IsiZulu as Conduit for Accessing Education: Students becoming Partners in Knowledge Discovery

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Abstract

IsiZulu, like African languages in general, is artistically rich; the use of proverbs, idioms, word meaning, and phrases with non-literal meanings, being some of the primary examples. This helps to facilitate the elucidation of conceptual meaning. When isiZulu is used as the language of learning and teaching during lectures and tutorials, learners deploy this artistic language to elucidate concepts and instructions. This helps students to understand what is being taught better, making it easy for them to participate fully when learning. In addition, it enables students to provide responses and views using isiZulu academic language. Therefore, this paper uses a qualitative approach to analyse first year students' experiences of learning an isiZulu Communication course at a South African university. Using Bernstein's theory of pedagogic discourse, the authors of this article argue that the use of students' home language for learning and teaching enables them to take ownership of their education, thereby facilitating deep learning. Subsequently, the quality of the students' work improves. Furthermore, the teaching and management of large groups become a possibility without compromising the quality of education. The authors conclude that the use of African languages in higher education institutions is imperative.

Keywords: Bernstein's Theory; Folk Language; IsiZulu Teaching; Mother Tongue Education. Pedagogic Discourse.

Tholani Hlongwa, Nokukhanya Ngcobo, Bonakele Mhlongo noSibusiso Ntuli   *Ulimi lwesiZulu Njengomgudu Wokuthola Imfundo: Abafundi baba Yingxenye Yokuzitholela Ulwazi*

Isifingqo

IsiZulu, njengezinye zezilimi zase-Afrika, sinothile ekusebenziseni ulimi ngobuciko; izibonelo eziqavile: izaga, izisho, okushiwo amagama, kanye namabinzana aqukethe umqondo ongekho obala. Lokhu kusiza ukuqhubezela ukuchaza kabanzi okuqukethwe umqondongqangi. Ngenkathi isiZulu sisebenza njengolimi lokufunda nokufundisa ezifundisweni (lectures) kanye nasemaqoqweni amancane okufunda (tutorials), abafundi basebenzisa lolu limi lobuciko oluchaza kabanzi imiqondongqangi/imibono, kanye nemiyalelo. Lokhu kusiza abafundi ukuba baqonde abakufundiswayo futhi kwenza lula nakubona ukubamba iqhaza uma befunda. Kubuye futhi kubasize ekunikezeni izimpendulo nemibono besebenzisa isiZulu njengolimi lwemfundo ephakeme. Ngakhoke leli phepha lisebenzisa indlela yocwaningo eyaziwa ngokuthi i-khwalithethivu (qualitative) ukuhlaziya amava abafundi bonyaka wokuqala okufunda Isifundo SokuXhumana SesiZulu kwenye yama nyuvesi eNingizimu Afrika. Ngokusebenzisa ithiyori yoxhumano lwezemfundo lukaBernstein ababhali baleli phepha bafakazela ukuthi uma usebenzisa ulimi lwasekhaya ekufundeni nasekufundiseni, abafundi bayibeka ezandleni zabo imfundo ngokuthi bakhuthalele ukufunda kwabo. Kanjalo, iqophelo lomsebenzi wabafundi liyathuthuka. Futhi, ukufundisa kanye nokulawula amaqoqo amakhulu kuba yinto engenzeka ngaphandle kokulahleka kweqophelo elikahle lemfundo. Ababhali baphetha ngokuthi ukusebenza kwezilimi ZoMdabu ezikhungweni zemfundo ephakeme kuyimpoqo, ukuze kwenzeke ukufunda okujulile.

Introduction

African languages are rich in the artistic use of language. This is evident in the way these languages use proverbs, idioms, word meaning, and phrases with non-literal meanings, to communicate meaning. This helps to facilitate the elucidation of conceptual meanings. For speakers of African languages,

the use of their home languages for teaching and learning in academic settings elucidates concepts, instructions, and views. This creates a conducive environment for students' meaningful participation in their learning. In this way, students employ artistic language to engage with the subject content knowledge and this enables them to provide responses and views using the academic form of the relevant African language.

