

The Return to Reading: Acquisition, Reading, Research on Narrative and the Implications for a Multilingual Pedagogy for Higher Education in South Africa

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Abstract

As applied linguists, we still need, given the resurgence of interest and scholarship in multilingualism, to attend to research on developing and changing language pedagogy so that it is informed by cognitive linguistics and psycholinguistics. This article surveys research into bilingual language acquisition and educational linguistics and explores the implications of this work for the development and use of indigenous languages development in South Africa. Five arguments, as listed here, are presented on the basis of this research.

First, that grammatical competence develops earlier in bilinguals because the use of two languages encourages an awareness of language systems (syntax and semiotics) such that the grammaticality of language is drawn to the attention of the bilingual learners when differences between two language systems become evident in the way these language are used and even learnt. Second, that the role of vocabulary development is crucial for the successful learning of a target language and such learning becomes more profound when phonology is developed and awareness of pronunciation is reinforced through reading. Third that bilinguals become aware of syntactic differences within languages at an earlier age than do monolingual speakers owing also to language exposure and use. Fourth, that phonological awareness of language use can be developed earlier when two languages are used and further that phonological awareness development is closely

correlated to the development of reading skills as sight and sound work together to develop and enhance language awareness in bilingual speakers. Finally, that bi-lingual language reinforcement occurs best through a focus on complex narratives outside as well as inside controlled learning environments. In this regard and within the controlled learning environment (from the early school years to tertiary education level), the teaching of complex narratives is critical for the development of sophisticated reading skills.

The article concludes by stating that research on language pedagogy for second language acquisition needs to be revived and further research conducted to account for an understanding of home-language syntax in relation to target-language syntax, and to create the scaffolding to enable learners to make the transitions necessary for effective learning.

Keywords: bilingualism, multilingualism, phonological awareness, vocabulary, reading, listening, language pedagogy

Introduction

As indigenous language development gathers momentum in South Africa, several scholars in language education and applied linguistics particularly, have demonstrated the need to shift from a focus on debates on language rights, policies, and choices at the macro-level (see Balfour 2009), to a concern with the implications for detailed development of languages as media for learning. Given the resurgent interest and scholarship in multilingualism there need arises to attend to research on developing and changing language pedagogy so that it is informed by cognitive linguistics and psycholinguistics in so far as such research is relevant to language pedagogy, curriculum design and development, and the emphases we bring to particular literacies development in more than one language.

The shift has not been sudden, but seems to have occurred rather as a consequence of selected and targeted funding of indigenous language projects which have often been multi-institutional (for example the SANTED project involving UCT, Rhodes, UKZN and DUT). The purpose of SANTED was the development of indigenous languages for learning in higher

education, and it was associated most often with professional qualifications in nursing, education, dentistry and psychology), or multi-level projects (for example, the North-West University's SANPAD project, involving the development of content and pedagogies for multilingual indigenous language learning in Grades 1-3 English, Afrikaans and Setswana). The broad range of activity is to be welcomed as it suggests that higher education institutions are making provision for the development and continued support of policy provisions associated with the Languages in Education Act (LiEP 1997) and the Languages in Higher Education Act (LiHEP 2002) and innovating in other, related areas of applied language research.

In textbook development (for example, Van den Berg & Nieman 2007), classroom pedagogy (for example, Mbatha 2010), lectures and other professional theatres (for example in Nursing, Medical and Traditional Health Care, see Engelbrecht *et al.* 2010; Goggin *et al.* 2010; and Gqaleni *et al.* 2010), and finally in relation to corpus planning itself, much is being achieved for bilingual education development: for example: Madiba's (2010) work with regard to written indigenous languages corpora planning at UCT, and Ngcobo and Nomdebevana's (2010) demonstration of the uses of spoken language for corpora development in isiXhosa and isiZulu. These developments find their parallels in international as well as local literature in which English as second or foreign language is often considered from the perspective of globalisation and technology: see for example, Kajee (2006), Wu and Marek, (2007). In South Africa, Kaschula and Mostert (2010) explore the uses of online games involving role plays as a means of stimulating interaction and engagement with the target language beyond formal learning as described by Krashen (1988). The argument advanced by both Kajee (2009) and Kaschula and Mostert (2010) is that online interaction may be enriched through explicit focus on language acquisition, simultaneously increasing motivation levels, pleasure and learning. Internationally work by Coste (2001: 15) challenges even conventional notions of bilingualism by suggesting that plurilingualism concerns the variability, flexibility and changing nature of language use, in which the use of languages is dependent, not on language equality, but rather on the value and context for a situated purpose for language use (Beacco & Byram 2003). Uneven competency in language use presupposes the integration of languages, dialects and registers often serving the purpose of endorsing

