

**TEACHING EXPERIENCES OF LANGUAGE EDUCATORS  
IN SELECTED GRADE TEN MULTILINGUAL  
CLASSROOMS**

**BY**

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## ***DECLARATION***

This is to declare that the work is the author's original work and that all the sources have been accurately reported and acknowledged, and that this document has not in its entirety or in part been submitted at any university in order to obtain an academic qualification.

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## ***SUPERVISOR'S STATEMENT***

This dissertation has been submitted with/ without my approval

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Professor A. Sheik

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Date

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I would like to thank God for carrying me this far, for sustaining me in the difficult times I have faced and for giving me strength to complete this study.

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## ***ABSTRACT***

This study explores teaching experiences of language educators in multilingual classrooms in urban schools. Urban school populations have drastically changed since 1994. There has been gravitation towards former model C schools. Although classroom contexts in urban schools had become linguistically diverse, educators' linguistic profiles have remained largely unchanged. Teachers are expected to teach in a vastly different context from the one in which they were schooled and practised to teach. Teaching language in a fluid linguistic ecology is therefore a crucial issue. The study explores languages in contact at classroom level. Multilingual classrooms have important and varying implications for language teaching and learning. The South African language-in-education policy advocates for the promotion of additive multilingualism. Teachers are regarded as the best people to cater for the specific needs of their learners. The study examines the realities of multilingual classrooms told from language teachers' perspectives.

The study is a qualitative study premised on an interpretive paradigm. The researcher endeavours to understand the subjective world of human experience. Language teachers' experiences will be constructed by language teachers themselves. The study explores cognition and conceptualisation by language educators as they experience evolving linguistic landscapes in their schools. It attempts to get insight into multiple realities of multilingual classrooms through the eyes of the participants. Data was collected through narratives written by grade ten language educators in the Empangeni district. Unstructured one-to-one interviews were used for triangulation purposes.

Research findings show that language educators are facing challenges when teaching multilingual learners. They are also conscious of classroom dynamics but do nothing about them. They find themselves in a paradoxical situation as they teach English alongside other languages. They are not empowered to promote multilingualism and they do not get professional support from the department of Education. As a result they have not devised teaching strategies to address multilingual learners' specific needs. Learners' repertoires are not recognised. A monolingual approach is still used in multilingual classes.

The researcher recommends that in-service programmes be designed for language educators. They also need to be conscientised about multilingual education. The Department of Education should work hand in glove with the whole school community for meaningful language education to take place. Proper guidelines on multilingual education should be added to language curriculum documents for teachers.

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## ***CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY***

### ***1.1 Introduction and purpose of the study***

The change in South African politics culminated in shifting demographics of the instructional context. Learners from African townships and rural schools gravitated to former model C schools hence the change of ex-model C schools' linguistic landscapes. The change necessitated a review of the South African language-in-education policy. In 1997 the South African Department of Education adopted the language-in-education policy which centrally seeks to promote multilingualism as the optimal way of utilising the country's linguistic resources in classroom contexts. This change consequently affects all teachers. Research has proved that the promotion of multilingualism in South Africa has not come to fruition yet. Scholars have identified a number of factors that retard the promotion of multilingualism in schools. Language teachers shoulder a responsibility to deal with realities of multilingual contexts on a daily basis. However, they have not been given some platform to share their perspectives of multilingual education. Examining teachers' experiences could paint a clearer picture about the realities of multilingual classrooms.

The study explores teaching experiences of language educators in selected grade ten multilingual classrooms in selected ex-model C schools in KwaZulu-Natal. It focuses on lived experiences of language educators as they encounter evolving linguistic realities. The purpose is to create an account of the way these language educators construct their identities in relation to their milieu as well as social and professional aspirations. Borg (2003) contends that teacher cognitions and practices are mutually informing, with contextual factors playing an important role in determining the extent to which teachers are able to implement instruction congruent with their cognitions.

The study purports to examine role redefinitions by language educators as they experience evolving linguistic landscapes in their schools. As a researcher, I deem it necessary that language educators, as key role players in the education system, reconstruct and redefine their roles in the transforming linguistic dispensation. The study focuses on how multilingual contexts impact on language educators' practices. It intends to examine language pedagogy that language teachers use in multilingual contexts.

## **1.2 Rationale**

In 1997 South African Department of Education adopted the language-in-education policy which centrally seeks to promote multilingualism as the optimal way of utilising the country's linguistic resources in classroom contexts. Language educators are perceived to be implementers of the policy. As a language educator, I have observed that no effort has been made to reskill language educators who have been trained to use monolingual approaches to language teaching, hence a number of challenges of teaching in a multilingual environment exist. By exploring teaching experiences of language educators, flaws in both conceptualisation of the policy and implementation strategy could be identified.

There have been politically inclined heated debates about multilingual education. Most research has focused on the gap between the policy and implementation. Much attention has been paid to parents' and learners' attitudes towards multilingualism as well the use of mother tongues as languages of instruction. Learners' experiences in multilingual classrooms have been investigated. Language educators' positions on multilingualism have not been explored yet they are people who face the reality of multilingual contexts. Language research and developments should reflect the reality of ongoing change.

