2002:8). The participants recommended that learners ought to be supported and prepared to be included in a classroom where the LOLT is different from their mother tongue.

The participants recommended that it is imperative that parents be made aware of available options and are consulted on available choices, such as placing their child in a Grade R class that

will prepare their child before entering the schooling system (cf. Fleisch, 2008:105–136; Laufer, 2000:18). They proposed that the Provincial DBE provide parents with guidelines to prepare their child for the LOLT prior to entering Grade One. In addition, they recommended sustained teacher-parent contact that allows the learner to grow up in a context of ecological harmony between settings. Therefore, home visits are one way of ensuring contact and a positive teacher-parent relationship to better meet the needs of the learner and family between settings (cf. Landsberg et al., 2011:93).

3. The **third recommendation** involves school-based support. Individual support was recommended for the learner from various sources in order to address the language barrier of the isiXhosa-speaking learner by means of filling the gaps in the learner's language proficiency and understanding of the LOLT (cf. Landsberg et al., 2011:84; Miles & Ainscow, 2011:163). School-based support also focussed on the important role translators and/or isiXhosa-speaking classroom assistants can play in the classroom. The participants recommended that the school should provide this form of support (cf. Landsberg et al., 2011:426; Miles & Ainscow, 2011:163). They also recommended that learners should first receive education in their mother tongue to ensure that they have firmly grasped the concepts before entering a classroom where the LOLT is different from their home language (cf. Landsberg et al., 2011:168; Maake, 2014).
4. The **fourth recommendation** the participants suggested was the use of stories as a strategy to be employed to support the learners. This is because reading activities are an excellent way of engaging the isiXhosa-speaking learner in learning activities (Haslam, Wilkin & Kellet, 2005:24, 29). In addition, they also recommended books with high quality illustrations and bilingual texts as an endless source of new vocabulary and discussion. Another recommendation was to simplify the work, so that the learner could grasp the meaning more easily (Haslam et al., 2005:24, 29).

The findings, as summarised above, were used to theoretically draw the following conclusions:

Table 1 Conclusion of findings based on the theory of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory

Level of functioning	Conclusion of findings
Micro-system Face-to-face interactions, activities and social experiences.	<u>Finding 1: Challenges for the learner</u> <u>Not understanding the LOLT:</u> Findings indicated insufficient exposure to English in Grade R, how it did not prepare the learners sufficiently for Grade One, and how the learners were not previously exposed to the LOLT when entering the Grade One classroom. Browne (2007:30) explains that it takes between two and four years to converse fluently in an additional language (second language) and another three years to become "... proficient cognitive and academic users of that language." Thus, the participants' reported that the learners are challenged with a language barrier based on the fact that they are not able to master the LOLT enough so as to support learning and teaching.
Meso-system Relationship between a number of settings in the learner's life.	<u>Finding 1: Challenges for the learner</u> <u>Not understanding the LOLT:</u> A lack of exposure to the LOLT outside of the classroom: parents or caregivers are not well-educated and the learners are not

Level of functioning	Conclusion of findings
	<p>frequently exposed to English (the LOLT). This in turn, had a strong impact on the academic performance of the learners. Taylor and Coetzee (2013) found that learners who receive education in a second or third language originate mostly from households where they receive little academic support.</p> <p>Lack of community resources: there is a lack of information regarding the availability of, and accessibility to, community resources and how it could support these learners (Taylor & Coetzee, 2013).</p> <p><u>Language barrier is viewed as a reason for failing and/or lack of progress:</u> Influence on self-image: learners struggle to understand the LOLT and this affects their self-image. Consequently, this may result in learners failing Grade One, or experience difficulty in making progress.</p> <p><u>Finding 2: Challenges for the teacher</u></p> <p><u>Limited time:</u> Teachers do not have enough time for teaching the existing subjects within the curriculum. In this case it was found that the LOLT is being forced onto the learners and it puts a strain on their ability to understand what is being taught (Hoadley, 2015).</p> <p><u>Communication between parent and teacher:</u> Language barrier: there is a language barrier in the efforts to communicate with the teacher. This language barrier often prevents or limits both oral and written communication between the parent and the teacher (Waterman & Harry, 2008:5). Parental involvement: In this study some parents of isiXhosa-speaking learners are not involved in the education of their child. The reason for this is mostly because the parents, in this study, have limited education and English/Afrikaans skills necessary for meaningful participation (Waterman & Harry, 2008:4).</p> <p><u>Finding 3: Recommendations for further practice</u></p> <p><u>Grade R as foundation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior experience of/exposure to the LOLT: the importance of a firm grasp of the mother language prior to entering the school system was highlighted. However, it takes between two and four years to converse fluently in an additional language, and another three years to become proficient cognitive and academic users of that language (Birsch, 2005:298, 364; Landsberg et al., 2011:168). It was also found that some 'pre-primaries' (early childhood education facilities) are too expensive for a substantial cohort of South African parents. • Guiding parents in the decision to place their child in a class where the LOLT is different from the child's home language: it was found that parents' roles are to use the child's home language to explore and develop the concepts being learnt at school in the LOLT. <p><u>Support from the school:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual classes/support: participating teachers recommended that schools should offer extra classes for individual support to the isiXhosa-speaking learners. It was also recommended that translators or isiXhosa assistants serve as more beneficial support. However, according to Miles and Ainscow (2011:163), learners can become dependent on the translator, as the translator becomes the spokesperson for them. • isiXhosa-speaking teachers to introduce English in foundation phase: within the South African context, research and findings showed that very few universities prepare students as African language teachers, and most of these graduates are not

