

Teaching Literacy in Linguistically Diverse Foundation Phase Classrooms in the Mother Tongue: Implications for Teacher Education

Thabile Mbatha

Abstract

South African classrooms have become diverse due to the shifting demographics in schools. Teachers are required to have the ability to deal with many forms of diversity. The article presents findings from a section of a larger study funded by the European Union and Department of Higher Education (DHET) about strengthening teacher education in the Foundation Phase (FP) and focusing on teaching Literacy in the mother tongue (MT) in the Foundation Phase. This case study of teaching IsiZulu MT in a Grade 1 linguistically diverse classroom comprising seSotho and IsiZulu Home Language (HL) learners reports the finding that although the isiZulu MT was the language of teaching and learning, it excluded certain learners from instruction in their MT. The learners' linguistic rights in the classroom were seriously compromised. The effect of this was that teaching was superficial and did not benefit this group of learners in acquiring literacy in their MT. Other challenges included the teacher's inadequacies of isiZulu language proficiency, content/disciplinary knowledge, knowledge of the educational context and pedagogical content knowledge. Implications for teacher preparation are then drawn indicating the need to prepare teachers adequately to deal with linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms.

Keywords: Literacy, Linguistic Diversity, Foundation phase, Mother tongue, Teacher Education

**Thabile Mbatha Ukufundisa Ukufunda Ngolimi Lwebele
Ekilasini Elinabafundi Abaliminingi Ezingeni Elakha Isisekelo
Semfundo: Umthelela Ekuqeqesheni Othisha**

Isifingqo

Amakilasi aseNingizimu Afrika agcwele abafundi abehlukene nabakhuluma izilimi ezahlukene ngenxa yezinguquko ezikoleni. Othisha kudingeka babe nolwazi olunzulu lokufundisa abafundi abanjalo. Leli phepha lethula ucwaningo olwenziwe esikoleni esisodwa oluyinxenye yocwaningo olukhulu oluxhaswe yinhlangano yamazwe aphesheya i-European Union kanye neZiko LezeMfundo Ephakeme (Department of Higher Education) eNingizizimu Afrika. Inhloso yocwaningo olukhulu ukuqinisa nokusimamisa ukuqeqeshwa kothisha bamabanga akha isisekelo semfundo (Foundation Phase) okugxile ekufundiseni ikhono lokufunda nokubhala (Literacy) ngesiZulu. Ucwaningo olukuleliphepha lumayelana nokufundisa ukufunda nokubhala ngolimi lwesiZulu eBangezi Lokuqala (Grade 1). Ucwaningo lwenziwe esikoleni esithize ekilasini elikhethekile elinabafundi abakhuluma isiSuthu emakhaya kodwa kusetshenziswa isiZulu kuphela njengolimi lokufundisa esikoleni. Okutholakele kulolu cwaningo kuveza ngokusobala ukuthi nakuba isiZulu sisetshenziswa njengolimi lokufunda nokufundisa esikoleni, iningi labafundi abakhuluma isiSuthu njengolimi lwebele likhishwa inyumbazana ngokungafundiswa ngolimi lwabo lwasekhaya abalwejwayele. Lokhu kukhombisa ukuthi amalungelo abo okusebenzisa ulimi lwabo lwebele esikoleni anyathelwe. Umthelela walokho wukuthi ukufunda nokufundiswa kwabo kuyanyanyalazwa, kukha phezulu, futhi akunamsoco. Futhi-ke akulithuthukisi ikhono labo lokufunda nokubhala ngolimi lwabo lwebele. Ezinye izinselelo ezibhekene nothisha ezivezwa yilolucwaningo yilezo zokusebenzisa ulimi olungesona isiZulu sangempela, indlala yolwazi lokufundisa ulimi, ukungayiqondisisi indawo, ulimi namasiko esiZulu, nendlala yolwazi lwamasu nezindlela zokufundisa abafundi abakhuluma izilimi ezahlukene ekilasini. Lolu cwaningo lukhuthaza labo abaqeqesha othisha ezikhungweni zemfundo ephakeme ukuthola izindlela zokuqeqesha othisha ukuze bakulungele ukufundisa abafundi abakhuluma izilimi ezahlukene abanamasiko ahlukile ngezilimi zabo.