Therefore, this paper uses a qualitative approach to analyse lecturers'/tutors' and students' experiences in teaching and learning isiZulu first year Communication Course at a South African University. Firstly, the authors of the current paper discuss the debates and discourses on the use of African languages in South African higher education. Secondly, the authors briefly explain the isiZulu Communication Course under discussion and the research methodology that was employed to generate data for this study. Thirdly, Bernstein's theory of pedagogic discourse, which provides an analytical framework to understand how a vernacular language can be used for knowledge discovery at a university, is discussed. The value of isiZulu Communication course in higher education is then discussed, followed by conclusions.

Debates on the Use of African Languages in Higher Education

The establishment of a democratic government following the 1994 democratic elections in South Africa brought widespread political, social and economic changes in the country, in an attempt to redress the injustices of the past. The fledgling democracy called for a new constitution that promotes inclusion and multilingualism while simultaneously recognising the society's cultural, religious, racial and linguistic diversity. As a result, the constitution afforded the nine previously marginalised indigenous languages an official status alongside English and Afrikaans (*Constitution of the Republic of South African* 1996).

Institutions of higher learning are seen as integral in the campaign to spread multilingualism within education. As a result of their inclusion, there has been extensive debates on language planning and language policy issues in the education domain. In 2002 the Department of Education approved the Language Policy in Higher Education (DoE 2002) with the intention to

accelerate multilingualism and transformation at universities. Whereas the debate in the last decade focused on the need to include indigenous languages in higher education, it has now progressed to exploring how these could be made an important part of the academic discourse (Nzimande 2012). For example, the discourse explores how African languages could be developed into languages for education so that they can be used in research, teaching, learning and communication in different academic fields. In addition, with the new status given to African languages, there is a need to pay more attention to their pedagogy within higher education institutions. This would redress the previous scenario where many universities taught African languages in the medium of English, and at times even lecturers were not conversant with the language. A case in point in KwaZulu-Natal universities is that isiZulu was taught through the English medium. Also these languages were largely taught following strictly grammatically-based structures (Mgqwashu 2013). Such tendencies have resulted in unintended detrimental consequences on the teaching of isiZulu in general. One of the consequences is that 'the cognitive, affective, and social development of young people, which must necessarily occur through a language that is well known, cannot take place effectively' (Kembo 2000: 287). Furthermore, Kaschula (2013) correctly notes that the apartheid legacy of teaching African languages as pure linguistic courses has resulted in many students losing interest in studying these languages. Like other scholars, he has called for an upgrading of the teaching of African languages in the 21st century at both the school and university levels (Alexander 2003; Lafon & Webb 2008). Hence, in this paper we explore the ways in which Bernstein's theory of pedagogic discourse can be employed to improve the teaching of isiZulu at university level.

Although there is still paucity of knowledge regarding the nature of isiZulu folk language, its meaning (Dhlomo 1977; and Msimang 1992) gives us a notion that it provides the worldview of its native speakers. In other words, the meaning of isiZulu folk language originates from a conceptual understanding of issues. For example, the origin of the proverb *(Ithunga) Selidumela emasumpeni,* literally translates to <u>the milk-pail already sounds around its handles</u>. However, in essence this proverb means that things are soon going to be alright. This popular proverb derives from cow-milking in the Zulu culture, where cows are central to the lives of the people and therefore cow-milking is a daily occurrence. During cow-milking, the milk-pail used is inserted under the cow and the sound of the milk filling up into

the milk-pail alerts the milking person if the milk-pail is getting full. The handles (*amasumpa)* of the milk-pail are right at the top end of the pail. During milking, as the milk gets drawn into the milk-pail, it makes a rumbling noise. As the rumbling noise fast approaches the handles of the milk-pail, it becomes even louder. Then, those adept at milking will know that the process is almost done. Therefore, this original meaning has become a conceptual meaning to refer to different situations with similar imminence. When milk-pails are full in a home, this represents life and prosperity because people will have food. People can use milk in different forms (for example, fresh milk, *umlaza* (strained milk); *amasi* (maas); *ihongo* (mixture of fresh milk and strained milk). Milk is also used for health and first aid purposes. Therefore, a proverb is only applicable in different imminent situations that are of a positive nature. It cannot be used to define imminent situations that are contrary to life and prosperity.