Very few studies have probed into language educators' experiences in multilingual classrooms. Moreover, studies on educators' experiences have focused on pre-service educators. As a researcher, I deem it necessary that experiences for language educators, who have been members in the teaching fraternity for a while, be explored as language teaching and learning has been undergoing transformation since the introduction of a new political dispensation in South Africa. Transformation of language-in-education policy warrants reconstruction of the language teaching reality by language educators. Reflecting about teaching experiences can potentially have a significant impact on teachers' thinking about themselves as teachers – their beliefs, habits, values and teaching strategies. It could thus help with language teachers' identity construction. In addition, reflections on experiences could foster language teachers' commitment to becoming active and informed critics of their own experiences in multilingual contexts as well as their professional and occupational circumstances.

The study is informed by Cooper's and McIntyre's (1996) notion that teachers have a rich repertoire of practical professional knowledge. Probyn (2001) argues that this knowledge can

be made explicit through reflection on practice. Reflections on teaching experiences could foster in language teachers the commitment to becoming active, informed critics of their own experiences in multilingual contexts. The study can potentially have a significant impact on language teachers, changing their thinking about themselves as teachers, their approaches to curriculum and teaching strategies. Educators could have an insight into challenges and strategies that could help them deal with multilingual contexts. The study could help language educators to revisit their school language policies and ascertain whether the latter talk to the South African language-in-education policy.

Exploring experiences of language educators could shed some light on realities of language classrooms. Educators will construct the reality of multilingual classrooms. Hearing language educators' voices on multilingual classrooms could increase the body of knowledge that language curriculum designers need in order to develop the language-in-education policy. The study could inform the work of developers of initial teacher education programmes.

### ***1.3 Theoretical and conceptual frameworks***

The proposed research is an investigation of teaching practice in multilingual classrooms. It draws on continua of biliteracy framework proposed by Nancy Hornberger in 1989. Hornberger (2002) contends that the notion of a continuum conveys that all points on a particular continuum are interrelated and there tends to be an implicit privileging of one end of the continua over another. Hornberger and Vaish (2009) assert that the idea of continuum posits that language development occurs in scalar and incremental fashion. The continuum contains infinitely many points which are inextricably related to one another. Hornberger (2002) defines biliteracy as any or all instances in which communication occurs in two or more languages. Hornberger (2003) depicts continua framework as a powerful ecological heuristic in stimulating a variety of investigations of practice in multilingual situations and a potent tool to conceptualise and effect change in the education of bilingual children.

Hornberger (2002) maintains that the continua of biliteracy model, like the ecology of language metaphor, is premised on the view of multilingualism as a resource. It incorporates language evaluation, language environment, and language endangerment themes of the ecology of language. The notion of bi (or multi) literacy assumes that languages are not static but dynamic, ever developing and changing, that is, they evolve. The study situates language

development in relation to the classroom context, that is, language environment. Hornberger (2002) contends that language teachers need to fill as many ecological spaces as possible, both ideological and implementational, if they have to keep the multilingual policy alive. She further argues that ecological language education policy is needed in order to achieve balance along a full range of continua of biliteracy, which include language context, development, content and media.

Ecology of the language is a social context in which more than one language is present which implies multilingualism. Creese and Martin (2003) accentuate Hornbrger's notion by maintaining that the ecological approach provides teachers and researchers with the tools to consider how one change along one point of a continuum will cause potential changes along other continua. They further argue that, through ecological approach, researchers can see the ways some languages become endorsed more than others. Ricento (2000) maintains that ecology of language approach emphasises language rights and on connecting macro socio-political processes with micro level patterns of language use. Drawing on Kramsch and Steffensen (2008), Creese and Blackledge (2010) contend that an ecological framework can be used to voice the contradictions and paradoxes that underlie research in language development.

Creese and Martin (2003) elaborate on the ecological approach by contending that it provides teachers and researchers with the tools to consider how one change along one point of continuum will cause potential changes along other continua. They further argue that the ecological approach also has the capacity to make connections between the educators' local and wider contexts.

Hornberger (2002) uses the continua of biliteracy framework to explore classroom experiences of Rand Afrikaans University pre-service teachers who were prepared to teach in multilingual classrooms. Horberger's and Vaish's study (2009) also draws on Horberger's continua of biliteracy model to examine tensions in translating multilingual language policy to classroom linguistic practice in India, Singapore and South Africa. The proposed study intends to explore how language teachers position themselves in relation to historical and current power relations that construct the content and context of the development of multilingualism. Language teachers will reflect on options available to them to create interpersonal spaces for multilingualism development. Drawing on Cummins (2002),

Hornberger (2003) contends that the continua of biliteracy framework permits various actors, language teachers in case of this study, to define their identities through their practice and their interactions.

The research publications cited above are influenced by interpretivism. Language educators construct meaning of their world of teaching language in multilingual contexts. Researchers also interpret discourses on experiences of teaching in multilingual classrooms. In the proposed research language educators will reflect on their experiences in multilingual classrooms and construct empowering knowledge and meaning within the context of multilingual encounter. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2011) assert that interpretive approach maintains that, all human beings engaged in the process of making sense of their worlds, continuously interpret create, give meaning, define, justify and rationalise daily actions. Language educators are responsible for role definitions they adopt in relation to multilingual classrooms. Reality about multilingual classrooms will be interpreted through the meaning that language educators give to their life world. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) maintain that interpretive paradigm examines the situation through the eyes of the participants. Interpretivism is congruent with exploring experiences.

