

Material Evaluation of Communicative Competence in a Setswana Beginner Language Learning Course

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Abstract

This study investigates the possible facilitation of communicative competence development in adult beginner learners of Setswana in a set of self-access course materials: *20 Minute Setswana: Setswana Language Course* (Abuti Syllabus 2020). The overarching aims are to evaluate this set of self-access course materials to determine whether it can facilitate the successful development of everyday communicative competence and how. Following a material evaluation procedure, a mixed method of data evaluation is used, including qualitative and quantitative data. New criteria were created to evaluate the set of self-access course materials. Results seem to suggest successful communicative competence development in Setswana is only possible if the self-access set of course materials is tailored to emphasise communication within varying social and cultural contexts. This can be accomplished by focusing on both form and function, while equipping learners with the necessary strategies to combat any external factors that may inhibit their language development.

Keywords: Setswana; Communicative competence; Language learning materials; Material evaluation; Self-access course materials

1. INTRODUCTION

This study sets out to examine a set of self-access course materials for beginner language learning within a blended constructivist perspective with a specific focus on communicative competence. The study makes use of material evaluation to determine whether a specific set of course materials is able to facilitate the development of communicative competence for everyday communication in Setswana.

The terms multilingualism and multiculturalism refer, respectively, to an individual's ability to use two or more languages after acquiring them (UNESCO, 2003 in Mathole, 2016), and to a country or social space's diverse cultural nature (Evans 2015,104). These issues have become prominent topics in South African discourse, not only in everyday life but also within the political and educational spheres (Setati 2002, 6). South Africa, with its 11 official languages, is renowned for its diverse cultural and multilingual nature (Evans 2015, 104). Most of the indigenous languages of South Africa, including isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiNdebele, siSwati, Xitsonga, Tshivenda, Sepedi, Setswana, and Sesotho, all belong to specific language families, which ensure mutual comprehensibility between languages belonging to the same family (Taljard 2015, 124). Despite the availability of nine official indigenous languages, South Africa has faced numerous challenges concerning the need for an accepted language for teaching and communicating. Many South Africans have continued to use English as the dominant national lingua franca as either a first-, second-, or even third language both in education and everyday communication (Desai 2001, 326). Using English as the dominant national lingua franca has caused many controversies, such as segregation, unfairness and resistance, to arise throughout South Africa's history (Setati 2002, 6; Desai 2001, 328). Meanwhile, the ability to communicate in one of the nine official indigenous languages of South Africa, for instance, Setswana, is still only regarded as an optional asset (Setati 2002, 8). This has resulted in many disadvantages for the majority of the South African population who do not understand nor speak English (Taljard 2015, 132).

The acquisition of communicative competence (CC) in Setswana could lead to increased use of indigenous languages for everyday communication in a multilingual South Africa since 8 per cent of the population speaks Setswana, and it is mutually intelligible with Sepedi and Sesotho. As a result, the Setswana language learner, if already bilingual in Afrikaans and English, should be able to communicate with more or less 47.8 per cent of the South African population in their mother tongue (user population of 24 million people), as opposed to the 9.6

per cent of mother tongue English-speakers (user population of 4 million people) if he/she can only speak English¹.

The importance of the development of CC in an indigenous South African language is stressed by the need for mutual understanding and appreciation of different cultures, histories, and values between people who speak different languages (Evans 2015, 100). If South Africans extend their multilingual abilities beyond the use of English and Afrikaans, effective communication in one of the indigenous languages could lead to greater understanding and empathy towards different cultures (Maganda 2016, 9). The need to investigate the facilitation of CC development in Setswana is thus the focus of this study.

The problem, however, is that most resources focused on teaching these indigenous languages are found within the pedagogical sphere, where they are used to promote teacher functionality and communicative competence in multilingual classrooms (Taljard 2015, 140). Most adults who wish to learn another language are forced to register for the same tertiary-level modules as student teachers. These modules are aimed at developing student teachers' cognitive/academic language proficiency (CALP), which is used to negotiate educational tasks and activities rather than basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) used for everyday communication (Webb 2002, 6). Students who enrol in these tertiary-level modules tend to learn and use a more formal variant of the language (also known as "bookish" language), which is usually out of place within the social context they are trying to communicate (Brown 2014, 261). A lack of language learning materials therefore exists which can facilitate the development of BICS and promote everyday communication in adult beginner Setswana second language learners.

With reference to the section above, and notwithstanding the fact that research on material evaluation has increased dramatically since 2009 (Tomlinson 2016), there still remains a noticeable lack of Setswana beginner language learning materials for aiding the development of communicative competence for everyday communication. In addition, a scarcity of research exists, which is concerned with evaluating these materials and how they are developed. Following this scarcity, this study's specific problem statement is whether the beginner

¹ Note that the last census available at this time stems from 2011, and that the distribution of the user population in all official languages may look different in terms of the percentage of the user population per province as well as the percentage of the total user population in South Africa today.

Setswana set of course materials, *20 Minute Setswana: Setswana Language Course* (Abuti Syllabus 2020), can facilitate the development of communicative competence in Setswana for everyday communication in a multilingual society. In order to address this issue, the main research question on which this study focuses is whether and how it is possible for a beginner Setswana language learner to develop communicative competence for everyday communication (BICS) through the use of the chosen set of course materials.

This main question is addressed by considering more specific questions:

1. How has the chosen set of course materials been tailored towards facilitating the development of communicative competence in Setswana?
 - a) Does it incorporate activities aimed at improving the language learner's grammatical competence?
 - b) Does it incorporate activities aimed at improving the language learner's sociolinguistic competence?
 - c) Does it incorporate activities aimed at improving the language learner's pragmatic competence (made up of strategic and discourse competence)?

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study approaches the facilitation of communicative competency within a blended constructivist perspective by focusing on the theory that language develops through personal experience as well as social and cultural interaction (Vygotsky 1962; Brown 2014: 91).

The constructivist perspective as a theory of complex learning not only involves linguistics when explaining the process of language development but also integrates both psychological and sociological paradigms (Brown 2014: 12). This study incorporates a blended constructivist perspective in which three different branches of the constructivist perspective, namely (1) cognitive constructivism, (2) social constructivism, and (3) sociocultural constructivism, are included. Such a blended perspective includes a theory of learning which maintains that language develops through personal experience (cognitive constructivism), social interaction (social constructivism), and cultural influence (sociocultural constructivism).