The use of isiZulu folk language enables one to access a conceptual view of entities. Since isiZulu language is rich in folk language if used as a Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) in class, it allows students and lecturers to engage at a conceptual level. As such, students are able to understand better new concepts from their own worldview, when they use their home language. The use of isiZulu as LoLT has a potential to enable students to access a huge reservoir of folk language knowledge such as proverbs, idioms and so on, to engage meaningfully with the subject content.

This paper seeks to argue that the use of pedagogic discourse in teaching isiZulu, a former marginalised African language, created a meaningful learning environment for student teachers learning an isiZulu Communication course. It is important to note that this module is mandatory for a teaching qualification. In our view, making the acquisition of this course a requirement might have far reaching consequences for the development of African languages at schools. Students who have been taught the language well, and have used it in academic learning, have the potential to transfer their proficiency to their own learners. This should include helping their own learners in schools to acquire high levels of proficiency in their home languages. Then, the learners should be able to use the languages for concept development, knowledge generation, acquisition and discovery. To acquire these proficiencies, should result in important gains in the development of African languages as academic languages and in affording them the currency they deserve.

IsiZulu Communication Course and Methodology

Mother-tongue education is a significant factor when students acquire knowledge, as it facilitates the development of their home language when they use it for academic purposes. It also allows them to have opportunities to self-direct their learning as it removes language as a barrier to knowledge. For this reason, the course was entirely structured and delivered in isiZulu including assessment activities. In the following section, the authors discuss the profile of the students who participated in the course. This is followed by the discussion of the course outline and the mode of delivery. Lastly, the discussion centers on the research methodology used in this paper.

The Profile of the Students

Seven hundred and forty first year pre-service teachers enrolled in the course, and five lecturers taught the course. The same lecturers also facilitated the tutorial groups during tutorial sessions. Both the students and lecturers were isiZulu mother-tongue speakers. The majority of students had learned isiZulu as home language at high school, but a few students did it as second language. Students who took isiZulu as second language in school were mostly from multiracial and private schools. In South Africa it has become a norm that African students who attend multiracial schools do not have an option but to take English as first language and their mother-tongue as a second language. This relates to the pre-1994 era where multiracial schools were solely designated for home language speakers and this never changed even though in the new dispensation their doors were open to African students.

The Course Outline and Mode of Delivery

The course, IsiZulu Communication, is part of a suite of modules that students take to fulfill the requirements of a Bachelor of Education degree. It is a compulsory module aiming to expose students to effective communication skills. Examples of content topics in the course include: interpersonal communication, non-verbal communication, essay writing and literature. It is designed to ensure that students apply their knowledge successfully and effectively in various contexts. Ultimately it intends to help

students develop an interest in and appreciation of isiZulu language and its traditional literature**.** The course is taught in the medium of isiZulu. This means that all the course materials are written in isiZulu and all class interactions are carried out in isiZulu. Table 1 provides the course content.

The course introduced students to listening, communication, concepts, and theories. All concepts and theories were contextualised within isiZulu media and literature. Students applied concepts to texts messages available through electronic and print media. For the application of concepts to isiZulu literature, a drama book titled '*Impicabadala*' (Dlamini, 2012) was used. The assessment in the course comprised of a test, individual assignment, group tutorial work, and examination.