language linguistics tolerance. In literacy research, the movement from bilingualism to biliteracy studies has contributed to the awareness that literacy development in more than one language accompanies bilingual language use. Reyes (2001: 98) defines biliteracy as:

mastery of the fundamentals of speaking, reading, and writing (knowing sound/ symbol connections, conventions of print, accessing and conveying meaning through oral or print mode, etc.) in two linguistic systems. It also includes constructing meaning by making relevant cultural and linguistic connections with print and the learners' own lived experiences ... as well as the interaction of the two linguistic systems to make meaning.

In South Africa, the renewed focus on language development in higher education, and specifically on indigenous language development for learning in higher education is timely, and a number of special issues of journals have appeared on this subject (Balfour 2010; Ndimande-Hlongwa & Wildsmith 2010). These testify to this scholarly interest, although the focus has differed: at the policy level (for example, Balfour 2007; and Wildsmith 2010) the issue of sustaining acquisition of indigenous languages so that their habitual use and development may become part of the on-going work of academics in South African higher education institutions (or HEIs). Wildsmith (2010:29) offers international precedents (notably Canada and the USA) for this development, while Balfour (2007) and Mbatha (2010) explore the implications of dual medium instruction in two South African languages in school contexts. Mbatha argues (2010:65) that mother tongue instruction should be the primary focus of the Foundation Phase, while Balfour (2007:2) suggests that an early transition to two languages, rather than a focus on one, is necessary especially in multilingual classrooms where target languages are routinely available to learners either through each other or through the teacher.

It is impossible to describe in detail the research reported in the previous two paragraphs and the purpose of providing this cursory overview is to shed light on the aim of this article, which is to explore the implications of research on bilingualism for language pedagogy in South Africa (beyond the level of corpus development, or content development for curricula). The

earlier research described indicates a commonality of purpose, particularly in relation to indigenous language development, but it also points to a gap which exists: as applied linguists, we still need, given the resurgence of interest and scholarship in multilingualism, to attend to research on developing and changing language pedagogy so that it is informed by cognitive linguistics and psycholinguistics. We also need to explore those implications for the uses of corpora, content materials and instructional aids.

My argument is intended to complement the research already undertaken. In order to achieve this, the article is divided into four sections, the first of which describes what is 'given' in research to date on bilingual acquisition concerning grammar, syntax and vocabulary and phonology. The second section explores these four dimensions where research has demonstrated the advantages to bilingual acquisition from an early age. This last point is important for this article, since being exposed to more than one language at an early age, and successful learning of languages in order to achieve coordinate bilingualism, cannot be an aim in higher education given the implications for the entire education system. The third section of the article explores the dilemmas for bilingual education as a project in South Africa, whether at the level of schooling or indeed higher education. The fourth section refers to the research explained in the first section and then extrapolates its implications for what might be achieved in South African higher education. The argument in this article suggests that research on bilingual language acquisition is relevant to universities' curricula if indigenous language development is to be supported.

What We Know about Bi- and Multi-lingualism

Definitions of multilingualism may be derived from an extensive literature in which bilingual research features prominently. Social interaction in multilingual societies may require more than two languages, and in this case it is useful to distinguish as does Krashen (1988) between languages which are acquired and languages which are learnt. For the former comprehensible input is needed, while the latter is associated not only with such input, but also with the explicit presence of formal language learning (syntax in relation to the development of semantics) towards the development of awareness and grammatical competence. Butler and Hakuta (2004:118) divide this

bilingualism as early or late bilingualism since the achievement of fluency associated with each differs depending on the ‘age of exposure to two (or more) languages’ (118).

In relation to the above, scholars have variously defined bilingualism as the degree to which a person can command native-like control over more than one language (Bloomfield 1933: 56), to persons who can communicate meaning in more than one language (Haugen 1953: 7), to persons who while using only one language, may have an understanding of others (Grosjean 1999; Peal & Lambert 1962; Weinreich 1953; and Widdowson 2001) distinguish between dormant (awareness of two languages, but the use of one), balanced (the more or less equal use of at least two languages), dominant (where the use of one language is privileged over another because of status or context), compound (the learning of two languages in the same place where one language is used to learn another) and coordinate bilingualism (the learning of two languages in two places, or where two language are learnt independently). The literature associated with classification of bilingualism has been extensively described by Butler and Hakuta (2004:116). I wish here to distinguish between the bilingualism necessary for daily communicative interaction, and the bilingualism necessary for formal learning and teaching in South Africa. It is the latter with which I am mostly concerned and in this domain, there is a further need to distinguish between what is possible in the early years of learning in schools, and in the early years of tertiary education.