Background

The current study investigates how teachers using isiZulu as a language of learning and teaching (LoLT) deal with linguistically diverse classrooms. Many language related concerns that exist in Foundation Phase classrooms in South Africa today are about the use of the appropriate LoLT at this early age of schooling. Early Childhood Development (ECD) practitioners argue that the best language in which meaningful learning can take place is through the language that learners command very well, which is usually their mother tongue.

In the South African context, linguistic diversity generally refers to learners who speak different indigenous South African languages in classrooms where the LoLT is English. Linguistic diversity in South Africa is not limited to South African indigenous languages and English, but also refers to where a dominant South African indigenous language is used as a LoLT in classrooms with other languages.

Problem Statement

Besides the linguistic diversity in South African classrooms resulting from the use of English as a LoLT in African language multilingual classrooms, there is another scenario that occurs in schools that use a dominant South African indigenous MT as a LoLT wherein other languages co-exist in one province. This situation is similar to the choice to use KiSwahili the dominant LoLT in schools in East Africa where other indigenous home languages are used. Brock-Utne, Desai & Qorro (2004:26) argue that ‘choosing a language of instruction would involve allocating educational functions to a language(s). This choice would involve a wide range of policy issues, from broad ideological and socio-economic concerns to purely educational considerations’. The current study focuses on how linguistic diversity is addressed in teaching in the MT Literacy in a primary classroom with Sotho speaking learners and how teachers respond to the challenge when teaching IsiZulu Home language literacy.

This study differs from other studies conducted in South Africa on linguistic diversity in that it tackles the problem of linguistic diversity in African indigenous languages used in the classroom as opposed to dealing with linguistic diversity in an English first additional language classroom. In South African classrooms, there are cases where the dominant mother tongue

of the province is used a LoLT and yet contravening the language rights of other children whose mother tongue is not the dominant mother tongue in the province. This situation does not only affect immigrant children but it also affects South African children who happen to speak a different African indigenous home language from the one that is used at school language. This in particular refers to the use of IsiZulu as a LoLT in a District in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) where IsiZulu is not the only home language spoken by the children attending a school where IsiZulu is used at the medium of teaching and learning.

The Purpose and Rationale of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the teachers' knowledge base for teaching in linguistically diverse classrooms using the mother tongue. It also tries to ascertain what happens in classrooms where learners are assumed to be learning in a mother tongue, and are taught by teachers who do not accurately speak the mother tongue, that is, assumed as the learners' home language yet most learners are taught in a language that is not their MT by teachers who do not accurately speak the LoLT. In the context of the current study, some schools in a district in western KZN were taught IsiZulu Home language literacy in a linguistically diverse context wherein the class predominantly contained seSotho home language learners, disregarding it as the learners' home language or mother tongue. This situation provided motivation for the study since the learners' home language was not taught at school. This was not in accordance with the Language in Education Policy that stipulates that the learners' home language should be used as LOLT in the Foundation Phase (DoE 2011).

Essien (cited by the *Mail & Guardian* of 22 March 2013) concurs with other researchers such as (Cummins 2000; and Baker 2006) on the effects of bilingualism on children's capacity for learning in school and claims that 'bilingual students with proficiency in both mother tongue and English out-perform students who are proficient in only one of either mother tongue or English, even when the bilingual students come from less-resourced schools'. However, he warns that 'cognitively beneficial bilingualism can be achieved only if learners' first language is adequately developed' and that the ability to make effective use of languages in the

