

PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES IN TEACHING SISWATI AS A FIRST LANGUAGE IN DIVERSE LINGUISTIC SETTINGS

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: October 2022 Revised: December 2022 Published: January 2023	<i>This article reports on pedagogical practices in teaching SiSwati as a first language (SL1) in diverse linguistic settings of Eswatini. In response to educational research indicating the vital role played by a learner's first language in learning, the Eswatini government embarked on an exercise of decolonising the curriculum in 2011 by using SiSwati as the medium of instruction and learning in the foundation and middle phases and a core subject throughout primary and senior secondary school. However, arguably, research on African language pedagogy is scanty, let alone teaching of SiSwati, as the little available research has been on issues of policy, thus leaving a knowledge gap on the pedagogy in SiSwati first language (SL1). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore pedagogical practices that are used in the SL1 class in compliance with the policy, which provides for SiSwati to be a compulsory subject and a vehicle for teaching and learning in early primary schools.. This qualitative case study involved eight teachers who taught SL1 in the foundation and middle phases. Data were generated through interviews. The findings indicated that teachers' practices were anchored in the understanding that teaching SL1 meant equipping learners with functional language skills, such as productive and receptive skills, essential for studying across subject curricula. However, a lack of pedagogical knowledge thwarted teachers' practices to teach language in general, let alone to multilingual learners as expository pedagogy dominated SL1 classrooms, as opposed to curriculum requirements that learner-centred pedagogies anchored in social practice be used. Besides, these findings advocate for culturally responsive pedagogies appropriate to teach SL1 to learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds.</i>
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INTRODUCTION

Human language is the most important tool for learning. Sustainable Development Goal 4, which focuses on quality education (UN 2015), can only be attained through language, which is the key instrument to equip learners with fundamental core skills of the 21st century. For Eswatini learners to survive in this competitive world, they need to be good collaborators, effective communicators, novel creators and critical thinkers. The attainment of these fundamental skills requires language proficiency. Eswatini, where this study was conducted, practices the assimilation approach to language teaching and learning, particularly at primary school where learners who are non-mother tongue (MT) speakers of SiSwati must adapt and conform to the language and culture of the SiSwati. SiSwati has a dual role of being LoLT from Grade 1 up to Grade 4 and a school subject from the former grade one up to senior secondary (EMoET 2018:39a; EMoET 2011:27). This is compulsory for all learners, native and non-native speakers of SiSwati. (Milner 2017; Milner 2012, Milner 2010) alert teachers that their pedagogical practices should be inclusive and embrace all learners since the world has become

a global village with learners in most classrooms coming from different socio-economic and political contexts.

The situation in Eswatini primary schools is, that most rural schools have learners whose first language (L1) is SiSwati. These learners learn SL1 and the use of SiSwati as LoLT seems to augur well with these learners as there is also research evidence that learners from rural schools perform better in SiSwati than those in urban areas (World Bank 2021:7) because they study a language they are most comfortable with and also learn other subjects through their native language and a language they use at home (EMoET 2011). However, the environment in urban areas is totally different. Schools in urban areas are made of learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Moreover, in primary schools, there is no option in the language curriculum for non-MT learners of SiSwati to do SiSwati as the second language, an option and privilege that non-MT speakers of SiSwati at junior secondary and senior secondary have. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to explore pedagogy in SL1 in diverse linguistic classrooms in two urban schools of the Kingdom of Eswatini in light of the scanty research on African language pedagogy, let alone teaching of SiSwati, as the little available research has been on issues of policy, thus leaving a knowledge gap on SL1 pedagogy.