Table 1: The Course Outline

IZIFUNDISO (Lectures)	*Amaqoqwana* (Tutorial Groups)
1. *Amakhonsephthi namathiyori agondene nokulalela* (**Concepts and theories related to listening**) *Izibonelo: ama-elementi okulalela, ukulalelisisa, ukuzwa nokuqonda, njll*. (Examples: elements of listening, effective listening, hearing and understanding, etc.)	
2. *Izindlela zokulalela* (**Ways of listening**) *Ukulalela ngendlela yokunaka umuntu. Ukukhuluma ngezwi nokukhuluma ngokwenza lapho kukhulunywa ngokulalela*. (Listening with empathy. Verbal and non-verbal communication while listening.)	*Iqoqwana 1* (**Tutorial Groups**): *Ukulalelisisa* (Effective listening) 1. *Inkulumo-mdlalo* (Role-playing) 2. *Ithekisithi efundwayo* (Reading Text)
3. *Izinhlobo zokulalela* (**Listening approaches**) *Ukubaluleka kokulalela ezikoleni.* (The	*Iqoqwana 2* (**Tutorial Groups**): *Indlela eqhakambisa umuntu nokuzotha.* (An approach that

importance of listening at schools)	pays attention to a person)
	1. *Ukuzotha ngokomzimba.* (Body gestures)
	2. *Ukuzotha ngokwephimbo.* (Verbal response)

4. *Ukulalela nemibhalo* (**Listening and literature**) *Kuhluzwa incwadi 'Impicabadala' Izinkundla 1, 2.* (Critical reading of the literally work '*Impicabadala*')	

5. *Ukulalela nemibhalo* *Kuhluzwa incwadi 'Impicabadala' Izinkundla 1, 2.* (Critical reading of the literally work '*Impicabadala*')	*Igoqwana 3* (**Tutorial Groups**): *Ukusabela* (Responding)
	1. *Ukusabela ngozwelo (Responding with empathy)*
	2. *Ulimi lokusabela ngozwelo (Language of responding with empathy)*

6. Ukulalela nemibhalo. *Kuhluzwa incwadi 'Impicabadala' Izinkundla 3, 4.* (Critical reading of the literally work '*Impicabadala'*)	*Igoqwana 4* (**Tutorial Groups**): *Ulimi-buthule* (Non-verbal communication)
	1. *Ukuvezwa kwabalingiswa ngendlela yobulimi-buthule nemilayezo yalo* (Identifying characters through their non-verbal communication habits)

7. *Ukulalela nemibhalo.* *Kuhluzwa incwadi 'Impicabadala' Izinkundla 5, 6.* (Critical reading of the literally work '*Impicabadala*')	*Igoqwana 5* (**Tutorial Groups**): *Ukulalela ngozwelo* (Listening with empathy)
	1. *Izinxushunxushu ezidalwe ukungalalelani kwabalingiswa* (Conflicts resulting from ineffective

		listening skills by characters)
8.	***Ukulalela nezinkundla zokuxhumana zomphakathi* (Listening and social media)**	***Iqoqwana 6* (Tutorial Groups):** *Ukusabela ngozwelo* (Responding with empathy) *1. Izinxushunxushu ezidalwe ukungasabeli ngozwelo kwabalingiswa* (Conflicts resulting from ineffective response skills)

9.	***Ukulalela nemidiya yemibhalo* (Listening and print media)**

Students were divided into five lecture groups. The big lecture groups were further divided into small tutorial groups of about 20 to 25 students resulting in about 30 tutorial groups. The course comprised of three contact sessions a week, each session lasting two double periods (90 minutes). Two double period sessions were dedicated for lectures and one for tutorials. Each tutorial was designed to link to a specific lecture.

Each tutor was assigned six tutorial groups and each of those tutorial groups had two student group leaders who worked closely with the tutors to facilitate tutorial group sessions. The group leaders would meet with the tutor before the tutorial class to discuss the content of the session and also to collect the work for that session. Most of the tutorial sessions were facilitated by group leaders and tutors spent less time with the groups. Group work was collected and marked by a tutor.

Research Methodology

Qualitative data was generated through focused group discussions towards the end of the course. All tutorial groups participated in the focused group discussions. Students were given discussion questions about the course. Group leaders facilitated the focused group discussions using the instrument that was developed for that purpose. The instrument had open ended questions organised into the five themes relating to the following aspects of the module:

- Language of learning and teaching.
- Lectures and lecturers.
- Tutorial sessions.
- Assessment.
- Teaching and learning materials.