classroom has to be learned. Dampier (cited by the *Mail & Guardian* of 22 March 2013) argues that ‘the best way to ensure that a child learns two or more languages is through a radical immersion in more than one linguistic system’. He criticizes the current language policy and says that ‘... it reduces the potential and power of language to a mere tool of communication for the purposes of creating and sharing meaning’. According to the Foundation Phase Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) document (DoE 2011) the first additional language is used for certain communicative functions in a society, such as a medium through which learning and teaching takes place. The home language, on the other hand, is a tool of cultural preservation and articulation. The above broader linguistic scenario and LoLT in the Foundation Phase and the learners’ cultural and linguistic diversity pose an increased challenge for the teacher who does not have adequate knowledge of dealing with diversity in the classroom when confronted with different mother tongues whilst trying to implement the curriculum requirement of using the mother tongue as a LoLT in the Foundation Phase classroom. Evans (2011:69) recognizes that South African classrooms have also become increasingly diverse which includes children who are linguistically and culturally diverse. He notes that teachers who teach in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms are presented with a challenge to appreciate linguistic and cultural diversity in the pedagogical context and hence they require teachers who understand diversity in order to be able to address the challenges associated with it.

Research Questions

The study is guided by three questions namely,

- What is the knowledge required by a teacher in order to deal with linguistic diversity in his/her classroom?
- What are some teaching strategies that may be used to address challenges of linguistic diversity in a Grade 1 classroom?
- Given how teachers deal with linguistically diverse classrooms, what are the implications for preparing teachers to teach in the mother tongue in linguistically diverse Foundation Phase classrooms?

Literature Review

Local and international research on linguistic diversity will be considered in the literature review. In many parts of the world, teachers' employment sometimes takes place in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms. In South Africa, English is a de-facto language of instruction in spite of the National Language in Education Policy which promotes additive bilingualism. Evans (2011:70) observes that in South African urban schools, teachers often face the challenge of facilitating learning using a language not spoken by learners at home (often English or another language not used a school).

A longitudinal study conducted in South Africa by Evans and Cleghorn (2010) attempted to explore complex language encounters in Grade R-3 classrooms in pre-primary and primary schools in South Africa. Complex language encounters referred to teacher-learner exchanges that take place when neither teacher nor learners are first language speakers of the instructional language. Evans and Cleghorn (2010) say this was with reference to English as the de-facto language of instruction in two linguistically and culturally diverse urban classrooms and one semi-urban pre-school.

Findings point out the central role that language and culture play in a 'majority' language content when children first enrol at school. They refer to the complexity of classroom situations that increasing numbers of teachers must be prepared for (Evans & Cleghorn 2010:143). The findings highlight language inadequacies and opportunities lost to teach simple yet appropriate words. The teacher sometimes gave inaccurate information. They add that at the cognitive level information was beyond the grasp of the learners. They also observed that there were language barriers as a result of insufficient knowledge. Incidental learning did not take place due to poor expression and miscommunication. Evans and Cleghorn (2010:146) conclude that when teachers are compelled through a language that they do not command well, they tend to use teacher-centred methods, non-communicative, rote learning practices such as meaningless repetition, drilling and loud chanting.

Daniel and Friedman (2005:2) suggest that 'being culturally competent in an educational setting means teachers acknowledging and supporting children's home language and culture so that ties between the family and school are strengthened'. The concerns raised by the authors are a common

concern for teachers in South Africa. This is not only in the area of learning English but it also concerns all other South African languages used for teaching and learning. These arguments show that teachers need to be prepared to deal with similar challenges. Daniel and Friedman (2005:2) aptly say that:

it is important for teachers to have the skills and understanding to recognize that all children are cognitively, linguistically and emotionally connected the language and culture of their home; this understanding should be manifested in their training and practice.

Terry and Irving (2010:114) state that linguistically diverse learners are expected to learn and use a new language and new cultural dispositions effectively and yet they suffer from low teacher expectations. The authors indicate that, 'these students are called on in class less often, receive less positive feedback and instruction and receive less direct instruction and interaction with the teacher'. To manage well in a linguistically diverse classroom, a teacher needs to be culturally and linguistically responsive. Culturally responsive teachers are knowledgeable and skilled in implementing effective instructional practices.