As language is the principal vehicle through which learners can learn various subject content, equipping them with skills required in the world market (Stauffer 2020), first language advocates (Bamgbose 2011; UNESCO 2010) in the context of Africa call for education systems in the continent to make a learner's First Language (L1) a core subject in schools and for at least the first four years of the education of the learner to be conducted in his/her first language. Considering the history of most education systems in Africa being influenced by imperial education structures, this has proved difficult, and limited progress has been made, as several African countries have an indigenous language as the language of teaching and learning (LoLT) or a subject in its school curriculum (Ikome 2019; Amaechi 2017). In response to the call to decolonise the African language curriculum, Eswatini where this study was conducted made some gains through the Ministry of Education and Training (EMoET) by making SiSwati, the mother tongue of about 95% of the population the LoLT from grade 1 to 4 and a core language subject from grade 1 to senior secondary (EMoET 2018; EMoET 2011). According to the language-in-education policy (LiEP) and the Eswatini National Curriculum Framework for General Education (EMoET 2018; EMoET, 2017; EMoET 2011).

All learners at primary school learn SiSwati as a first language (SL1), irrespective of whether they are native or non-native speakers of the language. This arrangement seems to augur well with teaching SL1 in rural schools where almost all learners are mother-tongue speakers of SiSwati, but it is a challenge in urban schools where learners are from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Mokibelo (2016) and UNESCO (2010) equate this arrangement as a divide-and-rule approach in the sense that speakers of minority languages are made to assimilate into the language and culture of the majority. In such a situation, the question is how does the teacher navigate the language teaching and learning process in a classroom environment where there is linguistic diversity in the sense that some learners are proficient in the language yet others are not? This is the question we wanted to get answered in this study. This is more so because scholars (Milner 2017; Milner 2012) advise teachers that their pedagogical practices should be inclusive and embrace all learners since the world has become a global village, with learners in most classrooms coming from different socio-economic and political contexts.

According to Milner (2012), teachers must afford all learners the best possible learning opportunities. In the case of the study, the Eswatini curriculum framework requires that constructivist approaches grounded in cognitive and social interaction be used by teachers when teaching learners across all subject curricular to meet the needs of diverse learners (EMoET 2018). Thus, Milner (2017) contends that teachers have to determine how effective learning is,

and also see to it that pedagogical approaches and practices used in teaching and learning are formulated in ways that attend to learners' diverse needs, as these learners are from diverse backgrounds, and they bring with them diversities to classrooms. In such a situation, teachers need to appreciate and embrace diversity in their language classrooms and make use of an array of culturally responsive pedagogical approaches that cater for the needs of learners from diverse socio-economic and language backgrounds. These could be culturally responsive constructivist pedagogies that promote active learning, such as participatory, diversity and discovery pedagogies which are characterised by inclusion, personalisation and individualised instruction and whose emergence was to meet the needs of 21st century classrooms, which are made up of learners from diverse backgrounds (Waring & Evans 2014; Sheets 2009). For Richards et al. (2007), culturally responsive approaches like diverse and participatory pedagogies facilitate and support the successes of all learners in the sense that teaching and learning are made effective through the use of learner-centred pedagogical practices. Such pedagogical practices could be the use of collaborative strategies like the use of small groups instead of expository pedagogies, which view the teacher as the master of knowledge like the lecture and question-and-answer methods.

Some authors (Ma, Tang & Lin 2021; Dooly & Vallejo 2020; Chambers 2019; Hannaway & Steyn 2017; Boulton & Cobb, 2017; Cheng 2015) note that through culturally responsive pedagogies such as translanguaging or plurilingual pedagogies, learners' heterogeneous linguistic abilities are appreciated and used in the language learning process such that no one language controls the teaching and learning process. However, in the language class, there is a place for multiple languages which are used as a resource for learning. For example, each learner's L1 can be used to aid learning. For Li (2018) and Van Viegen and Zappa-Hollman (2019), the focus on plurilingualism and translanguaging pedagogies is to bring out multiple modalities and the use of different semiotic tools such as language and technology to be integrated into classroom practices such that all communicative experiences learners bring to class are used to gain new knowledge. Zano (2022) concurs that translanguaging and pluralistic strategies are tools that empower learners to use their pre-existing linguistic knowledge to explore new given tasks, thus taking ownership of the learning process. For example, the above can be achieved through code-switching strategies, where the teacher temporarily alternates between languages to aid learning as Cheng (2015) found that code-switching between L1 and L2 motivated learners and helped them to understand the conversation, particularly if the strategy was accompanied by visual aids, such as pictures and short videos which were related to learners' lived experiences. Thus, pedagogical practices that have to be used in diverse linguistic classrooms are those anchored in situated learning where learning is made authentic and knowledge derived from the context or the environment (Vygotsky 1986).