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to determine whether the current set of course materials can facilitate the development of communicative competence for everyday communication in beginner Setswana language learners, it is, firstly, crucial to establish a definition thereof. This definition is framed within the distinction between BICS and CALP, as proposed by Cummins (1999). Secondly, this section will outline the four components which make up communicative competence. The features of BICS and CALP are outlined in the section below.

3.1 BICS and CALP

In terms of communicative competence, an important distinction must be made between the concepts of BICS and CALP since they refer to two very different types of skills needed for different communicative contexts (Brown 2014, 206). BICS refer to “the communicative capacity that all human beings use to function in daily interpersonal exchanges” (Brown 2014, 206), while CALP points to “a specialised dimension of communication used to negotiate typical educational tasks and activities, and often involves a conscious focus on language forms” (Brown 2014, 206). In this regard, the term BICS refers to “conversational language” (Cummins 1999, 3), which is used to function and communicate with other people in familiar, everyday situations (i.e. ‘real-world’ communication) (Brown 2014, 207). Whereas the term CALP denotes the “academic language” and specialised vocabulary (Cummins 1999, 3; 2013), which is employed during classroom interactions and requires a refined form of communication “to negotiate typical educational tasks and activities [such as] classroom exercises, reading, assignments, written work, and tests” (Harsch 2017; Cummins 2013). Figure 1 provides examples of language use for both BICS and CALP.

BICS	CALP
“Hey, dude, what’s up?” “Not much, and you?” “I’m good.”	“Everyone be seated.” “Get into small groups and discuss this question.” “What page did you ask us to look at?”
“Okay, so the Giants bit the dust – don’t rub it in.”	“I see your point, but I think...”
“My grandma is sweet as honey, you know, but I was really in the doghouse.”	“The following research methodology was used to examine the three hypotheses.”

Figure 1: Examples of language use in terms of BICS and CALP (from Brown 2014, 207).

These examples show that BICS generally involve slang and conversational metaphors, which require context to ensure successful communication and understanding. Whereas the examples for CALP show language use less concerned with context and more concerned with the ability to engage in academic discourse and discussions (Brown 2014, 207). It becomes clear that the development of communicative competence falls on a sliding scale determined by the context of language use (i.e. everyday situations versus classroom interactions). When developing a second language (L2) for the purposes of BICS, within the perspective of this study, this scale leans towards language use and language development for everyday communication within various interpersonal contexts. The following section outlines a definition of communicative competence in terms of grammatical-, sociolinguistic- and pragmatic competence, which includes discourse- and strategic competence, as defined by Canale and Swain (1980) and later expanded by Canale (1983).

3.2 Defining communicative competence

CC involves the underlying knowledge of language in terms of grammar and an ability to communicate within any given context (Canale and Swain 1980; Canale 1983). The focus of CC rests on communication as the primary function of language (Jabeen 2016; Brandl 2008). It requires independent language use by employing different sets of skills from diverse fields of knowledge (Canale 1983, 6), as well as four different competencies, namely grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence (Canale 1983; Canale and Swain 1980; Farhady 1982, 44). In order to ensure a complete conceptualisation of a CC model, it is essential to define the four components which constitute it as listed above.

Firstly, grammatical competence, defined as the knowledge of the rules of grammar, entails the mastery of language forms and rules, such as vocabulary, pronunciation, sentence formation, and spelling. It enables the language learner to accurately use language when expressing the literal meaning of an utterance (Canale 1983, 7). Secondly, sociolinguistic competence refers to the knowledge of how language is used and understood, depending on specific contexts, with regard to both meaning and form, and so focuses on the purpose of specific interactions in relation to certain norms and conventions (Canale 1983, 7). Thus, sociolinguistic competence entails the mastery of language use within varying social and cultural contexts. Thirdly, discourse competence entails the ability to combine various grammatical forms and

meanings in both spoken and written text in order to ensure cohesion² in form and coherence³ in meaning (Canale 1983, 9). Lastly, strategic competence refers to the mastery of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies, which enhances the flow and effectiveness of the communication process (Canale 1983, 10). CC necessitates the mastery of grammatical forms as well as a contextual-based knowledge of when to use those forms to reveal the desired meaning of an utterance, be it literal or figurative, while ensuring the effectiveness of the communication process.

In redefinitions and modifications of the CC model, the four competencies, namely grammatical-, sociolinguistic-, discourse-, and strategic competence, are further divided to emphasise the difference between knowledge of language form and knowledge of language function (Brown 2014, 209). Bachman (1990) uses the term textual competence, in which grammatical and discourse competence are grouped together under what he calls *organisational* competence. This grouping focuses on language form in terms of rules (grammatical) and how those rules are used to express meaning (discourse). In this conceptualisation of CC, sociolinguistic competence is placed under what he calls *pragmatic* competence, and divided into two sub-categories, namely *illocutionary* competence, defined as the ability to negotiate intended meanings, and *sociolinguistic* competence, defined as aspects of language use pertaining to accepted social and cultural norms. This grouping focuses on language function and considers strategic competence to be a separate and final component of language use, which determines word order, phrasing, and meaning negotiation.

This conceptualisation of CC is rearranged by Littlewood (2011, 546) and grouped together with the conceptualisation of Canale and Swain, as set out above, in order to create five different components, and thereby definitions, of CC. The first component includes linguistic competence, which outlines the underlying knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, semantics, and phonology. Here, linguistic competence is equated to Canale and Swain's grammatical competence. The second component includes discourse competence and outlines the underlying knowledge of how to connect ideas and participate in conversations, which links with Canale and Swain's description of discourse competence. The third component includes

² Cohesion refers to the way in which meanings of utterances can be linked in a discourse or a text without being grammatically or lexically related (Richards and Schmidt 2010, 93).