Terry and Irvin (2010) further note that for many learners, often the language and culture used at school are different from what learners have learned at home. Sometimes linguistically and culturally diverse learners are not given fair treatment by their teachers. It is sometimes erroneously assumed that if a learner does not speak the mainstream language used in the classroom he/she is incompetent or if a learner fluent in a language he/she is competent in the language. This assumption compares with what Cummins (1984) calls BICS and CALP. This constitutes a wrong judgment caused by the fluency of a learner in BICS and opposed to CALP. Cummins states that while many children develop native speaker fluency (i.e. BICS) within two years of immersion in the target language, it takes between 5-7 years for a child to be working on a level with native speakers as far as academic language is concerned. CALP is Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency, and, as the name suggests, is the basis for a child's ability to cope with the academic demands placed upon her in the various subjects. Cummins (2000) warns that 'it must be assumed that non-native speakers who have attained a high degree of fluency and accuracy in everyday spoken English have the corresponding academic language proficiency'.

Conceptual Framework

This study partially draws on Shulman's 1987 model of teacher knowledge. Shulman proposes different kinds of teacher knowledge need to be distinguished such as disciplinary knowledge and pedagogic content knowledge. Disciplinary knowledge refers to a circumscribed body of knowledge that is considered to be essential to gaining membership of the language teaching profession. The study also draws from teacher knowledge for language teachers and New Literacy Studies (NLS). Richards (2011:3) writes that disciplinary knowledge of language teachers was largely drawn from the field of linguistics, but today it encompasses a much broader range of content. This includes knowledge about what is literacy, models of literacy, approaches to developing literacy and so on. Pedagogic content knowledge on the other hand refers to knowledge that provides a basis for language teaching.

In the field of NLS, Evans and Cleghorn (2010:142) contemplate that the NLS cluster conceptualizes literacy as a plural phenomenon and that 'language encounters in classrooms entail much more than the ability to read and write. Literacy is plural multimedia phenomena- oral, visual, and written'. Pahl & Rowsell (2012:21) propose that NLS is an ecological approach to literacy which helps researchers to theorize the relationship between home and school systems as interconnected. By an ecology the authors mean '... that literacy exists in places, as a set of actions by particular individuals, that is in a network of their actions around literacy'. They contend that previously through the autonomous model, literacy was associated with books and writing with a language schema. This later changed in the mid-1980s to literacy as being recognized as a social practice. Something that people do everyday in different contexts which include the school, home and at work.

Street (1995) challenged researchers not to think of literacy as a neutral skill. Instead, he encouraged researchers to think of literacy as a socially situated practice. The NLS signals the roles of context and practices within contexts and subjectivity of individuals involves in meaning making. Pahl and Rowsell (2012:17-24) argue that an approach that takes literacy as a social practice involves: 'acknowledging that school is only one setting where literacy takes place and recognizes that the resources used to teach in classrooms might be different from resources used by students in their homes'.

The preceding arguments presented on Literacy education acquired through the NLS approach require an astute understanding of learners' linguistic and cultural diversity which can then inform educators when teaching the literacy so that all learners in the literacy classroom are given the opportunity to learn through a variety of ways.

Research Methodology

A qualitative research methodology was chosen for the study to answer the research questions developed in the study. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011:219) maintain that,

Qualitative research is appropriate in research that it provides an in-depth, intricate and detailed understanding of meanings, actions, non-observable as well as observable phenomena, attitudes, intentions and behaviours and these are well-served by naturalistic inquiry.

This qualitative investigation took place in one school typically identified through purposive sampling consisting of linguistically diverse learners from a school in KZN where IsiZulu is the LoLT used in the school. The study sought to understand how teachers address linguistically diverse learners in mother tongue literacy classes and how they were prepared for this task in higher education. The teacher's pedagogic content knowledge (PCK) and disciplinary knowledge were considered during the investigation.

Profiling the Research Site and Negotiation of Access

The study was conducted in one grade 1 primary classroom in a Sotho speaking community at Nquthu near Rorkes Drift area in a school situated at the uMzinyathi district. The school is about 15 km away from Dundee town. According to the STATS SA, 2001 Main Languages Census, 93% of the population in Umzinyathi Speaks IsiZulu. English is spoken by 3%, seSotho is spoken by 3% whilst Afrikaans is spoken by only 1% of the population.