Few members of the population have achieved what Widdowson (2001) would term ‘coordinate bilingualism,’ where a person can express or understand complex meaning in more than one language in the four basic literacy skills. The reason for this is, as noted by Barnes (2004): the education system in South Africa has not, historically, been able to offer formal and sustained learning as well as acquisition opportunities for the majority of the population in more than one language, despite there being a wealth of languages and literatures available. Instead learners have either had to make the transition from mother tongue education too early, or had to acquire languages (English and Afrikaans) inadequately as a consequence of insufficiently educated teachers, inadequate resources for language development, and too few opportunities to use the target language. Language development for higher education has thus been a patchwork characterised

by unequal proficiency and inequitable distribution of opportunity. Unequal in this sense: what indigenous languages that were offered to children were either offered for only a short period (for example, the 1980s a child could learn Setwana or Sesotho in primary school, but then switch all English or all Afrikaans classes after the age of 11). Inequitable: in many schools the introduction to English or Afrikaans occurred too late for children (after the age of 11) who by this time had passed what is often referred to as the maximal window period for language learning.

Despite this, what emerges, repeatedly in research into language choice in South Africa (see Balfour 2010), is that people negotiate culture, face (or dignity) and identity through more than one language, and balance the need for modernity, the value of tradition, with awareness that multiculturalism is normative in South Africa. The education system post-1994 attempts to support multilingual language development through encouraging the learning of more than two languages throughout schooling, and the use of at least two languages for learning in higher educational contexts (see Singh 2009).

For Vygotsky (1962/ 1932) and for Peal and Lambert (1962) it was clear that knowledge of more than one language might actually be ‘enriching and enhancing’ of a child’s development (Bialystok 2004: 579). What are the advantages for bilingual learners and how can these be used for enhancing language pedagogy? Clark (1978: 36) speculates that ‘learning two languages at once, for instance, might heighten one’s awareness of specific linguistic devices in both’. Understanding the relation between words and their meanings consistently emerges as superior in bilingual children in two major areas of research.

Grammatical competence studies: the famous study conducted by Piaget demonstrates the implications of enhanced word recognition. Children were asked if it was possible to exchange the words ‘sun’ and ‘moon’ and retain their meanings. Having agreed to do so they were then asked what star would then shine at night? Most children in the group responded that the sun would shine at night and the moon by day. When asked what colour would the sky be if the sun shone at night?, bilingual children were the first to reply that the sky would be dark at night. Edwards and Christopherson (1988) and Eviatar and Ibrahim (2000) have consistently shown that bilingual children solve this problem earlier than monolinguals.

Vocabulary acquisition studies: Feldman and Shen (1971) experimented with a combination of real and nonsense names for children to learn. Both bilingual and monolingual children learned the names equally well and scored similarly on vocabulary tests, but bilingual children were consistently able to use the names accurately in new sentences, accepting that new names could be used ‘arbitrarily in a real linguistic context’ (Bialystok 2004: 582).

Syntax awareness: Ben-Zeev (1977) showed that bilingual children are also more advanced than monolingual children when recognising syntactical rules. Asking a group of children to substitute the word ‘we’ with the word ‘spaghetti’, bilingual children could consistently make the substitution in when asked ‘how would you say ‘we are good children?’ ‘Spaghetti are good children’’. Bilinguals are thus able to apply syntax rules more skilfully than monolinguals because awareness of two languages draws attention to the syntactic structures.

Phonological awareness: Bruck and Genesee (1995) working with English-speaking children in a French immersion programme found that monolingual children had an advantage over bilinguals in terms of phonological awareness. Bialystok, Majumder and Martin (2003) found that there were no differences between bilingual children and monolingual children and concluded that ‘bilingualism is insufficient to fundamentally change the path to metalinguistic development’ (Bialystok 2004: 588).