Level of functioning	Conclusion of findings
<p>Exo-system Relationship between one setting directly related to the learner's life and another setting that indirectly influences the learner.</p>	<p>qualified to teach a particular African language as a LOLT (Hoadley, 2015:13). Thus, it was recommended that at least one isiXhosa-speaking teacher ought to work in the foundation phase.</p> <p><u>Finding 2: Challenges for the teacher</u> <u>Lack of formal support/access to resources:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and professional support: the participants reported a lack of, and an urgent need for, training and support to effectively address the research topic. Overwhelming evidence corroborated the fact that provinces are resource-constrained, there is an insufficient budget for training, and to compound matters, available workshops are irrelevant (Hoadley, 2015). • Functional teaching and learning aids: while the findings point out that functional teaching and learning aids (i.e. 'Rainbow Workbook') are not accessible to them, the DBE argues that teachers do not always utilise the materials provided (Child, 2013; Hoadley, 2015; Wildeman & Nomdo, 2007).
<p>Macro-system Culture, lifestyle, resources, etc., that have an influence on the learner's functioning.</p>	<p><u>Finding 3: Recommendations for further practice</u> <u>Support from the DBE:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training opportunities: according to participants, the curriculum advisors do not give solutions to problems (barriers) (i.e. how to accommodate and assist the isiXhosa learner). Thus, the participants recommended more involvement regarding the accommodation of the isiXhosa language learner. Participants also recommended training in specific methods to support learners, language and mathematics, as well as practical ways to involve parents to help them to be able to support the isiXhosa learner. Findings indicated that complicating factors such as the problem of multiple home languages in many classes, the dialectisation of African languages, and the problem of terminology in mathematics still requires more attention (NEEDU, 2013:2–3). • Resources: The following resources were recommended: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teaching assistants, which the DBE can assist in providing to schools. ○ Teaching and learning resources/aids are valuable. However, according to the participants, and affirmed by Hoadley (2015:13), teachers are often not provided with the needed resources or equal access to a quality education. • Learning support professionals: Participants recommended that learning barriers ought to be identified as soon as possible and learners should be supported at an early stage.

Recommendations

Based on the findings above, this study concludes with the following practical recommendations for parents (micro-level), schools (meso-level) and the Provincial Department of Education (macro-level).

Within the micro-level, it is recommended that parents should consider placing their child in a school where the LOLT is that of their mother tongue for at least the first three years (Grades One to Three). It is also suggested that learners be exposed to the LOLT, as much as possible prior to entering the Grade One classroom, and that this language must be of a high quality. Parent involvement entails attending parent meetings and/or workshops and assisting the learner with his/her homework.

On a meso-level, it is important for schools to encourage learners to use the LOLT as much as possible, while still acknowledging their home

language. Acknowledging the home language is necessary to emphasise something, as well as repeat and/or clarify information within a communicative event in order to obtain a better understanding of the LOLT. For this reason, teachers should be able to converse in the different mother languages of learners in their classrooms. Hence, teachers' communication in the learners' LOLT must be of a high quality.

Teachers can apply strategies such as non-verbal modelling, code-switching and audio linguistic while scaffolding is taking place. Listening and reading activities are important for developing language skills, such as the construction and meaning of words and texts. The use of multicultural and wordless picture books ought to be available in order to read and write the LOLT. They need to engage in concrete activities to promote cognitive and language development.

Activities should use all of the learners' five senses in order to create meaning from the supplied information.

Parent workshops must be provided to enable parents to assist their child. Parent meetings must be encouraged and are recommended for teachers to get a better understanding of the learner's background in order to provide the parents with suggestions on how to assist their children with homework. Extra classes can be provided to fill any gaps (i.e. the learner might not have grasped and/or understood a concept taught during teaching time. This gap in understanding can be explained one-on-one during extra classes). Homework must also be clear and well-designed so that parents can assist the isiXhosa-speaking learner.