Open-ended questions were given to individual group leaders to complete in writing, and about forty of them were returned. Lecturers/tutors were interviewed and transcripts were produced. The course documents namely, course packs, assignments, weekly tutorials, and exams also formed part of the data. The data sources were then analysed using a thematic approach, which according to Rabiee (2004), allows the researcher to break data into manageable parts, using short phrases, ideas or concepts arising from text and using them to develop themes. Furthermore, Bernstein's theory of pedagogic discourse (Bernstein 1996, 2000) was used in the analysis of collected data. In the following section we discuss this theory in brief.

Bernstein's Theory of Pedagogic Discourse

Bernstein (1975: 83) noted that:

> Curriculum defines what counts as knowledge, pedagogy defines what counts as valid transmission of knowledge, and evaluation defines what counts as valid realisation of knowledge on the part of the taught.

Thus, curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation are considered message systems as they constitute the structure and process of knowledge transmission and practice in educational settings. The pedagogic discourse is made up of two discourses; namely, the Regulative Discourse (RD) and the Instructional Discourse (ID) (Bernstein 1990). The Regulative Discourse is a discourse of order, which translates the dominant values of society and regulates the form of how knowledge is transmitted. Simply put, the nature of the curriculum content is regulated by the methodologies, the teacher and values he/she espouses, and the medium through which the teaching occurs. The Instructional Discourse is a discourse of competence which refers to what is

transmitted – the content. The two discourses are incorporated in such a way that the regulative discourse always dominates the instructional discourse. For example, in pedagogic context, when the teachers select the content, materials, and the methods used, they are influenced by their personal background, experiences, and values. Therefore, this means that 'the what' of the pedagogic context, which is the content, is not devoid of these influences. Thus, in Bernstein's theory (as cited in Morais 2002), the nature of social interaction that characterises given teaching-learning contexts at the micro-level of the classroom is a consequence of power and control relations between participants, discourses and spaces. Classification (power) and framing (control) are conceptual instruments used to characterise 'the how' of pedagogic practice, at the level of both instruction and regulation. Furthermore, in instructional contexts, discursive rules of selection, sequencing, pacing and evaluation define teacher-student relations using distinct values of framing. Stronger values characterise theories of instruction more centered on the transmitter (educator) and weaker ones those more centered on the acquirer (student).

The use of mother tongue as Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) is advantageous to students as language used in class is part of the RD. The idea of allowing group leaders to facilitate learning in Tutorials was in line with Bernstein's weak classification of spaces (teacher-student and student-student); and was a condition for simultaneously weakening the framing of pacing, and strengthening the framing of the evaluation criteria, while weakening the framing of the hierarchical rules. Thus, a weak framing of the hierarchical rules creates a context where students can freely question, discuss and share ideas, thus strengthening the framing of evaluation criteria.

IsiZulu as a Conduit for Knowledge Discovery

In this section, the authors present the findings that emerged from analysis of data. The data sources that were analysed were interview transcripts, responses from students' focused group discussions, and individual group leaders' responses. Findings are presented in the following two themes: (i) students as partners in knowledge discovery; and (ii) quality of students' engagement in lectures and tutorials.

Students as Partners in Knowledge Discovery

The use of isiZulu as the language of learning and teaching in the course enabled students to engage with the course contents in such a way that they became partners in their own education. It was observed that there was an increased students' participation in lectures and tutorials; for example a high level of interaction occurred during the scaffolding of concepts. Students gained insights into the concepts of listening and related theories as they apply in the teachers' professional interactions inside and outside the school context, as the following excerpts from students' data show:

a) *Kube nomthelela omuhle ngoba ezifundisweni sikwazi ukuzwa noma ukuqonda kahle ebesifundiswa kona ngoba besilufunda ngolimi lwethu lwebele.*
   It yielded good results because in lectures we were able to understand or comprehend well what was taught to us because we were taught in our home language.