Huang and Hanley (1994) suggest that there is a complex relationship between phonological awareness and learning to read. In other words, we need to consider in our pedagogy the relationship between reading, which is essentially the silent pronunciation of words on the page, and understanding. Galambos and Goldin-Meadow (1990) suggest that while bilingualism alters the rate of language development, it does not change the course of development for learners. This point is worth exploring further in the context of South Africa. Butler and Hakuta (2004:126) suggest that the age of exposure to a language is an important factor in acquisition, but not necessarily a factor in learning. While children exposed to unstructured language in the early years learn languages with speed, adults can typically learn languages equally fast in controlled environments, provided there are sufficient opportunities for acquisition and learning. The point here serves to confirm that there does indeed exist a critical age during which language

acquisition is accelerated, but that if controlled support for learning occurs in later years, there is no evidence to suggest that languages cannot be multiply acquired by adult learners; a point to which I shall return.

Phonological awareness has been ignored after the early years in education in South Africa. And yet listening tests conducted with university students (Balfour 2002) show that students experience difficulty regarding the comprehensibility of English as spoken by different non-native speakers, or by native speakers of the language. Of particular importance is Stevens's (1965) finding that non-native speakers of English are less aware of loss or lack of comprehensibility. This research suggests that listening skills development which takes into account accent and pronunciation is key also to the development of reading skills for coping with higher education in South Africa.

Finally, we can confirm that the ability to distinguish between meaning and form, is more advanced for bilingual learners. This ability suggests that bilinguals not only are able to make sense of the world, and thus knowing and knowledge, in more than one language system, but that the compulsion to move between one language and another fosters an awareness of systems and the means by which human beings make sense of experience and knowledge.

Dilemmas in South Africa as Regards Bilingualism and Education

While these findings support the assertion that bilingualism advantages learners, the success of bilingual learners depends on a number of factors, not least of which is previous exposure to the additional language in terms of vocabulary, and also learning age (Bialystok 2004: 585). In this regard, a number of caveats or qualifications delimit the extent to which interventions in language education are effective, and the extent to which a 'weak' language can be used for education in tertiary education in South Africa.

As regards teacher education, there is no consistent measure which provides us with data concerning the degree of depth of 'previous exposure' to English or any other language, for the following three reasons. First, the national assessment exercises, whether in Grade 3 or Grade 12, require the

demonstration of competencies not fully developed or adequate for university level requirements. Initiatives to explore the predictive value of language and mathematics as predictors for success at university level suggest that these two subjects are crucial, but beyond that finding, the bridge between development and the competent demonstration of skills remains a concern. This is complicated by other realisations: first, the quality of teacher education (in the past and present) is variable, and second, because models for initial teacher education are revised in five to ten year cycles. It is thus difficult to determine which pedagogic models, if any, best support teaching and learning and what training is required in order to equip teachers to support learning. Finally, because the curriculum itself shifts in relation to new knowledge developments and generation it is not possible to argue that research, or insights arising from research in language acquisition are fixed beyond change. Indeed, developments in cognitive and neuro-sciences shed light on cognitive processes which change the ways we understand learning.

Given the variable access to high quality language education in South Africa, it is necessary consider what interventions support learning in a weak language in higher education, as opposed to those programmes which are designed to encourage acquisition of a language.

We have yet to develop immersion type programmes, high enough in status and adequately supported by economic and social need. For example, a Bachelor of Commerce (in Entrepreneurialism in Africa) might demand that students learn academic content through immersion types modules where the target language, be it Swahili or Arabic, is also the language of learning. A number of factors need to be considered in this regard: first, where we already have programmes in which learning through a weak language is supported. Learning through English and Setswana is supported thus at NWU, and to a lesser extent isiZulu at UKZN), but the estimation of resource development in relation to gain needs to be considered. For example, in some South African universities classes/ modules are offered in two languages. Second, the costs associated with parallel medium education are astronomical, in terms of hours devoted to double teaching, the translation of materials and the availability of translation expertise in institutions. Related to this second point is the fact that in many instances, the outcomes (separation of language groupings and an absence of integration) of parallel medium education are also undesirable; for example,

in terms of the reinactment of language ghettos and the reinforcement of language shift in contexts where strong and weak language divides are evident. On the other hand, targeted interpreting and translation support, as has been successfully done at NWU, does enable a more efficient articulation between human resources and language-related expertise, even though not every class/ module can be interpreted, nor can materials in translation be available to every programme. A complex organisational bureaucracy, itself a gatekeeper to access, must be put in place to ensure that interpreters are available and materials developed all at least a year in advance.

Totally ignored in higher education curricula in South Africa is the role of vocabulary acquisition for bilingualism to develop. It is only in the recent past (Balfour 2010) that attention has refocused on vocabulary acquisition, and we have not yet addressed the need to concentrate on phonological awareness in association with reading skills development (Kilfoil 1998). Such neglects are not accidental and the next section of this article explores the extent to which absences of focus arise from theoretical underpinnings of curricula and associated pedagogies.

