HOW SOUTH AFRICAN TEACHERS MAKE SENSE OF LANGUAGE-IN-EDUCATION POLICIES IN PRACTICE

By

FIDELIA NOMAKHAYA NOBESUTHU MASHIYI

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR

in

EDUCATION POLICY STUDIES

Department of Education Management and Policy Studies

Faculty of Education

University of Pretoria

SOUTH AFRICA

31 JANUARY 2011

SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR M. NKOMO

© University of Pretoria
A. DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, FIDELIA NOMAKHAYA NOBESUTHU MASHIYI, hereby declare that this submission is my original work and that all the sources used in this thesis have been acknowledged.

.............................. 31 January 2011

F.N.N Mashiyi

Submission Date
B. ABSTRACT

In South Africa, the medium-of-instruction (MOI) debate has continued to demand the attention of educators and academics, particularly after the promulgation of the 1997 multilingual language-in-education (LIE) policy and the introduction of the OBE-NCS curriculum in the schools.

Using a survey questionnaire, classroom observations and focused interviews, this study aims at establishing how teachers in selected urban and rural high schools in the Mthatha District understand, interpret and implement MOI policies within their practice. It also seeks to establish reasons for implementing the MOI policies in the ways they do. The study utilizes Phillipson’s English Linguistic Imperialism Theory, Brock-Utne’s Qualification Analysis, and Vygotsky’s Social Constructivism to explain the findings.

The main findings of the study are that MOI policies are not implemented uniformly in urban and rural contexts or within each context. Learner linguistic profiles, mismatch between a teacher’s home language (HL) and that of his/her learners, the subject being offered, the need to promote understanding of content, teachers’ understandings, misconceptions and beliefs about the role of language in education: all these were found to be factors which may influence a teacher’s language choice during lesson delivery.

Generally, teachers endorse the use of English as a language of learning and teaching (LOLT) at high school, together with the learners’ HL. Although some teachers believe that they use English mainly for teaching, indigenous languages are also used extensively, especially in rural and township schools; code-switching, code-mixing, translation, repetition, and township lingo all make the curriculum more accessible to learners. The anomaly is that assessments are conducted only in English, even in contexts in which teaching has been mainly in code-switching mode.

An English-only policy was employed in the following situations: in a desegregated urban school; in a rural high school where there was a mismatch between the teacher’s HL and that of his learners; and also in a rural high school where English was offered as a subject. The most cited reasons for using English only as an LOLT were: school language policy, teachers seeing
themselves as language role models, the use of English as a LOLT at tertiary level, and past teacher training experiences.

The study concludes that the major factors influencing school language policies in a multilingual country such as South Africa are the school context and the teacher and learner profiles. In addition, teaching and assessing learners in languages with which they are familiar, as well as using interactive teaching strategies, would develop learner proficiency, adaptability and creative qualifications, resulting in an improved quality of education.

C. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Additive Bilingualism:** A language learning situation/model in which the L1 and the L2 are acquired simultaneously by learners, are accorded an equal status, and are used as LOLTs and in all other high public domains.

**Bilingualism:** Being proficient/literate in two languages.

**Code-mixing:** When the speaker of a language transfers rules or elements of one language to another language.

**Code-switching:** A communication strategy that entails the use of two or more languages in one utterance.

**Desegregated schools (Model C):** South African schools that were exclusively for white pupils during the apartheid era, but are now open to all racial groups.

**Language alternation:** The use of strategies such as code-switching, code-mixing, repetition, translation and borrowing by multilinguals.

**Monolingualism:** Being able to communicate in one language system only.

**Multilingualism:** The ability to speak and understand many languages; the existence of many languages in a community, comprising many languages or language groups; or something being written or expressed in many languages (Mda in Nkomo, McKinney & Chisholm, 2004:166). In this study, the term ‘multilingualism’ refers to language diversity in the classroom situation.

**Subtractive Bilingualism:** A language model that promotes the use of the L2 at the expense of the L1.
## D. Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CASS:</td>
<td>Continuous Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCFOs:</td>
<td>Critical Cross-Field Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOE:</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAL:</td>
<td>English as an Additional Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELT</td>
<td>English Language Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL:</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DET SCHOOLS:</td>
<td>Schools that were for black pupils only during apartheid in S.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FET BAND:</td>
<td>Further Education and Training (FET) Band on the NQF; Comprises Grades 10 -12 in the school system, training Certificates from NGOs, and colleges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GET BAND:</td>
<td>General Education and Training (GET) Band of formal schooling and Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HL:</td>
<td>Home Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSRC:</td>
<td>Human Sciences Research Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSTC:</td>
<td>Junior Secondary Teacher’s Course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAC:</td>
<td>Language Across the Curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LI:</td>
<td>First Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2:</td>
<td>Second/Additional Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIE:</td>
<td>Language in Education Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOITASA:</td>
<td>Language of Instruction in Tanzania and South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOLT:</td>
<td>Language of Learning and Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOs:</td>
<td>Learning Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOI:</td>
<td>Medium of Instruction Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCS:</td>
<td>National Curriculum Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBE:</td>
<td>Outcomes-Based Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTC:</td>
<td>Primary Teacher’s Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPSS:</td>
<td>Statistical Package for Social Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIRLS:</td>
<td>Progress in Reading and Literacy Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIMSS:</td>
<td>Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UED:</td>
<td>University Education Diploma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
E. LIST OF TABLES/FIGURES