b) *Kusisizile ukuthi sikwazi ukuqonda kangcono imiyalelo ukuze sikwazi ukwenza imisebenzi esinikwa yona.*
   It helped us to understand the instructions better so that we were able to do the tasks that were given to us.

c) *Kube nomthelela omuhle ekuhlolweni kwethu ngoba besikwazi kahle ukuqonda imibuzo ebuziwe bese siphendula kahle.*
   It yielded good results in our assessment because we understood questions better and we answered well.

d) *Bekulula ukuphendula imibuzo ebibuzwa ngoba besiphendula ngokungangabazi futhi sizethemba ngoba besiphendula ngolimi lwethu.*
   It was easy to answer the questions that were asked because we answered without hesitation and we were confident because we were using our home language (Iqoqo lokuqala/ Group 1).

Another extract reads as follows:

a) *Kusenze sawuqonda kangcono umsebenzi ngoba besinikezelana ngolwazi nangemibono okwenze sayiqonda kangcono le mojuli.*
It made us understand the task better because we shared knowledge and ideas which made us understand the module better.

b) Kusisizile kakhulu ngoba besithuthukisana ngolwazi nemicabango singabafundi.
It helps us a lot because we mutually developed each other as students in knowledge and insights.

c) Yebo ibalulekile, abafundi bayakwazi ukubonisana benikezane ngemicabango.
Yes it is important, students are able to share ideas and give each other insights (Iqoqo lama-27/ Group 27).

Students used tutorial sessions as opportunities to apply different knowledge aspects learned during lectures. In such tutorial sessions students engaged with the content material through role plays and activities. As students were using their home language, there was more focus on content rather than on language. This increased motivation and commitment to their work.

> *Ugqozi belulukhulu kakhulu ngokufunda le mojuli ngoba besazi ukuthi usuku nosuku kukhona okusha esizokuhlomula.*
> We were very motivated to study this module because we knew that we would gain something new in every lecture (Iqoqo le-17/ Group 17).

> *Besinogqozi nofuqufuqu olukhulu lwale mojuli ukulangazelela kabanzi ngezindlela namakhonywana okulalela, khona sizokwazi ukuwasebenzisa ezikoleni kodwa kungagcini lapho nasempilweni imbala kuzodinga ukuthi siwasebenzise.*
> We had motivation and much inspiration for this module [as we were] eager to learn more about listening approaches and skills, so that we could use them in schools and of course in our daily lives (iqoqo le-12/ Group 12).

In the course, students learnt a variety of life skills such as leadership, responsibility, accountability, time management, and respect for

one another. They took ownership of their learning, as the following group leaders stated;

> *Ngishintshe kakhulu kulesi sikhathi ngoba sengiyakwazi ukufika ngesikhathi, ngilande umsebenzi futhi ngihlele iqoqwana lami njengomholi walo…ngizuze ukuzethemba.*
> I have greatly improved now because I can be punctual, collect the tasks and organize my group as their leader…I have gained confidence (Umholi wesi-6/ Group Leader 6).

> *Ngizizwe ngikhethekile ukuhola leli qoqwana. Lokhu kungenze ngakukhuthalela ukusebenza ngokuzikhandla, kwaphinde kwangenza umholi obukhali…ngifunde ukuthi kumele uyilalele imibono yomunye umuntu noma umuzwa ukuthi uyanhlanhlatha.*
> I felt privileged to lead this group. This encouraged me to work hard, and it has made me a good leader… I have learnt to listen to other people's ideas even when they differ from mine (Umholi wama-36/ Group Leader 36).

> *Ngikwazile ukwesekela abalandeli bami [amalungu eqembu] ukuthi senze obekulindelekile, nalapho ababentengantenga khona ngikwazile ukubeseka ... eqenjini lami uma bekunemibono engahambisani ndawonye bekumele ngiqiniseke ukuthi umbono ogcina uthathiwe uzoba nesizathu esizogculisa wonke umuntu.*
> I was able to support my group members to complete the required tasks, where they were weak, I guided them...when there were differrent ideas, I ensured that the idea agreed upon was based on the reason that satisfied everyone (Umholi wama-23/ Group Leader 23).