Problems Associated with Language Learning Theories in South Africa

Communication Language Theory (CLT: Krashen & Hymes *et al.*) has long been dominant in language curriculum design in South Africa. CLT assumes that exposure to the target language is sufficient for acquisition. If this were true for all contexts how would we explain that the input routinely used in the monolingual non-English classroom does not activate either conscious control over language, or the ability to use it for purposes outside the communicative context? (Balfour 2008a). For Krashen (1988) the quality of L2 input is critical, whereas for Ellis (1994), the role of the L1 is essential since adequate knowledge of the mother tongue enables the scaffolding (that is the use of understanding of one concept to build the understanding of a new concept in language) (Wong-Fillmore 1985/1994) of language learning to be developed. In both positions there is an assumption that knowledge of the L1 and the L2 are critical for the movement of learning from the compound bilingualism to coordinate bilingualism. Yet as demonstrated in

the rural monolingual classroom and the urban middle class multilingual classroom, learners are not enabled by teachers to make use of either the L1 or the L2 as a learning opportunity. Given that no formal scaffolding is created upon which the internal cognitive processing of L2 through the L1 is made explicit, learners are left to make connections on their own, developing a compound bilingualism that, as we know from the variable success of academic development programmes, seldom progresses beyond the interlanguage stage. Simply put, code-switching is neither desirable nor useful in the classroom unless it is incorporated into an explicit pedagogy that seeks to develop the adequate use of the L1 as a tool for acquisition and learning of the L2. If this seems logical and acceptable to us, then the remaining question must surely be concerned with education since both the monolingual and multilingual contexts provide the only opportunity for learners to develop their formal awareness of the L1, and (at least in the monolingual rural environment) their acquisition of the L2.

In Balfour (2008b) I argue that second language pedagogy and research are located on opposite extremes of a continuum in this regard. For some, like Wong-Fillmore (1985) this interference requires diminution if the learning of the second language is to be reinforced, since immersion leads to accelerated learning. For Ramsay-Brijball (2004), code-switching is a critical part of the acquisition process, and because of its psycho-social aspects, an important part of validating one's own language and culture in order to promote what Lambert (1974) refers to as additive bilingualism. Other theories of acquisition are equally extreme in positions and hypotheses. On the one hand, Krashen and Terrell (1983) propose that the relationship between learning (the formal and pedagogic awareness of a language) and acquisition (the natural acquiring of another language through contact and input) is mutually exclusive. This is known as the non-interface position, according to which one can acquire a language more successfully through contact and comprehensible input (Hymes 1972), than through learning, focussed as it is on form and conscious awareness of structure. On the other hand, Ellis (1994) and Francis (2002) argue that a focus on form draws on learners' long-term memory, through consolidation of awareness in the short term working memory and thus develops not only one's capacity to recall languages, but also to use them.

Research demonstrates (Geva, Wade-Woolley & Shany 1997) that without strongly developed reading skills in the main language, the transfer of such skills to an additional (weak) language is compromised.

Research also suggests (Bialystok 2004: 596) that learners who are partially bilingual do not achieve the same advantages as in cases where children attain bilingualism at an earlier age. Bialystok argues that ‘the absolute levels of language proficiency and the relative balance between languages’ are crucial in determining whether skills learnt in the main language are transferrable to the weak language (2004: 596). In other words, ‘children who speak two languages poorly, or two languages in the absence of literary experience in at least one of them, may not reap any benefit from their experience’ (2004: 596). Exposure to the language of literacy instruction and narrative experience in the weak language encourages phonological awareness. Furthermore, Bialystok (2004) confirms that the transfer of reading skills is not automatic where orthographies differ as is the case with English in contrast to isiZulu for example. In such circumstances the explicit teaching of differences between the systems is a requirement for understanding how both work. This supports my earlier point about the need to develop reading and vocabulary skills in both the ‘main’ and ‘weak’ language.

Implications for Language Pedagogy in Higher Education in South Africa

Previous sections have made the following arguments: that the use of two languages in a teaching context is desirable in terms of increasing grammatical awareness; that the use of two languages in a classroom (or controlled learning environment) can have the effect of developing awareness of syntactic differences between languages and this aid in the learning of a target language; that we focus on the role of vocabulary development in controlled learning environments, and that we focus also on the phonology of the target language (in other words, focus on the spoken and the written text) to reinforce acquisition through reading and speaking. Although the above can be achieved at higher education level, it needs also to be noted that in relation to learning in the early years that phonological awareness of

language use can be developed earlier when two languages are used, and further that the use of narratives even at an early age, should be encouraged to develop bilingual speakers.