#### **1.4 Key research questions**

- What are the teaching experiences of language educators in selected grade ten multilingual classrooms?
- What are the key challenges experienced by language educators in selected grade ten multilingual classrooms?
- How do language educators address challenges that prevail in multilingual classrooms?

It is envisaged that data will unfold experiences whereby language educators will construct their meaning of their multilingual world. They will redefine their role in the transforming linguistic dispensation. They will share pedagogical considerations they make as they face the reality of multilingual classrooms.

## **1.5 Definition of key concepts**

In this study experience is seen as a transaction between the subject and the environment. Robinson (1999), in her explanation of orientations to teacher education, refers to a practical orientation which is concerned mainly with using experiences as a source of learning. Therefore, the term experiences will be used to refer to everything language educators encounter including content, teaching methods, the actual learning/teaching process, actions and attitudes of learners and teachers. The experiences will be confined to urban multilingual classrooms in urban areas.

In this study the term multilingual is used as an attribute of learners and teachers as well as a descriptor of classes. Setati and Adler (2001) define a multilingual classroom as one in which there is a teacher and many languages to the class, but the teacher and learners themselves are not necessarily multilingual. Multilingual classrooms refer to contexts which show linguistic and cultural pluralism. Learners in multilingual classrooms are influenced by cross-cultural experiences. Mitchell (2012) depicts multilingual learners as students who are influenced by cross-cultural experience and whose daily lived reality necessitates the negotiation of two or more languages. Therefore multilingual classrooms or contexts are characterised by the co-existence of a number of languages. The classrooms that are studied constitute learners from different native language backgrounds, namely, English, Afrikaans and a number of African languages.

Linguistic ecology has been used to depict situations in multilingual classrooms. Linguistic ecology metaphor has been used to depict a variety of situations by different researchers. Mühlhäusler (2001) suggests that the ecological metaphor illuminates a range of subject matter, including the diversity of inhabitants of an ecology; the factors that sustain diversity; the housekeeping that is needed; and the functional interrelationships between the inhabitants of an ecology. This notion of linguistic ecology is appropriate for this study as it examines the housekeeping that is needed on the part of the language teachers and the functional interrelationships between English language educators and language learners in multilingual classrooms in urban schools. The study also adopts Horberger's notion of ecology. In an ecological approach to a discussion of multilingual language policies and the continua of biliteracy, Hornberger (2002) points out how languages exist and evolve in an ecosystem along with other languages, and how speakers interact with their socio-political, economic, and cultural environments. Spolky and Hult (2010) add another dimension by asserting that

ecological perspective places perception (perceptual action) in the centre of educational process. The study explores language teachers' conceptualisation of teaching in multilingual contexts.

### ***1.6 An overview of research design and methodology***

The study intends collecting information on teaching experiences of language educators in multilingual classrooms. The purpose is to determine how language educators conceptualise their teaching experiences in multilingual contexts.

Narratives will be used as the main instrument to collect data from language educators who teach in multilingual schools. The sources of data are three language teachers who teach at high schools. The selection of these language teachers is informed by the nature of the study. As the study is qualitative, the group in question only represent themselves. Qualitative research is inherently ungeneralisable. The study seeks to explore the particular group under study, not to generalise. Two teachers teach English as a home language in schools largely populated by learners who speak English, Afrikaans and African languages as their mother tongues. The third teacher teaches English First Additional Language to learners whose native language is Afrikaans. All these teachers teach in schools around Richards Bay. They will relate what it means to be a language teacher in the multilingual environment they find themselves in.

Schools have been selected because they service multilingual communities. The researcher has considered context as a determinant of participant selection. Schools around Richards Bay have been selected for ecological validity. The situation under investigation is multilingual classrooms. The selected schools are situated in multilingual communities and thus form a research site for the proposed study.

Language teachers, who are willing to participate in the research, will be requested to write narratives about their teaching experiences in multilingual classrooms after the inception of the language-in-education policy in South Africa. The language-in-education policy is a transformative measure which seeks to redress language inequity in South Africa by advocating promotion of multilingualism at classroom level. Narratives are the most suitable instruments for eliciting data as they catch the vividness of human experience, the multiple



perspectives and lived realities of participants. Cohen *et.al* (2011) assert that narratives report personal experiences and bring fresh insights to often familiar situations. Narratives will provide rich authentic and live data which will enable the researcher to generate a thick description from the collected data. Drawing on Thody (1997), Cohen *et.al* (2011) describe narratives as a method of reaching practitioners' mindsets. Language practitioners will reflect on their teaching experiences in the current linguistic landscape. They will construct meaning of their world of language teaching. Participants will reflect upon their views and values in a multilingual situation. Narratives allow participants to speak for themselves thus decreasing the researchers' subjectivity.

Data in the form of storied texts will be collected from each participant. Participants' narrative accounts will be analysed inductively. The researcher will categorise and code content and thematise concept building. As the study is premised on interpretivism, data analysis will be a reflexive and reactive interaction between the researcher and the data that are already interpretations of language teachers' encounters. The researcher will note down own ideas, insights, comments and reflections on data in a memo.