³ Coherence involves the grammatical and lexical links between meanings, which determine whether an utterance should be interpreted literally or figuratively in order to facilitate communication (Richards and Schmidt 2010, 93).

pragmatic competence and outlines the underlying knowledge of how to negotiate meaning during conversation; Littlewood's categorisation of pragmatic competence links with Canale and Swain's strategic competence. The fourth component includes sociolinguistic competence and outlines the underlying knowledge of how to appropriately use language in various social situations, as is also reflected in Canale and Swain's sociolinguistic competence. The fifth and final component includes sociocultural competence and outlines the underlying cultural knowledge that prevents misunderstandings during intercultural communication (Littlewood 2011, 547); Littlewood's sociocultural competence links with Canale and Swain's sociolinguistic competence. Thus, a definition of CC essentially depends on the purpose of its use and the perspective in which it will be defined (Llurda 2000, 88). Within the constructivist perspective, CC will constitute the development of language use and skills within a specific situation, allowing learners to possess the required grammatical and sociolinguistic knowledge needed to use the language accurately and appropriately within any given context.

Note that while later modifications of the CC model exist, the work done by Canale and Swain (1980) is still used as an "important orientational framework in discussions of the nature of communicative competence in a second language" (Littlewood 2011, 546). In this regard, the current study conceptualises CC in terms of Canale and Swain's model of competencies, including grammatical-, sociolinguistic-, discourse-, and strategic competence, but groups strategic and discourse competence together as pragmatic competence in order to create a reconstructed model of CC. It is important to emphasise that while these two competencies are grouped together, they remain two separate entities that uphold their original definitions as outlined above.

Although Littlewood's conceptualisation of CC will not be included in the analysis, it is required to emphasise an important difference between competence and performance. Note that while performance entails language production (proficiency), CC constitutes the internalised knowledge of how to creatively use a language within any specific context (Hymes 1972, 59). Therefore, in terms of BICS, performance will be linked to a basic communicative capacity required to use language for everyday function, whereas in terms of CALP, the learners' performance will be linked to their ability to use cognitive/academic language to "negotiate typical educational tasks and activities" (Brown 2014, 207).

If one examines the five components of CC as outlined by Littlewood (2011), it is firstly clear that an essential part of the conceptualisation thereof lies in understanding that CC points to a language user's internalised knowledge. This internalised knowledge in the constructivist perspective is seen as a product of meaning creation, which occurs alongside the use of language rules and is manifested as grammatical competence. It secondly outlines how to use these rules to understand and produce utterances within any given context. The use of these utterances in any context links with Littlewood's discourse and pragmatic competence and subsequently with Canale's discourse and strategic competence as well as with Littlewood's sociolinguistic and sociocultural competence, which again links with Canale's sociolinguistic competence (Ellis 1994, 969; Canale 1983; Littlewood 2011). Competence is thus learned and developed as a skill (Bruner 1973, 111), while performance, and thus proficiency, constitute how the learner uses this acquired knowledge to communicate (Hymes 1972).

4. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 Research design

This study is of both a quantitative and qualitative nature, thus resulting in a mixed method of data collection and evaluation (Leavy 2017, 23). Before the material evaluation of the *20 Minute Setswana: Setswana Language Course* (Abuti Syllabus 2020) could occur, a new evaluation system based on work by Tomlinson (2013) and Işik (2018) (see also McGrath 2016; Reinders and Lewis 2006; Tomlinson 2008; Tomlinson 2013, 2016) was created to analyse the components of communicative competence in the set of course materials.

4.1.1 Quantitative data analysis

This study, firstly, uses quantitative research methods whereby data collection and analysis take place by means of assessment and comparison of the dispersion of specific content (authentic language use, activities, feedback, and opportunity for practice) per percentage intervals for the chosen set of course materials. Each of the components (and their subcategories) are evaluated according to a measurement scale of frequency, specifically in terms of interval and ratio data, which can be categorised, ranked, evenly spaced and has a natural zero (Wegner 2016) for quantification in terms of the research methodology (Tomlinson 2008). This measurement scale was based on the percentage with which each component occurred within the course, with a specific focus on each lesson counting as a measurement unit. Each lesson consists of an interview-style podcast and a theme-specific

vocabulary list. For a detailed overview of the content of the course, please see section 4.3. The methodology aids the researcher in evaluating different components and modalities of the measurement units in the set of course materials (*20 Minute Setswana: Setswana Language Course* (Abuti Syllabus 2020)). The measurement scale with which each component of the set of course materials will be evaluated is outlined below:

- 1 = Never (0% of the measurement units)
- 2 = Rarely (1 - 10% of the measurement units)
- 3 = Occasionally (11 - 30% of the measurement units)
- 4 = Sometimes (31 - 50% of the measurement units)
- 5 = A moderate amount (51 - 70% of the measurement units)
- 6 = A great deal (71 - 90% of the measurement units)
- 7 = Always (100% of the measurement units)

4.1.2 Qualitative data analysis

Secondly, this study also uses qualitative research methods by employing a thematic analysis. Section 5 below contains an analysis of the contents of the set of course materials in terms of the communicative competence criteria, as identified in the following questions:

1. Does the set of course materials incorporate grammatical explanations, focused on form and accuracy, aimed at improving the language learner's **grammatical competence**?
2. Does the set of course materials incorporate activities aimed at improving the language learner's **sociolinguistic competence**?
3. Does the set of course materials incorporate opportunities for **authentic and meaningful practice** of Setswana?
4. Does the set of course materials incorporate exposure to **authentic and meaningful use** of Setswana?
5. Does the set of course materials provide opportunities for the development of **cultural awareness**?
6. Does the chosen set of course materials incorporate activities aimed at improving the language learner's **pragmatic (i.e. strategic and discourse) competence**?

7. Does the chosen set of course materials encourage the learner to **interact** within a Setswana-speaking environment outside the learning environment?

4.2 Material evaluation as a mixed methodology

Material evaluation is defined as the process whereby language learning materials are assessed, checked, and measured according to their contents to make certain predictions about their possible value for and effects on the language learners using them (Tomlinson 2013, 21). Questions used in material evaluation can be answered through either numerical values or a cline, after which scores can be calculated and judgements can be made about the potential value of the set of course materials in question (Tomlinson 2013, 22). This study uses numerical values and a cline in the form of interval and ratio measuring scales (as outlined in section 6.1). The process of material evaluation can be divided into three stages, namely (1) pre-use evaluation, (2) in-use evaluation, and (3) post-use evaluation (Tomlinson 2013, 30; McGrath 2016, 21). Due to the scope of the study, only a pre-use evaluation and analysis will occur (Tomlinson 2013, 30).