The implication of this for the language teacher is to employ pedagogy that is appropriate and relevant to the context of the learner, as knowledge construction is a result of the social interaction between learners and other skilled individuals in the learners' context, such as the teacher who is a facilitator of learning rather than the spreader of information and the mediator between the learner and the subject content (Vygotsky 1978). This means that the prior knowledge and experiences the learners bring to class are used as a scaffold to facilitate learning. It is for this reason that Joubert (2015) and Vygotsky (1978) contend that both oral and written language should not be taught in decontextualised ways but should be contextualised to the learners' environment such that learners are made to do activities such as working in groups, singing songs, telling jokes and reciting poems and rhymes which are effective and fun methods of teaching language to the foundation phase and middle phase (FOMIP) learners. These collaborative and cooperative learning strategies (Hedge & Cullen 2012; Cheng 2015; Whong 2013; Kalina & Powell, 2009) are central to learners acquiring a deep understanding of concepts, as all learners are included and none feels left out.

Moreover, research indicates that teacher-centred expository pedagogy is widely used by teachers in teaching African home languages, where language forms are taught in isolation without paying any consideration to meaning and decontextualising the content, thus making the teaching and learning process mechanical and does not support the acquisition of language (Mbele 2019; Mkhwanazi 2014). As a result, this study aims at exploring the pedagogical practices that are used by teachers in the SL1 class as a vehicle for teaching and learning in early primary schools.

Theoretical Framework

To understand pedagogy in SL1, the researchers used the socio-cultural theory (SCT), particularly its interrelated and intertwined constructs, that is, the social interaction, mediation, zone of proximal development (ZPD) and collaboration. The SCT views language acquisition and learning as social constructs anchored in human interaction (Vygotsky 1978). As learners are social beings, the SCT posits that their learning is not an independent phenomenon, but it is interdependent, as its foundations are on socialising with skilled individuals in the child's environment like teachers, guardians and peers who work collaboratively or in partnership to facilitate cognitive development in the learner. In the case of the classroom, the teacher is a facilitator who has to guide learners and employ collaborative pedagogical practices that are learner-centred such as the use of groups, oral presentations and debates that tap into the learner's pre-existing knowledge to acquire new knowledge. Thus, for Khanahmadi and Sarkhosh (2018) and Lantolf, Thorne and Poehner (2015), teachers provide both symbolic and human mediation. With the former, both teachers and learners use semiotic tools such as language and all its manifestations and other technologies to mediate connections to themselves, each other and the world at large (Dewey 2018; Lantolf *et al.*, 2015). With the latter, the language teacher as the human mediator has the responsibility of ensuring that learners acquire all the textual and linguistic skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing that guarantee communicative competence. Since this study focused on teaching SL1 to learners of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, the teacher is anticipated to be a cultural mediator, that is the glue that holds the class together by facilitating an understanding of different cultures in his/her language classroom and by playing the role of intermediary and creating a conducive social environment.

Thus, according to the Vygotskyian perspective, the language teacher as a human mediator has to provide scaffolding, which according to Lantolf *et al.* (2015) is the support and guidance adults offer to learners through a variety of pedagogical practices to develop and organise their behaviour and thinking processes such that they can independently solve problems that they could not solve on their own. In the case of this study, we view the SL1 teachers as experts, their pedagogical practices and instructional strategies are scaffolds through which they demonstrate the desired task within the ZPD where maximum support and thoughtful coaching ought to be provided to these novice learners (Vygotsky 1978), and where responsibility is supposed to be gradually shifted, as their understanding and self-reliance grow and they ultimately acquire linguistic competencies they will use independently in future. This practice augurs well with FOMIP learners who need a bit more attention, assistance and approval. Thus, this strategy requires teachers to regulate the classroom environment by ensuring that learners get gradual instruction devoid of frustration while they expand their knowledge depth. Therefore, the SCT suggests that teachers must be cognisant of the developed abilities of a learner, but must not limit their instruction to these abilities which have already developed. Instead, they should utilise effective tools in the form of sound and effective pedagogical practices to develop functions in the process of maturing. Hence, the overlapping relationship between these constructs of the SCT are intertwined and they show an elaborate relationship that synchronises and intersects, pointing out that thoughtful incorporation of all these constructs guarantees an efficacious teaching and learning of language. These constructs