The researcher obtained permission to visit the schools from the District Manager to conduct the European Union research study who in turn delegated some subject advisors to accompany the researcher. During the school visits several schools were visited and it was very striking to find one school situated in a seSotho speaking community found to be using IsiZulu and the LoLT. The reason for this was that parents preferred the isiZulu school because it was in the Zulu schools that learners had access to 'better' learning facilities and opportunities to proceed to high schools in the vicinity. The informants of the study were two foundation phase subject advisors and one Foundation Phase teacher in a school that used IsiZulu mother tongue to teach literacy to learners that predominantly spoke seSotho as a home language. The teacher's ethnic identity is Sotho and she is fluent in seSotho and isiZulu. She teaches learners in Grade 1 class. At the time of the study she was completing her Bachelor of Education at one of the Universities in South Africa. Two lessons taught by one teacher were observed and video-recorded during data collection in August 2013. A post observation interview with the teacher was also conducted based on lessons observed.

Data Collection

Initial interviews were held with subject advisers. This was followed with an interview with the Foundation Phase team in the school where the study was conducted. One teacher was observed teaching two lessons video-recorded lessons in the mother tongue literacy classroom. She taught an isiZulu oral and reading skills lesson and a phonics lesson on the sounds /-sw/ & /-tw-/. A post-observation interview was conducted with the teacher whose lessons were observed in order to identify how she dealt with the challenges of teaching in linguistically diverse classroom.

Data Analysis

Content analysis was conducted based on Richards' (2011) view that 'there appears to be a threshold language proficiency level a teacher needs to have reached in the target language in order to be able to teach effectively'. Shulman's (1987) models of teacher knowledge informed the data analysis considering the teachers' pedagogic content knowledge of teaching literacy

and her content knowledge of IsiZulu language and culture. The teachers' subject and grammatical knowledge of her learners' language was considered. Implications of teaching in a linguistically diverse Foundation Phase classroom were carefully considered and an astute understanding of learners' linguistic and cultural diversity.

Findings

An interview held earlier with the Foundation Phase teachers in the school established that IsiZulu was the only LoLT used in the school despite having 80% of the learners as seSotho speakers in the school. Teachers reported that it was because the parents wanted their children to continue learning at the Zulu school since Sotho schools were too far and seSotho was not taught much around the place where they lived. Therefore, their children were not going to succeed in school if they used seSotho at school. IsiZulu was the language mostly used even though seSotho was used by many families in the community. In the Foundation Phase the teachers confirmed that they only used isiZulu to teach. The children in grade 1 struggle a lot with isiZulu but get better as they get to grade 3. One teacher mentioned that *'We do not allow learners to use seSotho at school because our school is a Zulu school and the parents also know that'*. Therefore, every parent had to accept that the school only teaches in isiZulu.

Analysis of Observed Lessons

Lesson 1

An integrated phonics reading lesson was observed. The reading text was written on the chalkboard due to the shortage of books for reading. The sound that was taught was 'g**cw**' and the title of the reading text was *'Umfana wakwaGcwabe'*.

Dealing with Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

As the learners read aloud the teacher stopped them and explained that Gcwabe is 'isithakazelo sakwaMkhize' or extended surname of Mkhize. This

led her to ask them their extended surnames. Most of the learners in the class were Sotho hence they were not quite familiar with izithakazelo.

The only observable attempt to deal with cultural diversity was when the teacher asked learners to tell her the izithakazelo (extended surname) for Gcwabe. Learners did not know and she told them that Gcwabe is Mkhize. Sotho learners did not know this cultural aspect of the Mkhize clan. She therefore tried to explain using some Sotho surnames. Five examples were used as shown below:

- Motlounng = Podisa
- Molefe = Tlokwa
- Motaung = Hlalele
- Moloi = Gulukwe
- Mahase – Mofokeng

It seemed that the teacher's knowledge to deal with linguistic and cultural diversity was very limited. This point supports (Ball 2010; Daniel & Friedman 2005; and Evans & Clerghorn 2011) who collectively assert that many teachers are underprepared and lack the knowledge to address the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse learners. Teachers mention that they need to learn more specific skills to address the challenges found in their teaching contexts such as the ones identified in the study.