A procedure of pre-use evaluation is followed, whereby the researcher makes certain predictions about the value of the chosen set of course materials. The pre-use evaluation uses a set of criteria that evaluates the possibility of the set of course materials successfully facilitating the development of communicative competency (Tomlinson, 2013: 31). A pre-use evaluation course materials necessitates that certain predictions be made about the potential value and effects of these materials on the language learners using them (Tomlinson, 2013: 30). This stage takes place before the materials are used by language learners, and usually makes use of checklists/criteria to reduce some subjectivity (Tomlinson, 2013: 31). These checklists/criteria should relate to the context, principles, and objectives of learning (Tomlinson, 2013: 31). Therefore, although most studies in material evaluation have used the same set of criteria (see Cunningsworth, 1984, 1995; Skierso, 1991; Brown, 1997; Gearing, 1999, as cited in Tomlinson, 2013: 31), emphasis is placed on the importance of creating context-specific checklists that relate to the learning context in which the materials will be used (McGarth, 2002, as cited in Tomlinson, 2013: 31). These criteria should (1) focus on evaluation not analysis, (2) only ask one question, (3) be answerable, (4) be free of dogma, and (5) be interpretable by other evaluators (Tomlinson and Masuhara, 2004: 7, as cited in Tomlinson, 2013: 32).

In this study, the chosen set of course materials is evaluated in order to determine whether they will be able to facilitate and how they will be able to facilitate the development of communicative competency for everyday communication. It is important to note that this study does not draw any conclusions about the actual levels of learner communicative competency (normally done as a post-use evaluation) but rather about the level at which a set of course materials can facilitate possible communicative competency in terms of its design.

4.3 Overview of the set of course materials

The set of course materials on which this study is based, *20 Minute Setswana: Setswana Language Course* (Abuti Syllabus 2020), is self-access course developed for beginner language learners who want to be fluent in basic conversation (an A1/A2 level proficiency) in Setswana (Abuti Syllabus 2020). This set of course materials consists of 25 lessons centred on various everyday themes/topics. Some of these themes include: (1) Basic greetings, (2) Making conversation, (3) Family and plurals, (4) Numbers, and (5) Occupations (Abuti Syllabus 2020). Each lesson includes an interview-style podcast between a native Setswana speaker and the course developer in the role of a beginner language learner who wants to improve his communicative skills in Setswana. In addition, each lesson contains a list of theme-specific vocabulary and phrases, which the language learner can use to understand the interview better. The test also consists of a grammar section which explains the grammatical features of the phrases used in the lesson, a tip of the week on the use of Setswana in context, and an example dialogue to show how the newly acquired phrases can be used in conversation. This course places emphasis on sounding as near-native as possible by developing a language learner's fluency in basic conversation (Abuti Syllabus 2020). It can be completed by listening to podcasts available on YouTube and following along in the *20-minute Setswana* workbook.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

The following section outlines the findings of the analysis and evaluation of the set of self-access course materials included in the *20 Minute Setswana: Setswana Language Course* (Abuti Syllabus 2020), according to the criteria discussed in Section 4.1.2.

5.1. Facilitation of the development of communicative competence

Communicative competence, as the underlying knowledge of proficiency, requires four different but interlinked components, namely, grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence, as outlined in the literature review. These components should not be measured or developed in isolation, as the increase in one aspect of competence will likely lead to an increase in another (Savignon 2001, 17). For this reason, although the focus on form and accuracy should not be the main aim when developing a learner's communicative competence, it should be included to ensure the development of the other three competencies. Nevertheless, opportunities for meaningful and authentic language use through activities and practice, which focus on accurate, appropriate, and culture-specific language use, should enjoy the highest priority.

The following section focuses specifically on the grammatical aspects of the set of course materials in order to assess the degree to which the development of grammatical competence is facilitated.

5.2. Facilitation of the development of grammatical competence

Developing grammatical competence requires an explicit focus on explaining rules, each of which emphasises different language forms and language use within context. These explanations should facilitate the internalisation of grammar knowledge in terms of phonetics and phonology, syntax, morphology as well as semantics and vocabulary to aid the learner in discovering salient features of the language. For adult beginner learners of Setswana who wish to develop communicative competence for everyday language use, these explanations should focus on promoting understanding of everyday expressions and basic phrases, which can ensure successful daily interpersonal exchanges (in terms of BICS).

The set of course materials places considerable emphasis on understanding the language in terms of both use and form. This is done by primarily presenting the language in spoken form, thus focusing on pronunciation, during each interview-style podcast. After this initial presentation, the facilitators ensure that learners understand how each phrase is formed by breaking the phrases down into single-word translations, thus focusing on the vocabulary and

morphology of Setswana (see Figure 2), before explaining the grammar behind the specific sentence constructions, thus focussing on syntax (see Figure 3 below).

CAN I PAY WITH A CARD?	A nka duela ka karata?	go duela - to pay
CAN I PAY WITH A DEBIT CARD?.	A nka duela ka "debit card"?	Please note that this is an example of mixing English with Setswana and is acceptable as a street slang but not as an academic form of speaking.
I DON'T HAVE ANY MONEY / CHANGE.	Ga ke na madi/ tšhelete.	madi / tšhelete - money / change madi – also means blood
WE HAVE A RESERVATION.	Re na le peeletso.	go beela - to put aside
WHERE IS THE TOILET?	Ntloboithusetso e kae?	toilet - boithusetso house – ntlo to help oneself – go ithusa i – reflexive morpheme (*** see grammar notes) e – subject morpheme referring to the noun 'ntloboithusetso'

Figure 2. An excerpt of Lesson 17 phrases in the *20 Minute Setswana: Setswana Language Course* (Abuti Syllabus 2020).

In Figure 2, the last example shows the various lexical and morphological features of the word *ntloboithusetso* to illustrate the origins of its meaning. This allows learners to see how a word can consist of various morphemes which alter the meaning of the words. In Figure 3, on the other hand, the course developers and facilitators explain the formation of reflexive verbs and how they can be used in different sentences to show meaning, thus moving the focus from the lexical item to the grammar.