Commitment and motivation was evident in that even students who were not group leaders took responsibility to ensure that tutorial tasks were collected. In instances whereby the group leaders would delay to collect their work, such students would take initiative of collecting the work and start the tutorial session on time. Even after the tutorials were completed, students were eager to do more work as they enjoyed sharing the work together. Furthermore, lecturers observed that students understood the concepts better, they gave appropriate examples in applying the concepts to real life situations at home and at the university residencies.

Quality of Students' Engagement in Lectures and Tutorials

The use of isiZulu as LoLT has enabled students to draw from a huge reservoir of folk language knowledge such as proverbs, idioms, polysemous lexicons, and so on, to engage meaningfully with the content. Students learnt to use the proverbs and idioms to access and manipulate isiZulu academic language. Consequently, students' meta-language developed. For example, listening theory, non-verbal communication, listening and responding with empathy, not responding when someone talks to you, and paying attention when one is talking, were all aspects that were developed as a result of learning in isiZulu. Drawing from their personal experiences at school, home, and university, students were able to apply learned knowledge. They cited examples from their families, for example, conversations between their moms and dads, or among their siblings at home where they had witnessed such instances where the learned concepts were applied, such as not responding when one family member is talking to another or not responding with empathy. Some of them drew examples from their university life experiences where either social or academic communication took place.

Students' academic writing skills also improved. This was observed in the quality of the essays produced by students during assessment. Almost all the students showed that they had mastered the structure of an essay. There was clarity in expressing ideas/dialogues and arguments in the content. Students could provide illustrations to elaborate on their ideas through creative dialogues. For example, in a literature assignment, the introduction would include the topic sentence. Others would begin by quoting a relevant idiomatic expression. These would be developed in the subsequent paragraphs of the essay. They could describe the characters using the conceptual knowledge gained in class. For example, they could analyse the non-verbal communication acts of *isixhwanguxhwangu* (delinquent). All paragraphs were expressed in sequential order, the ideas contained were also in that manner, all the way to the conclusion. Again, because the language was not a problem to express their ideas, their academic writing skills were the main focus.

The Value of the Course

As shown in the previous sub-section of the paper, the course isiZulu Com-

munication led to the students' intellectual development. As discussed by the authors earlier in the paper, in Bernstein's theory, the Regulative Discourse is a discourse of order (the pedagogy), which translates the dominant values of society and regulates how knowledge is transmitted. Since in the course, the home language was used as LoLT, the content knowledge was somehow aligned with the values of the society and the pedagogy. Hence, the students had the capacity to access the content knowledge from their own world view, and this enabled them to engage deeply with the content topics. Furthermore, it allowed students to understand the concepts better, as they were able to apply them appropriately in real life situations. Students readily opened up and discussed sensitive issues such as abuses, including but not limited to: sexual, physical, emotional, psychological abuse and neglect. Students learnt to view the course content as beneficial to them well beyond the classroom, that is, in real life situations such as in conversations, knowledge assimilation, arguments and expression of ideas. The idea of appointing group leaders to facilitate tutorial groups concurs with Bernstein's weakening of the framing of the hierarchical rules. Thus, a weak framing of the hierarchical rules created a context where students could freely question, discuss and share ideas, in that way strengthening the framing of evaluation criteria.

Conclusion

Using a qualitative research approach together with Bernstein's theory to analyse isiZulu Communication course, the authors of this paper have argued that if students use their home language, they focus more on the content than on the language, and they are able to engage effectively with concepts and theories. Students are motivated to work in groups, exercise leadership and take initiative. This enables them to become partners in knowledge discovery. Besides, there was marked improvement in students' quality of work; this was evidenced by appropriate application of learnt knowledge in real life situations.

Moreover, the use of students' home language creates a conducive environment for almost all students to participate meaningfully in their learning. The students manipulate their home language in engaging with the subject content knowledge and this enables them to provide quality responses

and views. The authors of this paper therefore suggest that the use of the mother tongue for learning and teaching is imperative, if deep learning is to occur.

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