

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

By

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## 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

  
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## **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.

**Terminology:** language-in-education policy, code-switching, code-mixing, translation, repetition, home language, medium-of-instruction, multilingualism.

## 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

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

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## **F. DEDICATION**

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