Lesson 17 - Facilitator 2 (Beginner learner) and Facilitator 3 (L2 Setswana Speaker)

Facilitator 2: *The last thing I wanted to ask you about, is this reflexive morpheme [we] were talking about “go thusa” means “to help”*

Facilitator 3: *Mm.*

Facilitator 2: *But “go ithusa” means “to help yourself”*

Facilitator 3: *“...to help yourself”*

Facilitator 2: *Is that correct?*

Facilitator 3: *So, it’s a reflexive “I”.*

Facilitator 2: *Okay.*

Facilitator 3: *You put that “I” in front of verbs, and that immediately makes the verb to mean “yourself”.*

Facilitator 2: *Now if you help yourself, does it change at all? Like, if I help myself it’s “Ke ithusa”.*

Facilitator 3: *Ja, “Ke a ithusa”.*

Facilitator 2: *I forgot that present tense...*

Facilitator 3: *Remember there’s nothing after the verb.*

Facilitator 2: *Ja, “Ke a ithusa”, “I help myself”.*

Facilitator 3: *“I help myself”.*

Facilitator 2: *Now, if you help yourself?*

Facilitator 3: *“Will you help yourself?”, “A wena o tla ithusa?”*

Facilitator 2: *Oh, so it doesn’t change?*

Facilitator 3: *No, it’s the same.*

Facilitator 2: *That’s very interesting.*

Facilitator 3: *“Ke tla ithusa” [I will help myself]. “O tla ithusa” [You will help yourself].*

Facilitator 2: *Okay, so this basically boils down to “ntloboithusetso” is a “house of helping oneself”?*

Facilitator 3: *Ja, that’s hundred percent. It implies, it’s “the small house where you help yourself”.*

Figure 3. A transcription of the facilitators’ conversation in Lesson 17 of the *20 Minute Setswana: Setswana Language Course* (Abuti Syllabus 2020).

The importance of grammatical competence in Setswana is further emphasised by the inclusion of grammar-specific lessons after each main lesson. The aim of these lessons is to focus on the forms dealt with in the main lesson (see Figures 4 and 5, respectively).

GRAMMAR NOTES

Here, we will explain some grammar and highlight certain aspects of the language. This will help you with the building blocks of the language so you can construct sentences on your own.

▶ **Using adjectives within a sentence:**

- eg: Letsatsi lê lentle - literally translated as "day that is beautiful".

Step 1 - Adding the noun prefix to the adjective root: st

- add the 1 two letters of the noun to the adjective root:

letsatsi(noun) le(noun prefix) added to -ntle(adjective root) to form lentle

Step 2 - inserting the adjective particle: st

- The 1 "lê" is the adjective particle / qualificative particle and we find them within the different noun classes in the Setswana. (We will discuss this in future lessons.)

- This particle comes after the noun and is mostly identical or very close to the noun prefix.

- These two words "that is / that are" are implied within this particle when translated back into English.

▶ **The 4 separate parts of this sentence construction:**

noun + adj. particle + noun prefix + adjective root

letsatsi + lê + le + ntle

Introducing the 1 noun class of Setswana (the "mo/ba" class)

(*we will cover the 9 noun classes in future lessons)

son - mosimane (singular)

sons - basimane (plural)

person - motho (singular)

people - batho (plural)

Example : noun + adj. particle + noun prefix + adjective root

motho + yô + mo + ntle

batho + ba + ba + ntle

Introducing the direct verb relative:

▶ In the example: "beke ê e tlang" the direct translation would be - "week that is coming."

Note : go tla - to come

Take for instance:

letsatsi lê le tlang (literally meaning - "day that is coming")

mosimane yô o tlang (literally meaning - "son that is coming")

noun + adj. particle + subject morpheme + verb + "ng"

letsatsi + lê + le + tla + "ng"

moshimane + yô + o + verb + "ng"

*** We will discuss this form of sentence construction again in lessons to come.

Figure 4. An excerpt of Lesson 2 grammar notes in the *20 Minute Setswana: Setswana Language Course* (Abuti Syllabus 2020).

Grammar Lesson 2 - Facilitator 2 (Beginner learner) and Facilitator 3 (L2 Setswana Speaker)

Facilitator 2: *[Facilitator 1] and I were talking about “letsatsi le lentle”, for example. Now, I know that “letsatsi” is “a day” and “lentle”, in this context, means “a beautiful day” or “a good day”? What would be the best translation?*

Facilitator 3: *“Letsatsi le lentle”, “beautiful day”.*

Facilitator 2: *“Beautiful day”.*

Facilitator 3: *That’s it.*

Facilitator 2: *Okay, now we’ve been talking a little bit before this lesson. So, what you’ve explained to me, is that this adjective “lentle” is actually...there are two words within that. The “le” is sort of a prefix and the actual adjective is just the “n-t-l-e”, the “ntle”?*

Facilitator 3: *That’s it. You can use any noun that you find in all the noun classes...*

Facilitator 2: *Mm-hm*

Facilitator 3: *...and from that noun you take the first two letters and you add it to “-ntle”.*

Facilitator 2: *Okay.*

Facilitator 3: *“Ntle” that means “beautiful”.*

Facilitator 2: *Okay, I understand, because “letsatsi” starts with “le-“ and “ntle” is the adjective. So, what you add is the first two letters of “letsatsi” which is “le-“, you add that to the adjective and then it becomes “lentle”?*

Facilitator 3: *That’s hundred percent.*

Facilitator 2: *What do we call this “l-e”, is it just a prefix or...?*

Facilitator 3: *The noun prefix.*

Figure 5. Transcription 1 of the facilitators’ conversation in Lesson 2 of the *20 Minute Setswana: Setswana Language Course* (Abuti Syllabus 2020).

In Figures 4 and 5, the facilitators explain the use of adjectives in Setswana in a grammar-centred lesson after the contextual use of the language has been introduced to the learners. By moving the focus from function to form, the facilitators ensure that the learner is able to use the construction introduced in the main lesson.