At both education levels (early years and higher education) the discourse structure of narrative is key to the development of coordinate bilingualism. The implications of understanding this for South African education are profound. It means that teacher education programmes should make normative the teaching of subject content matter through more than one language, rather than focusing merely on basic interpersonal communication skills. These are useful in everyday contexts, but not useful enough for learning or complex argument in reading or writing. In view of perspectives such as these the following implications for education to better support bilingual acquisition are worth articulating.

First, given that reading has consistently (since and even before 2002) been identified as the one skill inadequately developed in higher education, we should emphasise the development of extended reading skills early in the curriculum. At university level, learners should be exposed to a wide variety of reading forms and genres, in order to become accustomed to reading extended narrative texts. Thus the shift from shorter readings to more elaborated texts, and the shift from shorter forms of assessment, to those associated with essay-writing or project-writing needs to occur earlier and more intensively in the curriculum.

Second, the emphasis in our national curricula on assessment exercises which are similarly based on shorter texts, basic comprehension and limited vocabulary acquisition must be recognised as inadequate and a disservice to the learners and ultimately to the nation. The approach to literacy which has hitherto focused on writing development and the formal development of semantic awareness (writing for comprehension) is inadequate. Bialystok argues that ‘Acquisition of the more detailed knowledge about how the (language) system works, requires the contrast of being exposed to two different systems’ (Bialystok 2004: 592). Thus, assessment needs to challenge learners more in terms of communicating a sophisticated understanding of texts, comparison, or the synthesis of longer texts in which different perspectives on the same topic are provided.

Third, (and already alluded to earlier) research consistently demonstrates for first as well as foreign language acquisition that vocabulary

remains the key to the development of structured and complex meaning in reading or writing. Acquisition of language is not dependent on exposure to short texts or basic comprehension skills. Complexity of meaning is understood within the narrative that encapsulates it, and because of this we should, in schools and later at universities, pay particular attention to vocabulary acquisition through exposure to complex narrative structures, so that learners grasp the awareness that word recognition is formed in relation to syntactic as well as semantic positioning. A wide-ranging vocabulary makes for better understanding of specialist terminology and communicative language competence. Glossary development, vocabulary testing (in order to improve memory store, for example, ought to feature as part of learning).

The fourth implication arises not from the literature above, but from the pedagogy associated with second language acquisition. We find in most language classrooms, concerning the role that the teacher adopts when teaching the features of the target language, and the roles learners adopt when interacting with each other to explain how the target language works, the use of what Widdowson (2001: 10) terms a ‘permissive pedagogy’:

which allows for, even encourages, the learners’ engagement of the L1, but again makes no acknowledgement of its existence in the design of the instruction itself. Monolingual teaching is justified in this case on the grounds that input in the L2, so long as it is comprehensible, will automatically activate learning.

Thus language education curricula ought to take as an assumption that learners need to be aware of at least two languages (one of which they might have as a home language), and that target language learning should focus on the similarities and differences between syntactic systems. Arising also from the context of higher education in South Africa, is an awareness that the language made available in the tutorial venue or lecture theatre, if not reinforced outside of those contexts, remains superficial and partially comprehended. Learners in bilingual environments should have access to out-of-class stimuli, including language laboratories, to support to formal acquisition as it occurs in the curriculum setting.

Finally, the research in international applied language studies on how bilingualism influences the development of proficiency in reading is in need

of further development. South Africa needs to contribute to this scholarly work, given our unique position enshrined in legislation, in terms of indigenous language development. The opportunity exists here for work in which language pedagogy development for the purposes of bilingual (or multilingual) language acquisition, can be undertaken. We should begin to incorporate in teacher education programmes a curriculum which makes for language teaching on the basis of more than one language from the outset of schooling so that the home language becomes a means for learning about the foreign or additional language whether this is English or any other language. The development of such curricula requires that monolingual models for acquisition (along with the pedagogic assumptions involved) are rejected since these do not reflect the multilingual nature of South Africa (see Balfour 1999). Accepting English as the lingua franca need not imply the automatic development of subtractive bilingualism since, if multilingualism is supported through pedagogy from the beginning years, and throughout schooling and tertiary education, I believe that most, if not all, the current difficulties associated with English (or for that matter Afrikaans) as barriers to access will become a feature of the past.

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