In order to verify findings, the researcher will conduct unstructured one-to-one interviews, also known as in-depth interviews, with each participant. These interviews will be conducted once data have been transcribed and will be tape-recorded. De Vos *et.al* (2011) maintain that the purpose of unstructured one-to-one interview is to understand the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. These interviews will be conducted to determine participants' reactions to initial findings. The interviews are intended to make events recounted and described experiences more substantial and real. De Vos *et.al* (2011) further assert that a researcher can use unstructured one-to-one interview to achieve understanding of the participants' point of view. The researcher will use them to negotiate meaning of the data collected from narratives with participants. Unstructured interviews will be used as a data generation instrument.

In addition, unstructured interviews will be used for triangulation purposes. Participants will have access to the analysed and synthesised data before the research is published. The researcher's interpretations and inferences of the narratives will be confirmed through the unstructured one-to-one interviews. Data collected from the narratives and data generated and confirmed through interviews will be synthesised as findings of the research.

### **1.7 Ethical issues**

The researcher will first seek ethical clearance from the University of Natal ethical committee. As research sites are schools, letters of informed consent, which contain information about purposes, contents, procedures, reporting, benefits, risks, reporting and dissemination of the research, will be sent to the Department of Basic Education. Participants will not be coerced to participate but participation will be voluntary. Permission will be sought from the Department of Education.

Participants who are willing to participate will be made aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any point in time, should they feel uncomfortable during the process of investigation. Responses by participants will be treated with confidentiality. Participants will sign contracts for participation after everything pertaining to the research has been explained. Full comprehension of details of the research will be set as a requirement for signing the informed consent. Pseudonyms will be used for participants to ensure anonymity. Names of the schools will not be disclosed. Before participants are engaged in research activities, they will be informed of the significance of the research.

### **1.8 Conclusion**

The chapter has given a background about the topic. It highlights the focus of the study and provides a rationale and significance for the study. It discusses theoretical and conceptual frameworks which underpin the study. It also provides key research questions which the study purports to get answers thereto. It unpacks key concepts which are used in the study. It highlights research design and methodology which will be used to collect data. Ethical considerations are also discussed. Chapter 2 will review local and international literature on multilingual education.

## ***CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW***

### ***2.1 Overview***

One of the most dramatic culminations of the South African political changes was the sudden gravitation of African language speaking learners towards schools which had previously been accessible to Whites only. This influx of African language speaking learners meant a profound change of linguistic ecology in schools which became multilingual. Linguistically diverse classrooms resulted in an increase of demands for language educators. Multilingual classrooms are characterised by shifting demographics of who learners are and the backgrounds they bring, including evolving demands in curricula and instructional practices. These classroom characteristics necessitate reshaping of teachers' professional requirements. Teachers need not only adapt to the changed curriculum but also redefine their knowledge base and professional competences at both the conceptual and professional levels. Nieto (1996) argues that structural changes must be accompanied by changes in the attitudes of the general public concerning teachers' professionalism as well as beliefs about their own abilities and the dynamic possibilities for learning that students' diversity creates.

Although classroom contexts in urban schools had become linguistically diverse, educators' linguistic profiles have remained largely unchanged. Teachers are expected to teach in a vastly different context from the one in which they were schooled and practised to teach. Teaching language in a fluid linguistic ecology is therefore a crucial issue. Multilingual classrooms have important and varying implications for language teaching and learning. The study examines teaching experiences of language educators who teach English to learners who speak English and other languages not spoken by their teachers. These teachers are closely involved with dynamics which learners from different communities bring to the classrooms. Language is viewed as central to an individual's and community's identity, dignity, and creativity. Johannessen (2011) identifies students, educators and community as elements that are fundamental in a thriving multilingual society aspiring to the preservation of its linguistic and cultural identities. She argues that students, educators and community represent the heart, mind and soul of a multilingual society respectively. The study draws on debates and discussions generated in the field of multilingual education. It also discusses the researcher's views and observations regarding language teaching in a changing linguistic ecology.

The study examines how the change in classroom contexts has affected the teaching of language. Heugh, Siergühn and Plüddemann (1995) suggest that the impetus for change is likely to come from teachers as they shoulder the responsibility to cater for the needs of linguistically diverse learners. Hornberger (2005) contends that it is essential for language educators to fill up implementational spaces opened up by multilingual language and education policy at classroom level. Language educators are expected to embrace transformation in terms of South African language-in-education policy. Thus change does not only impact on the language learning and teaching process but also directly on language teachers themselves.

Moreover, Rassool, Edwards and Bloch (2006) state that the history of curriculum rigidities has implications for educator responses to the requirements of new educational policy demands which are learner centred. They further argue that this philosophical shift towards learner centredness suggests a move away from rigid curriculum impositions towards teachers having relative autonomy in negotiating curriculum content and teaching materials. In reality, the language-in-education policy does not offer autonomy to educators as it is a top-down imposition. Teachers are expected to redress the imbalances created during the apartheid epoch. Cummins and Hornberger (2008) assert that there has been very little involvement or input from the people at the grassroots level such as teachers and researchers. Spolsky and Hult (2010) maintain that language cultivation is delegated to educators.

This chapter reviews research on multilingual educational contexts. Dominant trends on multilingual studies will be discussed. It examines different researchers' views on how language teachers interact with practice in multilingual contexts. In choosing studies for this review I searched for published work examining experiences of language teachers teaching in multilingual contexts. The chapter also evaluates studies which analyse South African language-in-education policy in relation to multilingualism. Issues pertinent to the development of multilingual education in South Africa will also be examined. The common thread throughout this chapter is the impact of the multilingual context on language teaching. Scholars' ideas about teaching and learning in multilingual contexts are grouped in terms of subjects they focus on.