The teacher proceeded to identify some aspects of Zulu and Sotho culture in the discussion of extended surnames. However, this was the only example she used during the reading lesson. It cannot be said that the teacher consciously dealt with linguistic and cultural diversity in her classroom. She moved forward with her lesson in which she taught some isiZulu phonemes but not successfully because her isiZulu phonemic knowledge was also full of errors as shown below:

Table of commonly confused isiZulu and seSotho phonemes

▶ IsiZulu	seSotho
▶ [q] iqanda (an egg)	[c] icanda
▶ [qh] qhina (to make braids)	[ch] china
▶ [nhl] inhl ^u loko (head)	[tl] tloho
▶ [dl] ukud ^l a (food)	[tl] ukut ^l a

▶ [ndl] <u>Indlovu</u> (elephant)	[ntl] nt <u>lou</u>
▶ [nk] <u>inkomo</u> (a cow)	[kg] <u>kgomu/inkomu</u>
▶ [o]	[u]
▶ um[<u>u</u>][<u>ntu</u>] (a person)	[o]mo <u>tho</u>

Following from the identification of commonly confused isiZulu and seSotho phonemes, it is clear that phonemic awareness and phonological awareness are key components of teaching in the Foundation Phase. Phonological awareness is the ability to detect, manipulate, or analyse components of spoken words (Taub & Szente 2012). Phonemic awareness is the awareness that words are made of individual sounds (Joubert, Bester & Meyer 2008). The teachers' knowledge of the pedagogy of teaching phonemic and phonological awareness is very essential for children's learning to read. Phonological awareness promotes early reading success and in turn, skills in reading enhance the development of phonological awareness (Cooper, Roth, Speece & Schatschneider 2002).

Lesson 2

A Zulu Phonics and Vocabulary Lesson based on the Sounds /-sw/ & /-tw-/

The second lesson was a Zulu phonics and vocabulary lesson based on sounds. Learners gave examples that the teacher accepted and wrote on the chalkboard. Words were listed as:

umswakama, uswidi, itswele, utswayi.

She corrected the learner and said **itshwele** (chick) and gave no further explanation. The teacher gave a strange Zulu word that does not exist in seSotho or in IsiZulu. The teacher did not engage learners in the meaning of the words that were given by learners. The teacher did not highlight what was wrong with the learners' response. Instead she gave a Zulu word with a [-tshw-] sound different from /-tw-/ or /-sw-/, the ones that the teacher had

asked for. The teacher should have been aware that learners could not give correct IsiZulu words because their knowledge of isiZulu was superficial.

Learners also gave an example of the word, ‘**utswayi**’ as having the sound /-sw-/. The teacher corrected the learners by saying ‘**iswayi not utswayi**’ (salt). According to the online dictionary the word ‘salt’ in Southern Sotho is ‘letswai’. That is most probably why the teacher corrected the learners’ sound /-ts-/ to /-s-/ and omitted the /-ts-/ sound as it does not exist in Zulu. Moreover, the concord that the teacher used is also incorrect. The correct Zulu word is [**uswayi**] or [**usawoti**] (salt). The concord [u-] corresponds with nouns in class 1(a) according to Doke’s classification in which nouns in class have no plural.

A further list of words was developed comprising words such as **utwayi** (skin rash), **utwetwe** (apprehension), **intwala** (flea), **itweba** (mouse). Suddenly, the teacher told learners that ‘*itweba is not Zulu word but it is a seSotho word for igundane (mouse)*’. She did not know isiZulu prefixes.