of the theory also indicate that an effective language teacher has to look in and beyond the language classroom for successful teaching and language learning.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study aimed at exploring pedagogical practices that are used in the SL1 because of the policy which provides for SiSwati to be a compulsory subject and a vehicle for teaching and learning in early primary, despite the country's linguistic heterogeneous classrooms in urban schools. Participants who were drawn from a population of teachers who taught SL1 in two urban schools were interviewed and observed in class while teaching. Those educators teach learners whose mother tongue was SiSwati and those whose mother tongue was not SiSwati but studied it as L1. Data were generated from eight teachers who taught SL1 to more than five hundred learners from Grades 1 to 4 in both schools and was analysed thematically. This was significant because besides being a core language subject, SL1 is also a LoLT in these grades.

All participants were native speakers of SiSwati and had over five years of experience teaching SL1 in both schools. The participants' identities were hidden by using pseudonyms SEA1-SEA4 and SEB1-SEB4 respectively. In this article, only one data collection tool, which is the individual interview was chosen for the scope of the study. Participants addressed two research questions which were: What is your conceptualisation of teaching SL1 in diverse linguistic classrooms? Which pedagogical practices do you use to teach SL1 in linguistically diverse classrooms? Before the individual interview, participants were briefed about the aim of the study which was to explore pedagogy in SL1 in light of the language in education policy which provides for SiSwati to be a compulsory subject and LoLT in early primary, despite the country's multilingual classrooms in urban schools. They were also acquainted with the interview schedule which had six semi-structured questions to whom teachers had to respond to individually.

All in all, researchers conducted eight individual interviews with the participant teachers. Since, this was a qualitative exploratory case study, data that were generated were purely qualitative, thus they were analysed through a content analysis where teachers' responses and information relating to pedagogy in SL1 were sorted and condensed into meaningful patterns. Through an in-depth analysis of all the data, information relating to pedagogy in SL1 was sought by finding connections and resemblances in all data, thus properly coding and condensing the results into themes.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

With respect to the aim of the study which was to explore pedagogy in SL1 in light of the language in education policy which provides for SiSwati to be a compulsory subject and LoLT in early primary, despite the country's multilingual classrooms in urban schools, this section provides the findings of the research questions which were: What is your conceptualisation of teaching SL1 in diverse linguistic classrooms? Which pedagogical practices do you use to teach SL1 in linguistically diverse classrooms? Two themes emerged from these research questions. The first theme pertained to participants' understanding of teaching SL1 and the second addressed pedagogical strategies participants used to teach SL1. Below are the findings from these two themes.

Theme 1: Participants' conceptualisation of teaching SL1

This theme revealed that teachers' understanding of SL1 was rooted in both a conventional and assimilation point of view. From the conventional viewpoint, teachers conceptualised that teaching SL1 meant teaching learners the productive skill of speaking, which is in the oral mode and the productive skill of writing, which is in the written mode. It also meant teaching learners the receptive skills of listening in the oral mode and that of reading,

which is in the written mode. Thus, teachers' conceptualisation of teaching SL1 in the FOMIP was that it should be taught to develop holistic literacy, for learners to acquire linguistic skills of being able to use the language both in speech and writing, which are a foundation of lifelong learning that ensures that learners are eloquent in language and demonstrate creativity, critical thinking and reasoning skills. These ideas were provided by teachers from schools SEA and SEB, who when asked about their understanding of teaching SL1, gave the following responses:

Teaching SL1 means equipping learners with speaking, reading and writing skills which are essential skills for learning. (SEA1)

It is to teach the SiSwati language so that the learner can be able to make conversation with others. It is to train them to listen to what is said and to teach them how to read and write anything in the language. (SEB4)

It is apparent, therefore, that teachers understood that teaching the SiSwati language in the FOMIP meant teaching language literacy so that all learners can have functional use of the language across the subject curricula both in its oral and print form, which is consistent with objectives of most language curriculums around the world. In this regard, participant teachers demonstrated knowledge and purpose of the SL1 content and its importance in being acquired by the young learners. Thus, participants had the fundamental knowledge required for them to teach SL1 which is content knowledge (CK) which according to authors (Baser, Kopcha & Ozden 2015; Pachler, Evans & Lawes, 2007; Shulman 1987) is the primary prerequisite and quality a teacher should possess to qualify to teach any subject area.

However, as much as teachers understood that teaching SL1 to learners meant equipping them with holistic functional use of the language, their views disregarded that they were not only teaching SL1 to mother tongue (MT) speakers of the language, but also to learners who had no proficiency in the language. Not once in their submissions did they mention what they understood teaching SL1 to learners of diverse linguistic backgrounds meant. It was evident from the submissions of participant teachers that they believed that teaching SL1 in the FOMIP meant aggressively assimilating non-native speakers of SiSwati into the language and culture of the SiSwati-speaking learners:

This is the mother tongue of most learners. It is a policy that all learners in Eswatini primary schools should learn SiSwati as a first language, even those who are non-native speakers. My understanding of teaching SL1, therefore, is that all learners have to study the language until they are proficient in it. The learners who are immigrants have to know our language, culture and our way of life because they are in our country, so they need to know our language so that they can communicate with us. If I go to study in another country, I learn their language first so that I can be able to understand what is taught. The same is true with the learners who are immigrants, they first have to learn SiSwati as this is the language of learning and a core subject in schools here. (SEB1)

Although there is some truth in the above view, it overlooks the fact that here teachers were dealing with young learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds and whose L1 was the sole tool for socialisation and learning. According to Milner (2017), Joubert (2015) and Barone and Mallette (2013), educators teaching in linguistically diverse classrooms have to be inclusive and ensure that all learners in their classrooms experience a sense of belonging, irrespective of ethnicity, race and language. This is because children found in today's schools are an illustration of present-day society where multiculturalism and multilingualism reign. Thus, for Barone and Mallette (2013) and Joubert (2015), learners who speak diverse languages, and are from culturally different backgrounds, should not be disadvantaged in the teaching and learning process, but in such situations, diversity should be viewed as an advantage that provides opportunities for understanding different cultures.

Theme 2: Inappropriate and inadequate pedagogical practices in teaching SL1

The findings indicated that teachers engaged in several pedagogical practices which were predominantly teacher-centred and did not cater for learners from diverse language backgrounds. Participants' practices were in total contrast to the SL1 curriculum, which required teachers to employ social constructivist approaches grounded in social interaction to teach SL1. Thus, teachers lacked the appropriate pedagogy to teach SL1, and they acknowledged this knowledge gap. The following excerpt is representative of the participants' views:

I use the listening and speaking skills method. I speak and they listen. The only way you can teach listening and speaking is by speaking and asking them to listen. (SEA2)

When teaching listening and speaking, I use the modelling teaching method. I want learners to copy the correct language from me. (SEA3)

The above views indicate some pedagogical knowledge deficiency on the part of the participants. In the above excerpts, SEA2 did not mention any teaching method but reproduced the question as an answer. Our interpretation of her views was that she could not distinguish between a skill to be acquired or learnt by a learner, the procedure (method) the teacher or learner follows so that the skill is acquired or learnt and the tactic (strategy) the teacher employs for easy acquisition of the skill. Participant SEA3 had the idea but assumed modelling was a teaching method, yet in this instance, this was a strategy or a tool that language teachers used to demonstrate the correct pronunciation of SiSwati words and concepts. Moreover, the teacher-centred lecture method dominated SL1 classrooms instead of learner-centred methods:

I emulate my trainers at college. The lecture and discussion methods worked for them; they explained a concept to us as they were the ones with knowledge and we would discuss it. I do that now. (SEA2)

I use the lecture method when teaching oral and written language. When I teach listening and speaking, I use the question-and-answer method a lot. I ask learners questions that they answer orally. This helps them to listen, speak and learn new words. These are the methods of teaching I know. (SEB1)

The foregoing views indicate that participants lacked knowledge of the appropriate pedagogy for teaching language to young learners. According to Leach and Moon (2008) and Shulman (1987), teachers ought to have pedagogic knowledge (PK), which includes not only the methods and strategies for teaching but also the understanding of the learners, how they learn, the tools of learning and the context where learning occurs. According to Brown (2007), teachers who are to implement a language curriculum should possess methods and strategies of teaching the language curriculum: knowledge being comprehensive and prescribed set of classroom specifications to achieve linguistic objectives and techniques being an extensive range of activities and exercises used to achieve objectives. Therefore, the preceding views of teachers indicate that they held the traditional view that the teacher is the master of knowledge and learners are blank slates, thus conforming to the 'jug and mug' strategy where the learners (mug) begin school without the knowledge and the teacher (jug) fills them with it. However, the understanding that teachers as trained individuals are equipped and prepared to teach a curriculum is not always factual because learners always come to school with pre-existing knowledge that the teacher can use to foster understanding of new concepts. Although the teachers might have gone to college, some still lacked that pedagogical knowledge. Furthermore, teachers' rationale for using expository pedagogy because it worked for their lecturers shows a lack of understanding of the context under which they teach. The lecture method might have been suitable for them as they were college students, but it is unsuitable and inappropriate for foundation phase learners who learn by discovering things for themselves and participating in their learning.

Moreover, participants also alluded to using culturally responsive strategies like code-switching to teach SL1:

Code-switching is another strategy I use to teach SL1. Code-switching comes naturally to me because at college, I was trained to teach SiSwati in English. I find it hard to relate what I studied in English to SiSwati and that is why now and then I find myself using the two languages interchangeably in a SiSwati lesson. To me, this is unconscious. (SEAI)

According to Mati (2004), code-switching, a strategy where the teacher temporally alternates between languages in one communication is an effective practice when teaching learners in multilingual classrooms as it promotes communication, and it is a collaborative and cooperative strategy that if properly used, it can result in the foundation phase learners acquiring problem solving and communication skills. However, there should be a clear purpose and rationale for why this strategy should be used in the language classroom and that should be to aid communication and learning. In the case of the foregoing view, the teacher code-switched because of SiSwati metalanguage limitations. According to teacher participants, this was a result of their training where they were taught SiSwati content and how to teach it in the second language English. In this regard, it cannot be said that teachers' use of code-switching solely benefitted the learner, as their uncontrolled use of English when teaching SL1 could be because of a lack of the SiSwati metalanguage, which could have dire effects on learners learning the language.

Discussion of Findings

Regarding research question, which is to explore which pedagogical practices they use to teach and the teacher's conceptualisation of teaching SL1 in diverse linguistic classrooms, the findings are not in harmony with findings by Mbele (2019) and Nkosi (2011) who found that teachers lacked knowledge of the purpose of teaching reading isiZulu among foundation phase learners. Participant teachers in this study had CK and understood that the purpose of teaching SL1 to learners was to help them become articulate in both oral and written forms of the language, as it is a core language subject and LoLT. Moreover, as much as the results show that teachers understood that teaching SL1 to FOMIP learners meant equipping them with communicative competence in the language, those good motives were defeated by their failure to understand and appreciate the beauty of linguistic diversity in their language classrooms.