## ***2.2 The impact of multilingual classrooms on language teaching and learning***

Language educators who teach in linguistically diverse contexts are faced with a truly vexing set of challenges in understanding how to meet the complex needs of their learners. The study views classrooms, in particular, as the contexts in which language teaching takes place. Context has been used to refer to the learning and teaching environment. In this study, multilingual classrooms are the context in question therefore classrooms and context will be used interchangeably. Several studies highlight a pivotal role context plays on teaching and learning.

The studies reviewed below manifest experiences of both experienced and inexperienced educators in language classrooms. Several studies elucidate the significance of the context in the teaching learning process. The significance of context in learning and teaching can be linked to Freire's idea (1970) that classroom learning and teaching cannot be separated from the broader contexts in which they occur. Spolsky and Hult (2010) further argue that meanings constructed by teachers and learners in classroom interactions rely on verbal and non-verbal information and on the discourse of wider school settings.

Drawing on Weistein (1991), Padayachy (2010) defines a classroom context as a distinct boundary that exerts particular communicative and social demands on participants. Spolsky and Hult (2010) maintain that context primarily focuses on processes of interaction and relationships of influence. In this study context is viewed from the interactionist position. Van Lier (2004) asserts that interactionists view a sociocultural context as the interaction between the environmental and cognitive processes. The study endeavours to explore enriching knowledge teachers acquire in their daily encounters with multilingual learners. Different environmental contexts such as home, community and school affect both learners and teachers. Haugen (1972) describes environment as the society that uses language as one of its codes. Drawing on van Lier (2004), Spolky and Hult (2010) contend that the surrounding world, described as the whole mind-body-world complex of resources that is involved in any communicative act, plays a constitutive part in language learning.

Diverse classrooms offer contrasting socio-linguistic, cultural and political settings for exploring teachers' beliefs, teacher-learner interactions and activities. The dynamic and fluid nature of multilingual classrooms yields many perspectives of multilingual research. A report

by Breton-Carbonneau, Cleghorn, Evans and Pesco (2012) suggests that diversely populated classrooms still offer challenges and opportunities for teachers alike. The study examines multilingual classrooms from a language teacher's perspective. It is significant to explore how teachers are responding to the diversity they encounter in the classroom as they endeavour to implement the language-in-education policy which aims at fostering multilingualism. Drawing on Macdonald (1990), Probyn (2001) maintains that teachers simply do what they can in order to deal with classroom realities.

Teachers develop their professional practice upon classroom discourse. Spolky and Hult (2010) depict classrooms as worlds in which knowledge is constructed through talk. They argue that teachers engage with learners not only through formal lectures but also interactive oral linguistic processes. Green (1983) accentuates the notion of classroom discourse by asserting that interactions are at the heart of how classroom learning socialises. Conversational rules are culture specific and are learnt from interacting with others. Immediate context shapes practices. Multilingual classrooms are thus resourceful if learners are afforded opportunities for meaningful interaction.

Drawing on Cadzen (1988), Spolsky and Hult (2010) add a cognitive dimension to context by contending that context is in the mind and is constructed by participants through interaction and experience. The study probes language educators' constructions as they experience multilingual classroom realities. Classrooms are viewed as socio-cognitive. Johnson (1999), Lampert (2001) and Borg (2003) suppose that classroom practices are socio-cognitive and behavioural undertakings. Van Lier (2004) emphasises the interrelationship between environmental and cognitive processes and their significant role in second language development.

Borg (2003) maintains that teachers' practices are shaped by environmental realities of the school and classroom. He identifies, among other factors, parents, the school society, school policies, classroom and school layout and the availability of resources as the environmental realities of the school and classroom. Burns (1992) maintains that the organisational exigencies of the context and the ways of teachers' awareness of the broader institutional context have an impact on decisions about lesson planning and content. Crookes and Arakaki (1999) found strong evidence on how working conditions had a powerful impact on teachers' pedagogical choices. Drawing on Richards and Pennington's (1998), Borg (2003) maintains

that teachers who had been trained in the version of the communicative method had to diverge from communicative principles due to the context in which they taught.

Drawing on Goodson (1992), Varathaiah (2011) contend that classrooms are special places that teachers are familiar with, where constructive learning must take place. Robinson (2003) asserts that changing local context has a major impact on the daily lives of teachers. She further argues that in South Africa workplace realities have fundamentally changed over the last ten years. Hargreaves (1994) argues that teaching is changing and writes about choices and challenges facing teachers as we move into the postmodern age. As South Africa is still in transition into a post-apartheid era, one may argue that change in linguistic ecology of classrooms requires deeper understanding of a variety of contextual factors and diligence on the part of language educators. Stevens (2011) contends that educators should have a more robust and rigorous way of knowing not just their students as learners, but knowing them as human beings in multiple contexts and understanding well those contexts. Drawing on Brisk (2006), Mitchell (2012) emphasises Stevens' notion by pointing out that understanding that multilingual learners are influenced by a number of cross-cultural experiences rather than rigid cultural stereotypes is vital for designing classroom practices. Drawing on Macdonald (1990), Probyn (2009) argues that teachers' classroom practices are moulded by the language proficiency of the learners.