This formula is repeated in every lesson from Lessons 1 to 23, after which the final two lessons (Lessons 24 and 25) are entirely dedicated to grammatical explanations by means of a Setswana grammar system poster. This poster outlines the 18 noun classes of Setswana, in terms of nine classes by combining the singular and plural form of each noun class into one class, and lists the following features for each class: (1) singular and plural forms, (2) subject agreement markers, (3) demonstrative links (this, that and that over there), (4) object agreement markers, (5) adjective links, (6) possessive particles, (7) verb relative particles (*which is/are, who*

is/are...), (8) defining copulatives (*am/is/are*), (9) identifying copulatives (*it is*), and (10) associative copulatives (*he/she/it is/has, they are/have*) (Abuti Syllabus 2020).

By introducing the language first through use and then shifting the learner's focus to the form of the language, as illustrated in the dialogues in Figures 3 and 5, the facilitators ensure that the language remains within the context in which it will be used. This also provides the learner with guidelines on the accurate use of the language. The parallel focus on use and form ensures that the learner is able to develop and use language for communication without being solely focused on form.

The set of course materials helps the learner internalise the various rules and structures by consciously and continuously linking old and new rules, as illustrated in Figure 6 below.

Grammar Lesson 23 - Facilitator 2 (Beginner learner) and Facilitator 3 (L2 Setswana Speaker)

Facilitator 2: *So, once again if you've learnt the adjective particle, you've automatically learnt these demonstrative pronouns?*

Facilitator 3: *Ja.*

Facilitator 2: *That's good news. Now, let's quickly talk about this reflexive "I", for instance, we had "ikutlwa".*

Facilitator 3: *Ja, "ikutlwa" that's a reflexive prefix...*

Facilitator 2: *That's that "I"?*

Facilitator 3: *Ja, to bring in the meaning of "myself".*

Facilitator 2: *That's right. So, "utlwa" is "to feel", "go utlwa".*

Facilitator 3: *"Go utlwa".*

Facilitator 2: *Is "to feel".*

Facilitator 3: *It's "to feel" or "to hear".*

Facilitator 2: *But, "ikutlwa" conveys the meaning of "to feel oneself". Is that right?*

Facilitator 3: *Ja, then you have the sound changes...*

Figure 6. A transcription of the facilitators' conversation in Lesson 23 of the *20 Minute Setswana: Setswana Language Course* (Abuti Syllabus 2020).

This approach also ensures that rules are repeated across various lessons to ensure an optimal understanding of grammar use. The distribution of grammar rules throughout the course material is indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Opportunities for meaning construction and understanding in terms of BICS in the *20 Minute Setswana: Setswana Language Course* (Abuti Syllabus 2020).

Language Feature	Lesson
Marking of tone	1 and 24
Word order and sentence structure	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 18, 20 and 22
Agreement of the subject and verb	3, 6, 7, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 21, and 25
Noun classes and grammatical variants	2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 23, and 25
Negation in terms of present, past and future tenses	7, 17, 18, and, 20
Question formation	1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 19, 20, 22, and 23

In these lessons, the course developers link the grammar back to the Setswana noun classes (see Figure 7). This not only shows learners how to build their Setswana grammar on the noun classes as required but also helps learners understand how the various phrases are formed. This enables them to form their own creative independent responses.

Lesson 6 - Facilitator 2 (Beginner learner) and Facilitator 3 (L2 Setswana Speaker)

Facilitator 2: *When thinking in Setswana you have to make this distinction between counting and describing.*

Facilitator 3: *And describing, yes.*

Facilitator 2: *When thinking about describing a person or people or an object that there are two of them, you have to use the root adjective form of “two” which is “bedi”. And then, obviously I’m guessing now, you’re going to use the noun classes?*

Facilitator 3: *Ja, you use the noun classes, and like we explained the forming of that adjective, the noun plus an adjective particle and then again in front of this root you put that noun class prefix again. That first two letters.*

Figure 7. A transcription of the facilitators’ conversation in Lesson 6 of the *20 Minute Setswana: Setswana Language Course* (Abuti Syllabus 2020).

This focus on function and form to develop grammatical competence will only lead to the development of overall communicative competence if facilitated in conjunction with sociolinguistic competence development, which focuses on the use and understanding of the language within various contexts and norms. The following section provides an analysis of the facilitation of sociolinguistic competence development of the selected set of course materials.

5.3. Facilitation of the development of sociolinguistic competence

The development of sociolinguistic competence requires the mastery of language use within varying social and cultural contexts in terms of both meaningful use and cultural awareness, where the focus is on using the language appropriately within various contexts. This is usually done in simulated social and cultural experiences within an educational environment. The facilitation of sociolinguistic competence thus relies on the learner being exposed to authentic and meaningful language use and practice.

Although the set of course materials does not include any practice/production activities to promote the development of meaningful and authentic language use, it does present the learner with examples of how the language can be used in “real-world” communication, including examples of authentic use (see Figure 8 below) in the form of simulated dialogues and useful phrases.

Lesson 2 - Facilitator 1 (Native speaker) and Facilitator 2 (Beginner learner)
Facilitator 2: *Okay so let's say I would want to say "I am tired". How would I say that?*
Facilitator 1: *(with tone and emphasis) "Ke lapile".*
Facilitator 2: *"Ke lapile".*
That's a bit easier. Alright.
Facilitator 1: *And you say it also with... there's a sound there, you say: (whispers and sighs as if tired) "Ke lapile".*
Facilitator 2: *Oh, really? Ah, obviously.*
Facilitator 1: *(whispers and sighs as if tired) "I am tired".*
Facilitator 2: *Yeah. You're not going to say it with a smile.*
Facilitator 1: *Yes.*
Facilitator 2: *(laughing) "Eh, ke lapile!"*

Figure 8. Transcription 2 of the facilitators' conversation in Lesson 2 of the *20 Minute Setswana: Setswana Language Course* (Abuti Syllabus 2020).


In Figure 8, Facilitator 1, a native speaker of Setswana, explains how the phrase *Ke lapile* (“I am tired”) would be said, if used during a conversation, by using tone and emphasis instead of merely presenting the piece of language. This means that when learners use the phrase in context, they will know how to use it appropriately. By demonstrating language use in this way, the facilitators provide learners with authentic language input, which they can use to communicate in the “real world”.