Another omission was in not correcting the learners’ mistake on the word ‘**utwetwe**’. The correct Zulu word is ‘**itwetwe**.’ It means (apprehension). She did not clearly know isiZulu words. The teacher correctly pointed itweba is not Zulu word but it is a seSotho word for igundane (mouse). Her knowledge of seSotho was better than her knowledge of the language she was teaching. This situation was precarious given the dangers likely to happen if learners are taught incorrect IsiZulu and are deprived of their mother tongue. If learners do not develop competence in either language they could be stilted and uncreative with language and become semilinguals. Baker (2006:11) refers to semilingualism as the quantitative and qualitative deficiencies in both languages of a speaker. (2006:11). The teachers’ seSotho grammatical knowledge versus knowledge of IsiZulu the teacher’s knowledge of seSotho superseded her knowledge of isiZulu. Her knowledge of Zulu grammar appeared very limited.

Discussion

Systemic Challenges for Dealing with Linguistic Diversity

The study highlights systemic challenges of dealing with linguistic diversity in the Foundation Phase classroom and a blind spot for the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (KZN-DoE) in not providing human and material

resources for seSotho. The study revealed that seSotho learners were not given their right to learn in the mother tongue. Parents and learners were ‘forced’ to choose options that are not pedagogically sound for their children because home languages have power over others. The South African Constitution (1996) and the Language-in-Education policy (1997) encourage the learning of learners’ home languages and promote their usage at school as LoLTs especially in Foundation Phase classes. The situation in the school heightens the current literacy crisis. Literacy was not well taught in the mother tongue and there were also possibilities that additional language learning would be negatively affected by the inadequate linguistic background acquired through first language instruction.

In addition to an inappropriate language of teaching and learning there seemed to be an inappropriate curriculum designed to teach linguistically diverse learners and the non-availability of seSotho books to give to the learners. All learners seemed to be put in the same ‘melting pot’ as isiZulu MT speakers using the same materials and curriculum as isiZulu home language learners. Further, seSotho teachers received no support from the District office.

Knowledge of the Educational Context

The teacher’s knowledge and understanding of the community, language and culture in which the school and the children existed was crucial. When teachers’ teach, they need to be supportive and responsive to learners’ needs through their knowledge of the context. This was not the case and yet the teacher was better placed to do so. Her knowledge of the educational context was compromised by the dominance of isiZulu. The power of isiZulu language had dominance over seSotho as it existed as a linguistic island. On the other hand isiZulu was accepted as culturally dominant in the schooling setting. The situation created disadvantage for the seSotho speaking children and negatively affected their learning of literacy in the legitimized school language and in their home language. Thus the teacher was also involved in legitimising and perpetuating the dominance of isiZulu over seSotho.

Teachers' Identity and Bilingual Proficiency

The teacher was upfront that her ethnic identity was Sotho and seSotho was her home language hence she was bilingual in isiZulu and seSotho. Baker (2006:8) indicates the dimensions of bilingualism as comprising maximal and minimal bilingualism. Baker indicates that it is rare to find bilinguals and multilinguals with equal ability or use of their two languages. One language is usually dominant. However, Baker also argues that there is a middle ground between maximal and minimal bilingualism. Incipient (minimal) bilingualism allows people with minimal competence to squeeze in as bilinguals. The teacher in the study was bilingual although not a balanced bilingual hence she used some inaccurate isiZulu words. In such situations the teacher should be highly competent in the language of instruction.

Although the teacher was bilingual in isiZulu and seSotho, her mother tongue was seSotho. She did not have adequate knowledge of isiZulu to teach it well. She knew some Zulu words enough to manage teaching a version of 'Zuthu' (half Zulu and half seSotho) as alleged by other teachers in the school. This situation was not ideal in that learners would not learn the correct isiZulu if teaching was conducted in this manner. The teacher said she 'discouraged' learners from using seSotho at school yet her class register was full of seSotho learners. Sometimes similarities between seSotho and isiZulu were identified e.g. Ndlovu which in seSotho is Motloung. The teacher occasionally encouraged learners to find extended family names to accommodate the seSotho speakers.