Breton-Carbonneau *et.al* (2012) investigated pedagogical and political encounters in linguistically and culturally diverse primary classrooms in Quebec, Canada and Gauteng. They found that teachers ought to be conscious of both challenges and resources that multilingual learners bring to the classroom. They also emphasise that teachers need to be able to relate to the learners' experiences as they shift from a community's language, values and behavioural norms to the individualistic values and behavioural expectations that tend to come with a Western form of schooling. Experiences of multilingual learners, that is, their transition from a cultural world to a new world and expectations of the Western oriented schooling, are part of a context that language teachers have to grapple with. Breton-Carbonneau *et.al* (2012) rightfully argue that teachers tend to view the challenges they experience in teaching as located within a learner rather than in the system.

Landman and Lewis (2011) give a broader notion of context. After probing into white teachers' experiences in linguistically diverse environment they contend that teaching does

not only take place in classrooms but also in local, state, national and global contexts. Teachers should therefore understand that the social contexts of schooling impact their teaching and that their context may not be supportive to learning. This implies that pedagogy should be designed to address the context while simultaneously preparing learners for the curriculum demands.

Padayache (2010) emphasises the impact of context on language learning by arguing that social interaction between children from diverse cultural backgrounds influences the development of children's communicative competence. Milner IV (2010) reiterates the importance of context by stating that teachers must understand the context in which they teach so that they can move beyond stereotypes to a mind-set that allows them to learn continuously about their communities.

The above cited studies elucidate how classroom practices are shaped by context and should therefore be linguistically responsive. Milner IV (2010) depicts responsive teaching as teaching which requires that educators know more than their subject matter; understand the differences, complexities, and nuances inherent in what it means to teach in a particular social context. Therefore it is essential for language educators who teach in multilingual contexts to critically make sense of the situation in which they teach as it inevitably affects the teaching-learning process as a whole.

### ***2.3 South African Department of Education position on teaching and learning language in multilingual classrooms***

Classroom practices are informed by the language-in-education policy. Multilingual classrooms are the aftermath of the political changes in South Africa. The language-in-education policy was enacted in 1997 as a response to historical rigidities associated with the apartheid era. The language-in-education policy is reviewed to find out about language teachers' experiences that are related to the policy. Heugh (1999) asserts that South Africa has embraced a policy which espouses the validation and promotion of multilingualism and, in particular, the development of indigenous languages. Wright (2004) argues schooling is the only arena in which issues of language cultivation can be addressed in depth. Issues pertinent to language cultivation are contained in the language-in-education policy.

A South African position on multilingual education is reflected in the language-in-education policy. The language policy is multifaceted and has numerous objectives. It proclaims



multilingualism and the drive to enhance the status of all South African languages in an educational landscape. The policy is comprehensive as it encompasses many perspectives. The motive for language-in-education policy is to take into account the language reality of classrooms by promoting access, integration and a sense of belonging thereby redressing the language imbalances of the past.

Studies have identified three distinct approaches to language diversity. Spolsky and Hult (2010) elaborate on the three approaches. They argue that the first perspective holds that the role of language in enhancing governance is of primary importance. In terms of this perspective linguistic diversity is viewed as a threat to the ability of the government and its effective functionality and therefore needs to be eliminated. This approach was adopted during the apartheid epoch. The then language-in-education policy was aimed at destroying indigenous languages. The second perspective views each sociolinguistic context as an ecological system and considers the maintenance of linguistic ecosystems as of paramount importance. In terms of this perspective, each language variety represents a significant resource that must be protected and encouraged to flourish. The policy influenced by this perspective seeks to attain balance within the overall sociolinguistic ecosystem by encouraging tolerance for linguistic diversity. The third perspective views linguistic contexts in terms of human rights. This perspective emphasises individuals' right to maintain and use their particular language variety. Policy which is primarily informed by this notion will actively protect diversity, creating social and political space for diverse linguistic and cultural expressions. The second and the third perspectives are congruent with the current South African language-in-education policy. It is aimed at redressing the imbalances of the past. As a measure to protect diversity, eleven languages had been accorded equal status.

Furthermore, the South African language-in-education policy is enshrined in the constitution of the country and adopts an ideological perspective. The language policy views multilingualism as a resource. It is thus informed by the notion that linguistic diversity represents a pool of these resources.

Reagan (2001) investigates the promotion of linguistic diversity in multilingual settings in post-apartheid South Africa. He observes that the South African government is engaged in a multifaceted programme of activities in the sphere of language planning, including status, corpus and language attitude planning. Status planning has been witnessed in the country's

eleven official languages. Reagan (2001) contends that South Africa has had extensive experience in corpus planning. Afrikaans was a powerful example of corpus planning. There is evidence of corpus planning with regard to African languages which is grounded in the communities in which the affected languages are actually used.

A significant planning which is lagging behind is what Finchilescu and Nyawose (1998) and Louw-Potgieter and Louw (1991) term language attitude planning. Changing common negative attitudes towards African languages is one of the greater challenges faced by language planners. This problem is inherent in many post-independent countries as observed by Sarinjeive (1997). Efforts to develop language attitude face the greatest resistance in the educational sphere. This has been proved by parents who take their children to urban schools and opt for English as the language of learning and teaching. Reagan (2001) argues that the overwhelming dominance of English is supported by both economic factors and tacit government acquiescence in the face of considerable linguistic diversity. English hegemony therefore renders the policy an ideal programme. This situation leaves language teachers in a predicament and defeats the idea of promotion of multilingualism.