The finding of the study showed that participants believed that teaching SL1 to multilingual learners meant assimilating the learners who were non-native speakers of SiSwati into the culture and language of the majority (Swati). In this regard, their views seemed to affirm the assimilation approach adopted by the EMoET to SL1 teaching and learning in Eswatini primary schools where non-MT learners of SiSwati have to learn SiSwati as a first language (EMoET 2018; EMoET 2017; EMoET 2011). Such an understanding by teachers is contrary to the conclusions made by some authors (Bailey & Marsden 2017; Cummins 2005; Macdonald 2002) who advised against assimilating MT learners of another language into the language of the majority in light of the many challenges learners encounter, including lagging in instruction, poor cognitive development and socialisation. This is more so because research evidence (Macdonald 2002) indicates that a child's L1 is vital for intellectual growth and forcefully assimilating them into another language may result in the contrary. In this regard, it appears that it is the responsibility of the 21st century language teacher to ensure that in his/her class diversity is appreciated.

The issue of responsibility of the 21st century language teachers tallies with the ideas of Milner (2012) and Milner (2017) who in their opportunity gap explanatory framework designed to help researchers and philosophers in examining, explaining and identifying instructional practices, particularly in extremely diverse and urban schools as in this study's context, warn teachers against taking a colour-blind approach in their language classrooms. By colour blindness, they mean lacking awareness of the ethnic diversity of learners in their class and the impact that awareness has on language pedagogy. Thus, teachers as curriculum developers are expected to design content and instructional practices that show an awareness of the diversity

of learners found in their classrooms. That being said, when teaching in their language classrooms, teachers can teach different language skills by manipulating them to create an awareness and appreciation that being different is not a bad thing but humankind is different.

Concerning research question two, which was about the pedagogical practices teachers use to teach SL1 in linguistically diverse classrooms, the results showed that participants heavily relied on expository pedagogy to teach SL1 to FOMIP learners. Common expository pedagogies in the SL1 classrooms were the question-and-answer method and lecture methods where learners had to respond to either oral or written questions. This confirmed the finding by Ramdan (2015) who found that foundation phase teachers lacked a socio-cultural methodology for teaching language literacy as they employed teacher-centred pedagogies. Teachers' reliance on expository pedagogy shows that they lacked the relevant methodology to teach SL1 in the context of learners from diverse language backgrounds. Teachers with intimate knowledge of young learners would use culturally responsive approaches that encourage learner engagement (Ma *et al.*, 2021; Dooly & Vallejo 2020; Dewey 2018; Hannaway & Steyn, 2017; & Joubert 2015), such as discovery, participatory, translanguaging pedagogy. These results confirm findings by several researchers (Schaffler, Nel & Booysen 2021; De Vos, Van der Merwe & Van der Mescht, 2014) who found that there was a gap between teacher content knowledge and pedagogic knowledge. For example, Schaffler (2015) found that teachers lacked knowledge of phonological awareness and the appropriate pedagogy to teach the reading content to foundation phase learners which was a consequence of inadequate training and the teacher's lack of proficiency in English.

Furthermore, the finding indicates that by using expository pedagogy like the lecture and question and answer method, which did not provide many communicative opportunities for learners to construct knowledge from personal experiences, teachers deprived learners of meaningful learning of the language. This is because there were few opportunities for communicative language learning as required by the socio-cultural theory and other learner-centred approaches like participatory, diversity, discovery and communicative language teaching pedagogies (Dooly & Vallejo 2020; de Sousa *et al.*, 2019; McKinley 2015; Joubert 2015; Whong 2013; Vygotsky 1978). Based on this finding, the teaching and learning of both oral and written forms of SL1 were made unrealistic and mechanical, as it did not mirror real-world situations of the learners, which were not in harmony with the socio-cultural theory that posits that language learning can be made authentic when learners are actively involved in their learning and when they learn about issues they understand and themes that relate to real-world experiences (Vygotsky 1978). This is the case as teachers controlled the teaching-learning process of SL1 and interactive strategies such as play, storytelling and group work which promote linguistic interaction were never used by teachers to teach SL1.