Table 1: Teachers’ home languages
Table 2: Other languages teachers can communicate in
Table 3a: Grade 10 teachers in the study
Table 3b: Grade 11 teachers in the study
Table 3c: Grade 12 teachers in the study
Table 4a: Teachers offering English
Table 4b: Teachers offering isiXhosa
Table 4c: Teachers offering Business Economics
Table 4d: Teachers offering Physical Science
Table 4e: Teachers offering Biology
Table 4f: Teachers offering History
Table 4g: Teachers offering Geography
Table 4h: Teachers offering other subjects
Table 5: Teaching experience
Table 6: Highest academic qualifications in the subjects offered
Table 7: Professional qualifications of participants
Table 8: Location of the schools
Table 9: Learners’ home languages
Table 10: Language(s) spoken in the area in which the schools are situated
Table 11: Teachers’ knowledge of current MOI policy provisions
Table 12: Teachers’ knowledge of MOI policy provisions on code-switching
Table 13: School language policy
Table 14: Language(s) employed most when teaching
Table 15: Factors influencing Teacher Language Choice
Table 16a: Languages often used by teachers to paraphrase a point
Table 16b: Languages often used to clarify or elaborate on a point I have been teaching
| Table 16c. | Languages often used to substitute a word |
| Table 16d. | Languages often used by teachers to emphasize something |
| Table 16e: | Languages often used to stimulate discussion/engage with a topic |
| Table 16f: | Languages often used for repetition/reformulation, e.g. repeat a question or a statement |
| Table 16g: | Languages often used to promote understanding of content |
| Table 16h: | Language often used to check the pupil's understanding of the subject matter |
| Table 16i: | Languages often used for exercises, assignments and homework |
| Table 16j: | Languages often used to correct or develop learners' language |
| Table 16k: | Languages often used to encourage learner participation in the lesson |
| Table 16l: | Languages often used to encourage learners to explain things to one another |
| Table 16m: | Languages often used to build learner confidence |
| Table 16n: | Languages often used to give special information, e.g. make an announcement |
| Table 16o: | Languages often used to address a serious issue |
| Table 16p: | Language often used to maintain discipline, e.g. admonish a pupil |
| Table 16q: | Languages often used to respond to pupils' non-verbal behaviour |
| Table 17: | Code-switching during lesson delivery | 82 |
| Table 18a: | I code switch to make up for my pupils' lack of English language skills | 85 |
| Table 18b: | I code switch because some English words are new/unfamiliar to the pupils |
| Table 18c: | I code switch to clarify/paraphrase a difficult point for my pupils |
| Table 18d: | I code switch when I can't think of an appropriate English word to use |
| Table 18e: | I code switch to facilitate concept development i.e. help learners understand content |
| Table 18f: | I code switch when I can't present a point successfully in English because I lack the necessary vocabulary |
| Table 18g: | I code switch for no specific reason |
| Table 18h: | Excluding other languages, particularly in education, would not be in line with the country's Constitution |
| Table 19a: | I use English only because as a subject teacher, I am the primary role model of English for my pupils | 93 |
| Table 19b: | I use English only to help my pupils understand the register (i.e. vocabulary used in the subject) of the subject that I teach |
Table 19c: I use English only because examinations are only in English
Table 19d: I use English only because parents expect their children to be taught in English
Table 19e: I use English only because our school has chosen English as the medium of instruction and I have an obligation to observe this
Table 19f: I use English only because indigenous languages do not have the necessary vocabulary to teach some of the subjects, e.g. Mathematics
Table 19g: I use English only because I do not know learners’ home language(s).
Table 19h: I use English only because I was trained to teach my subject area in English only
Table 19i: I use English only because in most tertiary institutions in South Africa, the medium of instruction (MOI) is English
Table 19j: I use English only because the world of work demands high proficiency levels in English
Table 19k: I use English only because English is the only language that can serve as a medium of instruction (MOI) in multilingual South Africa
Table 19l: I use English only because textbooks and other resource materials used in schools are written in English
Table 19m: I use English only because English is an international language
Table 19n: I use English only because South Africa, being a multilingual country, uses English to facilitate communication among people who speak different languages
Table 19o: Although my students and I speak the same LI, I cannot use it successfully as a medium of instruction (MOI)

Table 20: Cross tabulation between teaching experience and language choice 113
Table 21: Cross tabulation between professional qualification and language choice
Tables 22-26: Cross tabulation between subjects and teacher language choice
Table 27: Cross tabulation between school location and teacher language choice
Table 28: Cross tabulation between teaching experience and code-switching
Table 29: Cross tabulation between professional qualifications and code-switching
Table 30: Cross tabulation between professional qualifications and assessment
Table 31: Emergent themes and patterns 150
F. DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late father Mchenge Dlangamandla, and my mother, Zameka Dlangamandla.
G. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to sincerely thank my supervisor, Professor Mokubung Nkomo, for the support and wise guidance he gave me so readily during the time I was engaged in this study, and for making me believe I could do it.