South Africa has taken some measures to develop multilingual policy. Skutnabb-Kangas, Phillipson, Mohanty and Panda (2009) argue that the language-in-education policy has been kept separate from curriculum transformation after 1999 in South Africa. The Project for Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA), based at the University of Cape Town, and the University of Reading in the UK, was a step aimed at promoting the policy of multilingualism. PRAESA has been involved in adapting materials designed for UK teachers working in multilingual schools to the training needs of South African teachers involved in implementing South Africa's multilingual policy. However, PRAESA has some limitations as it is only accessible to few educators who are interested in furthering their studies by enrolling for a Masters degree at the University of Cape Town. Language curriculum transformation was not integrated within PRAESA. National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), Grades 10-12 document does not explicitly highlight the promotion of multilingual education policy. Multilingual education is implied in the following two principles:

Human rights, inclusivity, environmental and social justice: infusing the principles and practices of social and environmental justice and human rights as defined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. The National Curriculum Statements for Grades R-12 is

sensitive to issues of diversity such as poverty, inequality, race, gender, language, age, disability and other factors. Such as valuing indigenous knowledge systems; acknowledging the rich history and heritage of this country as important contributors to nurturing the values contained in the Constitution. (National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), Grades 10-12, 2011: 6)

In addition, one of the general aims of the South African Curriculum states:

Inclusivity should become a neutral part of an organisation, planning and teaching at each school. This can only happen if all teachers have a sound understanding of how to recognise and address barriers to learning, and how to plan for diversity. (CAPS: 7)

CAPS document is reviewed to examine statements which point to teaching approaches which are suitable for diverse groups of learners. Although the CAPS document does not make direct reference to South African constitution and multilingual policy, the above cited statements relate to teaching in multilingual classrooms. These statements are not specific to language teaching. They are general principles which are applicable to all subjects. They are most relevant principles pertaining to language teaching. These statements could be effectively interpreted by language practitioners who are familiar with the contents of the South African constitution and language-in-education policy. Implicit statements leave teachers in a predicament as the CAPS document serves as the main reference on which teachers rely for their daily practices. Ironically, few (if any) teachers have a sound understanding of the South African constitution; how to recognise and address barriers to learning and how to plan for diversity. Heugh (2009) argues that the whole language literacy is supported by insubstantive documentation which left teachers disempowered. Spolsky and Hult (2010) contend that the effectiveness of language cultivation efforts depend on, among other factors, local interpretation of national policy directions and local readiness to participate in their implementation. Teachers shoulder the responsibility of interpreting and implementing language-in-education policy as well as the curriculum. Spolsky and Hult (2010) depict language specialists in a changing linguistic ecology as curriculum and classroom instruction adapters who have to meet the specific needs of their students.

The principle of valuing indigenous knowledge system implies that learners' experiences are essential for the construction of new knowledge in the classrooms. Skutnabb-Kangas *et.al* (2009) maintain that indigenous peoples' knowledge cannot be separated from their

epistemological and metaphysical roots, as cultural concepts and meanings are negotiated within epistemological boundaries and metaphysical realities.

Different scholars have analysed the South African language-in-education policy from different perspectives. Drawing on Eastman (1983), Kamwangamalu (1997) argues that language planning is done through the cooperative efforts of political, educational, economic and linguistic authorities. The South African language-in-education policy adopts an additive approach to bi- or multilingualism whereby the first language lays the foundation for learning another language. Skutnabb-Kangas, *et.al* (2009) contend that the new South African language-in-education policy reintroduced the principle and right of mother tongue education within the context of additive bilingual and multilingual models of education. Cuvelier *et al* (2009) distinguish different linguistic outcomes. They depict additive multilingualism as starting a school career in mother tongue with a second language being gradually added.

Breton-Carbonneau *et.al* (2012), after investigating pedagogical and political encounters in linguistically and culturally diverse primary classrooms in South Africa, conclude that the South African language-in-education policy advocates but does not mandate initial instruction in mother tongue. They further argue that schools are becoming increasingly Westernised through the processes of educational policy borrowing; the adoption of foreign ideas for inclusion in the curriculum; and the apparent homogenisation of schooling practices. They also contend that the policy also aims to foster national identity and cohesion by inculcating values of equity and equal opportunity within a racially and inter-culturally integrated rainbow nation. Language teachers end up in a dilemma. They have to prepare learners to be members of the rainbow nation and simultaneously, assimilate learners to Western ways of knowing and behaving through English.

Breton-Carbonneau *et.al* (2012) contend that the policy suggests an additive approach to multilingualism that aims to elevate the status of the previously marginalised African languages in schools and contribute to the rainbow nation. They further argue that, on one hand, the policy suggests that learners join a wider societal context associated with economic and political advantages and requiring adoption of a new language. In a South African context English has been adopted. On the other hand, learners are encouraged to maintain their home language and their ethnic identities. This has culminated in the increased demands for instruction in English, which in turn creates new challenges for language teachers.