Even though participant teachers espoused using social constructivist pedagogies to meet the needs of learners from diverse language backgrounds, such as translanguaging pedagogy through the use of code-switching, the purpose of using this strategy was misguided as there was no clear picture of why it was used. According to Mati (2004), the major purpose of code-switching should be to facilitate communication, which will subsequently aid learning. In the case of the study, the results showed that participants code-switched from SiSwati to English because of their SiSwati metalanguage limitations. In this regard, code-switching was not a resource for teaching and learning in linguistically diverse classrooms, but it was a tool to hide teacher inadequacies in the SiSwati language. This finding confirms findings by Thomson and Stakhnevich (2010) which showed that language teachers code-switched from English to isiZulu in their English lessons for non-pedagogic reasons like disciplining learners when they did not follow instructions. This is despite the fact that the use of code-switching in classes with linguistic diversity and where the language of learning is foreign to some learners is both an integral and integrated part of teaching and learning because it aids learning by accommodating

all learners (Mati 2004). Moreover, the findings of the study also confirm the results of a study by Babane and Maruma (2017) which showed that whilst learners code-switched because they lacked vocabulary in the home language, teachers code-switched to English for class control and social reasons.

Thus, it was the finding of the study that the only learner-centred pedagogical practice that participants espoused using in teaching SL1 was plagued by incorrect use, as the purpose for using it was not to support student learning. In essence, teachers failed to effectively employ translanguaging and plurilingual pedagogies, as all the linguistic experiences that learners brought to class were never used as a resource for learning. This finding is not in line with several authors (Dooly & Vallejo 2020; Hannaway & Steyn 2017; Ma *et al.*, 2021; Chambers 2019; Boulton & Cobb 2017; Cheng 2015) who noted that through culturally responsive pedagogies, such as translanguaging or plurilingual pedagogies, learners' heterogeneous linguistic abilities are appreciated and used in the language learning process such that no one language controls the teaching and learning process.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study was to explore pedagogy in SL1 in light of the LiEP which provides for SiSwati to be a mandatory subject and LoLT in early primary, despite the country's multilingual classrooms in urban schools. The results showed that teachers believed that teaching SL1 meant equipping learners with language skills that would enable them to use the language in functional ways, and they knew the SL1 content to be taught to learners. However, teachers' ignored that they were teaching multilingual learners, as their practices were to assimilate learners who were non-mother speakers of SiSwati into the SiSwati culture and language. The implication for the language educator teaching in diverse linguistic settings is to do a self-introspection and accept and appreciate diversity as a feature of 21st century classrooms. Teachers should refrain from making learners feel like their languages and cultures are substandard or that what the learners have known for years is useless and has no value in his/her learning of the target language. Therefore, they have to create a community of language learners by ensuring that learners are not stigmatised because they speak a different language, but the teacher should guide all learners to accommodate each other, thus all experiencing language as inclusive, not exclusive and teachers building new knowledge on the learners' pre-existing cultural and linguistic experiences.

In terms of pedagogical practices employed to teach SL1, participants lacked the appropriate pedagogy to teach SL1 to FOMIP learners, let alone to multilingual learners. This is because teacher-centred expository pedagogy dominated SL1 classrooms as opposed to learner-centred culturally responsive pedagogies suitable to teach learners from diverse linguistic settings. Furthermore, even though teachers espoused to using code-switching as a learner-centred pedagogy, their purpose of using the strategy was misguided, as it was not to support learning, but to conceal teacher limitations. It can be concluded that teachers' uncontrolled code-switching between SiSwati and English showed that teachers lacked fluidity in the SiSwati metalanguage, as its use was not to facilitate meaningful and functional learning of the SiSwati language. Therefore, the study revealed that as much as knowledge of content is integral for the effective teaching of language, the mere knowledge of content is insufficient, but teachers ought to be a total package, having both content and pedagogical skills to teach language to learners which is termed pedagogical content knowledge. Thus, the study revealed that there should be no gaps between the teacher's content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. Based on the foregoing, the study has implications for pre-serving and in-service training and reconceptualising the kinds of skills and knowledge that should be provided to language teachers to be effective in their practice.

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