Group activities and/or pair work are important for the facilitation of cooperative learning with the integration of different academic and social experiences (Johnson & Johnson, 2008:9). Peer support is to be made use of where learners with different abilities are grouped together to share responsibilities, tasks and successes, while peers serve as helpers. Individual support can be provided by the class teacher in collaboration with the Individual Learning Support Team (ILST). The 'Rainbow Workbook' can be utilised to reinforce literacy/language and mathematical skills. It also introduces learners to the language and concepts required for learning and understanding other subjects. The 'Letterland' programme can be utilised to improve learners' spelling. The 'Do and Learn' programme can be used to improve reading, writing and counting. Phonemic awareness activities in this programme help to develop spelling skills. The utilisation of library-media centres will help learners to engage with their own language, and also to engage with the LOLT through clear and realistic illustrations. It is important that teachers demand the supply of specific training for required needs from the DBE. They must also feel free to access curriculum advisors for language support.

Furthermore, within the meso-level, it is recommended that all schools have a library or a library-media centre. IsiXhosa-speaking colleagues are recommended for translating instructions and explaining learning content. Classroom assistants are also recommended to alleviate the teacher's workload and increase the isiXhosa learner's access to the curriculum. Every school should have a language support professional from the ILST. Language support professionals should be made available for regular support and sufficient time allocated for this additional assistance. Schools ought to do more to get parents involved in their child's early education programme in order to prepare their isiXhosa-speaking child for the LOLT. Schools should compile a list of resources that are available in the community. Both learners

and parents ought to be made aware of the value of these for learning, as well as the accessibility thereof.

Looking at the macro-level in which the Provincial Department of Education functions, it was recommended that the curriculum be revised by the DBE in terms of subject content and time allocation, whilst acknowledging the dilemma regarding the implementation of the NLP in South Africa. In line with the White Paper 6, it is recommended that training focus on how to identify and address barriers to learning with the assistance of a learning support professional.

Teachers must be trained to develop their knowledge and skills regarding the diverse use of languages in the classroom and with the parents of learners. The DBE needs to review their budget for training and implement the Education White Paper 6 regarding training opportunities within an inclusive school system. Parents ought to be guided to rather place their child in a school where the LOLT is their mother tongue. Alternatively, learners who experience diverse support needs will at some point require a degree of individual support to overcome their barriers to learning. Thus, individual support can be provided by the class teacher in collaboration with the ILST. Curriculum advisors should regularly monitor early childhood education facilities in order to promote equal education for all learners. A firm grasp of the mother tongue is needed for a learner to be able to communicate properly and to understand another language (i.e. the LOLT).

Alternatively, prior exposure to the LOLT in Grade R can help prepare the isiXhosa-speaking learner to only understand basic instructions in Grade One. It is recommended that universities need to prepare all teachers on how to assist learners within a multilingual and inclusive context, while teachers in current practice ought to be trained in this regard. Teachers in current practice should receive training opportunities to equip them on how to accommodate learners within a multicultural and inclusive classroom. Successful inclusion requires adequate teaching and learning aids that must be available to teachers. The DoE should provide resources that meet the necessary proficiency levels of each learner, including cognitive academic language skills to enable learners to learn more effectively across the curriculum. The DBE should compile a list of resources that are available in the community and inform learners and parents of their value for learning and the accessibility thereof. The Education District Support Team should provide specialised professional support in curriculum, assessment and instruction to schools by means of training teachers regarding the support of the isiXhosa learner within an inclusive classroom.

Curriculum advisors must be able to assist teachers regarding learners with language barriers. The DBE can monitor and train Curriculum advisors on what and how to advise teachers regarding language barriers in today's South African classrooms. Considering the full Curriculum, it is beneficial to have extra support to fill in the gaps in the isiXhosa learner's language proficiency and understanding of the LOLT. It is therefore recommended that a support professional assist with the understanding of concepts, particularly when the isiXhosa learner missed something during a lesson.

In addition to the recommendations stated above, further exploration of the research topic is proposed in the section below.

Conclusion

This article addresses the teaching strategies used to support isiXhosa learners who receive education in a second/third language. In doing so, it reflects on the findings of a recent study that attempted to answer the question: "what challenges do Grade One teachers experience to support isiXhosa learners who receive education in a second/third language?" Based on the research findings, the article makes a number of practical recommendations to resolve the language needs of isiXhosa learners who receive education in a second/third language. This allows for an optimistic view of the study outcomes, noting that it contributes to: 1) current practice regarding language support to Grade One isiXhosa-speaking learners who are receiving education in a second/third language; 2) the different support systems and their responsibilities regarding language support to isiXhosa-speaking learners within an inclusive education system; and 3) the future implementation of the IIAL policy. The study is imbued with the confidence that isiXhosa learners will be able to obtain the necessary support to progress academically and that the DBE will not only consider but also start to implement the recommendations set out here, in order to overcome the dilemma of multilingualism in the South African classroom.

Acknowledgement

This article is adapted from a master's thesis at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. I wish to express my sincere appreciation, gratitude and thanks to my supervisors, Dr M. Van der Westhuizen and Dr E. Barnard, for their guidance, support, motivation and immense knowledge. Their guidance helped me during the time of research and writing of my thesis and article. I would also like to thank Lee-Anne Roux, for all her effort and insight regarding the editing of this article.

Note

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