Teacher's Knowledge

In addition to pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), a teacher needs to have content or disciplinary knowledge. Content/disciplinary knowledge refers to a circumscribed body of knowledge that is considered to be essential to gaining membership of the language teaching profession. Grammatical, sociolinguistic and pragmatic knowledge of a language consists some of the aspects of disciplinary knowledge. Although the teacher tried her best, in the circumstances, her knowledge of teaching and knowledge of isiZulu was her weakest point. Despite being competent in isiZulu at the conversational level, her knowledge of isiZulu language structure (grammar) was limited. This was evident in the two lessons that she taught. Her phonological knowledge was

weaker in isiZulu. Her vocabulary of Sesotho was good as indicated in her correction of seSotho words misrepresented in isiZulu. Furthermore, her cultural knowledge of seSotho was good.

Compounding the teachers' competence was that she was not qualified to teach in the Foundation Phase which explains why she was not equipped to deal the challenges she encountered. Sometimes even teachers who have full qualifications are not in a position to adequately address the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse learners. Foundation Phase teacher knowledge is highly needed in many classrooms in South Africa. NEEDU (2012) shows that 'the majority of South African teachers know little more about the subjects they teach than the curriculum expects of their children and that some teachers know considerably less than this'.

Conclusion

The study has implications for teacher preparation in higher education, particularly in preparing teachers to teach in the mother tongue in linguistically diverse FP classrooms. FP teachers need to address a variety of learning barriers that face learners in linguistically diverse Foundation Phase classrooms. Linguistic diversity is a social justice and inclusivity issue in the Education system. Other forms of diversity have been addressed in White Paper 6, however, teachers feel incompetent to deal with linguistic diversity in the classroom. Daniel and Friedman (2005:2) observe that 'even though most early childhood teacher education programmes now require students to take some general course work related to the topic of diversity, recent research indicates that teachers believe that they have not been adequately prepared to teach children from cultural and linguistic backgrounds different from their own and they need to learn more specific skills to do so'. Even though Daniel and Friedman's observation was in the United States teachers in South Africa are in the same situation and lack of preparedness to support the learning of diverse children they find in their classroom. Evans (2011:73) suggests that the university module they offered in their Department was to enrich students' understanding of how linguistically diverse South African classrooms are, and how this language diversity came about. Student teachers need to grasp pedagogical issues related to teaching and learning in an additional language context. Evans (2011) highlights the need for teachers to

conduct an analysis of their learners' profiles in order to assess the needs and expectations of existing competencies, which help to shape the design of modules in higher education to cater for diversity. For example, the module designed by Evans took into account Afrikaans, English, Northern Sotho and SiSwati language demographics of their students.

All linguistic minority groups in linguistic islands should be given their right to mother tongue education that is enshrined in the Constitution and in the Bill of Rights. Teacher education should strengthen its capacity in ensuring that teachers who come out of their programmes can address these issues adequately. The paper concurs with Evans' (2011:80) comment that teachers need more than a qualification to successfully negotiate classroom space. Teachers need to have a better understanding of linguistic and cultural diversity. Therefore, a module that adequately address issues of linguistic and cultural diversity in Foundation Phase classrooms is more than needed it is a matter of must if learners' needs are to be addressed.

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Thabile Mbatha

APPENDIX SHORT STORY

UBafana umfana wakwaGcwabe owayethanda izilwane zasendle. Wayesuka ekhaya agcwalise umphako ebhasikidini aye entabeni ayozi buka. Wayefika ehlathini ahlale phezulu egatsheni lesihlahla ukuze ezwe izinyoni zicula kamtoti. Wayebukela izimvu zitabuzela zibuyela emanzini zipholisa imizimba yazo. Esahlezi kulelo gatsha azwa ubukhwashakhwasha. Mamo! Indlovu izitika ngamaqabunga. UBafana uyazi ukuthi indlovu ayinachuku izidlela amaqabunga nje ayilwi nawe ungagcwaneki. Kuthe kusenjalo kwaqhamuka unogwaja. Wathi nhla wbana uBafana wabaleka. UBafana wayengezukwenza lutho. Uyazinakekela izilwane nemvelo futhi uyayivikela. UBafana wabuyela ekhaya ecula kancane. Izigcwelegcwele ezizingela izilwane akazibonanga.

Thabile Mbatha
School of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal
mbathath@ukzn.ac.za