Thus, while the learners will not be provided with opportunities for authentic and meaningful practice within simulated social experiences, they can use the examples, dialogues, and phrases as samples of authentic and meaningful language use and compare them to their own use. However, with a lack of feedback on independent language use, the learners will have no way of knowing whether they are using the language correctly. This will inhibit their mastery of language production.

In terms of culture, the set of course materials ensures the inclusion of cultural information both during the lessons, linked to the language use (see Figure 9 below) and after the lessons as “Cultural inserts”, which inform learners about Batswana culture and give them a more in-depth background of the Setswana language (see Figure 10).

Lesson 2 - Facilitator 1 (Native speaker) and Facilitator 2 (Beginner learner)
Facilitator 2: *Can I just say “O mang?”*
Facilitator 1: *Uh, it’s very rude, “O mang?”*
Facilitator 2: *“O mang?”*
Facilitator 1: *Yes, you can’t say that.*
Facilitator 2: *Okay, so I’d rather, at the first time of meeting someone I wouldn’t say “Eh, o mang?” That would suit if I were sort of agitated and someone stepped into the room and I’m like, listen, “Who are you?”*
Facilitator 1: *Yes, true, yes.*

Figure 9. Transcription 3 of the facilitators’ conversation in Lesson 2 of the *20 Minute Setswana: Setswana Language Course* (Abuti Syllabus 2020).



CULTURAL INSERT

▶ In this lesson we are joined by *Jéan Raath*.

He grew up on a farm in Vredefort and from a young age had the opportunity to converse with Sesotho speaking people.

He has since moved to Potchefstroom where he now speaks a mix of Setswana and Sesotho .

It is very interesting to see the profound similarities between these 2 languages and the great news is that by learning the language of Setswana, you are basically also learning the language of Sesotho.

Both these languages come from the Bantu language and for that reason are very similar.

We have included a link for you to learn more about the culture of the Batswana and the language Setswana:
<http://kwekudee-tripdownmemorylane.blogspot.com/2013/03/tswana-are-niger-congo-or-bantu.html>

Figure 10. Example of the cultural inserts included in some of the lessons in the *20 Minute Setswana: Setswana Language Course* (Abuti Syllabus 2020).

In Figure 9, the use of the phrase *O mang?* (“Who are you?”) is discussed. While the phrase itself seems innocuous, as it is often used when speaking in English, Facilitator 1 explains that the use of this phrase in Setswana is considered rude as it denotes a sense of agitation. This facilitates a discussion of what language is considered appropriate within the cultural and social norms and illustrates that it is important to consider the implicit meaning conveyed by the target culture’s conventions, customs, attitudes, values, and beliefs.

Furthermore, as illustrated by Figure 10, the cultural inserts provide the learners with important cultural information either through articles or personal experiences of other L2 speakers. This informs the learner about important social and cultural norms that should be followed when communicating with native speakers of Setswana. These inserts ensure learner development in terms of cultural awareness by emphasising the importance of accurate, appropriate and culture-specific language use. The set of course materials, therefore, provides the learner with the opportunity to develop sociolinguistic competence with a specific focus on cultural

awareness while lacking opportunities for meaningful practice, as discussed in the following section.

5.4. Facilitation of the development of strategic and discourse competence

Developing strategic- and discourse competence requires the learner to participate in authentic social interactions in which they are able to express meaning through effective language use by linking form in terms of grammar and use in terms of meaning. The use of self-access course materials will not provide the necessary opportunities to practise the language in a social or cultural setting with other learners. The set of course materials should thus provide examples of how language form and use are linked, while also encouraging the use of language outside the educational environment in order to communicate in a “real-world” Setswana-speaking setting.

Although the set of course materials does not create any opportunities for meaningful practice within the learning environment, the facilitators do encourage learners to interact within a Setswana-speaking environment outside the learning environment (see Figure 11 below). They also show learners how to use the newly learnt words and phrases to create their own responses (see Figure 12).

Lesson 18 - Facilitator 1 (Native speaker) and Facilitator 2 (Beginner learner)
Facilitator 2: I hope you guys are practising, by now you should be able to start forming your own sentences and start speaking to native Setswana speakers.

Figure 11. A transcription of the facilitators’ conversation in Lesson 18 of the *20 Minute Setswana: Setswana Language Course* (Abuti Syllabus 2020).

A RE BUENGI!	LET'S TALK!
Diphepafatsi tse ga di tlhoke metsi le sesepa mme di ka dirisiwa kwa ntle ga metsi. Fa o dirisa sephepafatsi se sa bojalwa tlhomamisa gore e na le go feta diperesente tsa bojalwa tse di fetang 60%. Latela dikgato tse di latelang:	These sanitizers do not require water and can be used without water. If you use a hand sanitizer, make sure the product contains at least 60 percent alcohol. Follow these steps:
Dirisa sephepafatsi se se lekaneng mo legofing go kolobetsa diatla gotlhelele.	Apply enough of the product to the palm of your hand to wet your hands completely.
Gotlha diatla mmogo mme gotlhe go fitlhela diatla di omile.	Rub your hands together, covering all surfaces, until your hands are dry.
Go dula o itekanetse, o tshwanetse go tihapisa diatla ka metlha.	To be healthy, you have to wash your hands regularly.
O tshwanetse go tihapisa diatla tsa gago nako e nngwe le e nngwe pele o ja sengwe.	You have to wash your hands every time before you eat something.

Figure 12. Useful phrases in Lesson 22 in the *20 Minute Setswana: Setswana Language Course* (Abuti Syllabus 2020).

In these phrases, the learner is provided with examples of language use related to the theme/topic of a specific lesson, thereby illustrating how the newly learnt language can be used within a specific context. Once the form and function of the target language have been presented to the learners, they are given the opportunity to further develop their language skills by studying the phrases used in the target language and attempting to create their own.

The facilitators also ensure that the communication of meaning remains the learners' top priority by reminding them that mistakes will not inhibit interaction, thereby reinforcing the principle that mastery of BICS is the learner's main goal (see Figure 13).