I am indebted to Mr John Kench, Dr. M. Cekiso and Professor Nomalungelo Goduka for editing my work and giving constructive feedback on the thesis, and to John Nasila for guiding me with the interpretation of the quantitative data.

I also wish to extend a special word of appreciation to all the study participants for the keen interest they showed in this project, and to my colleagues at the Centre for Learning and Teaching Development (CLTD) Sabelo Mponco Aphelele Ncangayi, and Mihlali August, for providing ICT support throughout the writing of this thesis. I am most grateful to the Zamukulungisa Heights Library staff members, especially Thozie Mpeta, for helping me access reference materials from the Walter Sisulu libraries and from other universities in the Eastern and Western Cape.

Special and loving thanks to my late husband Grey and our children for their loving support and encouragement during my long research journey.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction 1
1.2 Language-in-Education Policy Implementation in African Countries 3
1.3 Background of the Problem 7
  1.3.1 Medium of Instruction Policies during the Apartheid Era
  1.3.2 Medium of Instruction Policies in Post-Apartheid South Africa
  1.3.3 A Critique of the 1997 LIE Policy
1.4 Statement of the Problem 10
1.5 Purpose of the Study 11
1.6 Over-arching Aim 11
1.7 Research Objectives 11
1.8 Research Questions 12
1.9 Rationale of the Theoretical Framework 12
1.10 Research Assumptions 13
1.11 Definition of Terms and Concepts 14
1.12 Justification of the Study 15
1.13 Research Approach 16
1.14 Limitations of the Study 16
1.15 Organization and Overview of the Study 17
1.16 Conclusion 17
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction 18

2.2 The Medium of Instruction Debate 23

2.2.1 African Languages should be used as Media of Instruction
2.2.2 English Should Remain the Main MOI in Post-colonial Contexts
2.2.3 Proposed Solutions to the Language Question

2.3 Critical Synthesis of the Literature: Gaps, Patterns and Trends 35

2.3.1 Identified Gap in the Literature on LIE Policy Implementation
2.3.2 Code-switching in Different Contexts
2.3.3 Factors Influencing LIE Policy Implementation

2.4 Theoretical Framework 37

2.4.1 Linguistic Imperialism

2.5 Conceptual Framework 40

2.5.1 Qualification Analysis
2.5.2 Social Constructivism

2.6 Conclusion 40

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction 42

3.2 Description of Research Approach 48

3.2.1 Epistemology
3.2.2 Mixed Method Approach
3.2.3 Mixed Methods Procedures
3.2.4 Sampling Strategy
3.2.5 Study Population and Sample Size
3.2.6 Research Context

3.3 Data Collection Tools 54

3.3.1 Questionnaire
3.3.2 Classroom Observations
CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF DATA

4.1 Introduction 61
4.2 Data Analysis Plan 61
4.3 Questionnaire Findings 114
4.4 Classroom Observations 135
  4.4.1 Teacher A
  4.4.2 Teacher B
  4.4.3 Teacher C
  4.4.4 Teacher D
  4.4.5 Teacher E
4.5 Focused Interviews 146
  4.5.1 Teacher A
  4.5.2 Teacher B
4.6 Emergent Themes 151
4.7 Discussion of the Findings in Relation to the Literature on LIE Policy Implementation and Conceptual Framework 157
4.7.1 How Teachers in the Study Understand and Interpret LIE Policies
4.7.2 Practice as a Reflection of Teachers’ Sense-making of LIE Policy

4.8 How Teachers Implement MOI Policies in Practice
4.8.1 Code Alternation and School Context
4.8.2 The Disjuncture between Policy and Practice
4.8.3 Teacher-related Factors and LIE Policy Implementation

4.9 Classroom Language Choices and their Effects on Teaching and Learning
4.9.1 Attainment of Learning Outcomes
4.9.2 Teaching Strategies, Classroom Interaction and Teacher Language Choice
4.9.3 Alignment between Teaching and Assessment

4.10 Why Teachers Implemented MOI Policies in Ways Evident in the Study.
4.10.1 English Linguistic Imperialism in the South African Education System
4.10.2 Intended and Unintended Consequences of the LIE Policy
4.10.3 The Role of Intermediaries in English Linguistic Imperialism
4.10.4 Social Constructivism, Qualification Analysis and LIE Policy Implementation

4.11 Reflections on the Findings

4.12 Conclusion

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, DEDUCTIONS, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction
5.2 Summary
5.3 Deductions
5.4 Conclusions/Findings
5.5 General Recommendations
5.6 Recommendations for Further Research
5.7 Contribution to Expansion of Knowledge
5.8 How the Triangulated Model of Enquiry can be Replicated
5.9 Conclusion
# REFERENCES

APPENDIX 1  CONSENT LETTERS/FORMS  215  
APPENDIX 2  QUESTIONNAIRE  225  
APPENDIX 3  FOCUSED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE  227  
APPENDIX 4  RESEARCH DIARY  228  
APPENDIX 5  REFLECTIONS  229