Facilitator 1 (Native speaker) and Facilitator 2 (Beginner learner)
Facilitator 2: <i>Also, slight difference but once again the message would be conveyed even if I made a mistake and said "o" instead of "yo" or the other way around.</i>
Facilitator 1: <i>Ja.</i>

Figure 13. An excerpt of a lesson in the *20 Minute Setswana: Setswana Language Course* (Abuti Syllabus 2020).

However, this will only facilitate the development of strategic- and discourse competence if the learners are able to overcome affective, social, and cultural factors that influence language use outside the learning environment.

In terms of communicative competence, the set of course materials ensures that the four competencies, grammatical-, sociolinguistic-, discourse-, and strategic competence, remain interlinked throughout the course to improve the communicative knowledge, and thereby the proficiency, of the language learner. This is done by exposing the learner to meaningful and authentic language use both in isolation and within the context in which it will be used, placing equal emphasis on meaningful language use and form.

6. DISCUSSION

This section provides a summary of the analysis conducted with the aim of addressing the research questions. Table 2 provides a summary of findings, indicating whether or not the features identified as comprising communicative competence are incorporated into the set of course materials.

Table 2: Summary of the lesson contents of the set of course materials in terms of the quantitative data

Thematic criteria	Set of course Materials: 20 Minute Setswana: Setswana Language Course (Abuti Syllabus, 2020)	
	Assessment of frequency on the measurement scale.	
1. Does the chosen set of course materials incorporate grammatical explanations focussed on form and accuracy, and aimed at improving the language learner's grammatical competence ?	100%	7
2. Does the chosen language set of course materials incorporate activities aimed at improving the language learner's sociolinguistic competence ?	100%	7
3. Does the chosen set of course materials incorporate opportunities for authentic and meaningful practice of Setswana?	0%	1
4. Does the chosen set of course materials incorporate exposure to authentic and meaningful use of Setswana?	100%	7
5. Does the chosen set of course materials provide opportunities for the development of cultural awareness ?	52%	5
6. Does the chosen set of course materials incorporate activities aimed at improving the language learner's pragmatic (i.e., strategic and discourse) competence ?	100%	7
7. Does the chosen set of course materials encourage the learner to interact within a Setswana-speaking environment outside the learning environment?	80%	6

6.1. Discussion of Question 1

The main research question addresses the issue of whether the set of course materials was tailored to facilitate the development of communicative competence in Setswana and how.

The set of course materials ensures the development of all four competencies by exposing the learner to meaningful and authentic language use both in isolation and within the context it will be used, placing equal emphasis on language use and form with the objective of achieving meaningful communication.

6.1.1 Discussion Question 1a

It is clear from the findings in Table 2 that the course developers have put considerable effort into developing the grammatical competence of the language learner in terms of rule explanations and focus on form. The appropriate form is presented after a discussion of the contextual use of the language, that is, the function.

However, this is always done through explanations rather than through activities, which could have been used to guide the learner's investigation and discovery of the Setswana language's most salient features. The set of course materials ensures the inclusion of grammar explanations, focused mainly on developing the learner's understanding and use of the noun class system in order to mark plurals, create subject-verb agreement, modify and qualify nouns, apply the subject-verb-object (SVO) word order to create sentences, negate them and ask questions. However, the learner using the different components of the set of course materials, with specific reference to the language activities, will only develop grammatical competence through listening to and then studying the rules provided.

This could possibly only lead to a partial development of independent language use, specifically in terms of grammar, since the set of course materials only provides examples of active meaning construction. While the learner can follow these examples when studying the notes, they will not have access to any activities that can guide them through the process of meaning creation toward independent language use.

6.1.2 Discussion of Question 1b

The findings drawn from the analysis of the set of course materials suggest that it facilitates the development of a learner's sociolinguistic competence to a certain extent. This is done primarily through the development of cultural awareness in the learner, thereby emphasising the importance of socially appropriate and culturally specific language use through the cultural insertions and discussions of authentic and meaningful language practice presented during the different lessons. The focus on developing sociolinguistic competence is evident in all the lessons.

However, this set of course materials does not provide activities for developing sociolinguistic competence in terms of meaningful language practice, as no opportunities are given for individual practice.

6.1.3 Discussion of Question 1c

While the set of course materials does not incorporate opportunities or activities for individual language practice, it does motivate the language learner to find a native speaker of Setswana to practice the language with. Moreover, it guides this process by providing the language learner with examples of authentic and meaningful language use, which he/she can use to build his/her own phrases for communication. The lack of activities for developing strategic and discourse competence in terms of meaningful practice is evident, with no inclusion of this feature in any of the lessons. This means that the learner will only be able to develop strategic- and discourse competence if they find a native speaker to practise with.

In terms of communicative competence and based on the findings illustrated in Table 2, the set of course materials has been tailored towards facilitating the development of communicative competence in Setswana through the inclusion of examples of meaningful and authentic language use. It also places equal amounts of emphasis on the importance of form through grammatical explanations at the end of each lesson, and meaning, through language use within context, which ensures that the grammatical- and sociolinguistic competencies of the learner are not developed in isolation. However, due to a lack of activities for language practice, the development of discourse and strategic competence is neglected.

7. CONCLUSION

This study, firstly, showed that while the facilitation of communicative competence is possible by using the set of self-access course materials, the set of course materials should be tailored in a way that emphasises communication within varying social- and cultural contexts by focussing on both form and function. Secondly, the set of course materials should equip the learner with the necessary strategies to manage any external factors that may inhibit language development. The analysis of the set of course materials *20 Minute Setswana: Setswana Language Course* (Abuti Syllabus 2020) seems to suggest that the successful development of communicative competence in Setswana is more likely through language learning materials

that focus on authentic and meaningful language practice. Even though the current study provides valuable data on the possibility of the facilitation of communicative competency (in terms of a pre-use evaluation), further research needs to be done in order to ascertain whether it will be possible for a beginner Setswana language learner to acquire communicative competency by using of the set of course materials. It would be ideal to couple the current study's findings with data from an in- and post-use evaluation, where the focus shifts to the learners using the set of course materials. It is hoped that the results of the current study can be used to develop new course materials for language learners which emphasise communication and equip adult beginner language learners with the necessary skills to participate in everyday communication within the multilingual context of South Africa.

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