In view of the above argument, the policy yields dual direction and leaves teachers with two options when dealing with multilingual classrooms. Breton-Carbonneau *et.al* (2012) maintain that, on the one hand, teachers might employ a socio-cultural approach which implies respect and acknowledgement of the language and culture that learners bring to class. This approach is suitable for diverse groups of learners. On the other hand, teachers might prioritise assimilation thus denying the significance of learners' home cultures and languages and their relevance for learning. In most South African schools assimilation has been prioritised as Spolky and Hult (2010) observe that in Africa there is a widespread belief in the value and necessity of continuing to use the metropolitan language introduced by the colonial powers and the distrust of the educational effect of using African languages in schools.

The dual nature of the language policy places educators in a dilemma. Wright (2004) asserts that the emphasis on additive multilingualism in the new school curriculum is perhaps the best guarantee of creating linguistic flexibility essential to achieving equitable modern schooling for all. On the contrary, the entrenched English hegemony at the heights of formal economy raises questions about multilingualism. Wright (2004) further argues that one may garner support for promoting African languages at school level but such arguments may counter an unfortunate legacy South Africans inherited from the apartheid epoch. The value of African languages has been tainted. Parkinson, Suria and Mackay (2011) maintain that, despite the recognition of mother tongue instruction for the six years of school, in South Africa one apartheid legacy is that proficiency in English amongst the population at large, including teachers, is such that education is frequently compromised.

Moreover, there is a mismatch between human rights point of view and a functional viewpoint about indigenous languages. The language policy considers the role of local languages from a human rights point of view. South Africans view the African languages from a functional viewpoint in economic activity. Apparently, economic value of African languages has not been established. This has been attested by a number of parents who send their children to urban schools. Scholars, in the field of multilingualism, such as Alidou, Boly, Brook-Utne, Diato, Heugh and Wolff (2006), Baker (2006), Cummins & Swain (1986) and Heugh (2009) advocate the wisdom of mother-tongue instruction in the primary schools so that a firm basis of written literacy can be established. This notion is a pedagogically grounded viewpoint which could not be understood by the community.

Skutnabb-Kangas *et.al* (2009) further argue that curriculum documentation misrepresents principles of additive multilingualism. They elaborate on additive bilingualism by pointing out that additive bilingual education requires a minimum of six years of mother tongue education under ideal conditions and usually eight years under those found in African education systems. Another linguistic outcome is subtractive multilingualism which is described as education in both mother tongue and a dominant language. Mother tongue is decreased progressively resulting in exclusive use of second language. Skutnabb-Kangas (2008) describes a subtractive policy as a form of linguistic or cultural genocide.

In evaluating the language-in-education policy, Skutnabb-Kangas *et.al* (2009) argue that curriculum documentation is fraught with terminological slippage, for example, ‘early exit transitional bilingual’ is passed off as additive bilingualism. Thus notions are not explicit in any documentation which leaves educators in a predicament.

Paradoxically, the South African language in-education-policy envisages additive bi/multilingualism but what happens in multilingual classrooms is subtractive multilingualism. Subtractive multilingualism manifests itself in the form of linguisticism in South Africa. Contrary to the human right perspective of the language in education policy, linguisticism prevails in most South African educational systems. Kamwangamalu (1997) defines linguisticism as an ideology according to which the language of the politically or economically dominant group or social class is accorded a higher social status than indigenous languages. In South Africa the higher status has been given to Afrikaans and English. Heugh *et.al* (1995) depict linguisticism as practices which discriminate against individuals or groups of people on the basis of (usually home) language. They further argue that in South Africa, African language speakers have been subjected to linguisticism with regard to language in-education-policies.

Thesen and van Pletzen (2006) argue that the language-in-education policy reflects the strong influence of Jim Cummins and draws on Cummins’ (1984) theory of additive multilingualism to account for failure in South Africa. Contrary to Thesen’s and van Pletzen’s (2006) argument Skutnabb-Kangas *et.al* (2009) contend that the so-called additive bilingual education in South Africa should be called transition to English because it is not consistent with Jim Cummins’ theory from the early 1980’s. They describe Cummins’ additive multilingualism as a form of bilingualism that results when students add a second language to

their intellectual tool kit while continuing to develop conceptually and academically in their home language. A central irony of the contemporary South African education system is that, African languages are continually devalued and stigmatised. Consequently, African parents send their children to former model C schools where English is mostly taught as a home language. It is evident that the South African language-in-education policy does not emphasise equitable multilingualism.

Skutnabb-Kangas *et.al* (2009) conclude that Heugh's (2009) research of late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century developments with regard to Ethiopian and South African education and language policies, illuminates that language learning programmes originating from English dominant contexts beyond Africa cannot be transported or imported successfully to Africa. Cenoz and Genesee (1998) elaborate this notion by contending that additive bilingualism tends to occur in situations where the first language is valued. Contrary, subtractive multilingualism tends to occur in situations where there is pressure to replace a socially non-dominant language with a second. The latter situation prevails in South African education. African languages are not valued by Africans themselves. Heugh (2002) asserts that parents' counter-veiling tendency to opt straight for English models yields subtractive or transitional bilingualism. Alexander (2005) depicts the situation as an attitude of mind prevalent throughout the African continent, which he refers to as static maintenance syndrome. He further argues that the attitude manifests itself as a sense of resignation about the perceived and imputed powerlessness of the local or indigenous languages of Africa. Kamwangamalu (1997) contends that the South African language policy has continued to vest English with power at the expense of African languages.

## ***2.4 Dominant trends in research pertaining to teaching and learning language in multilingual classrooms***

Scholarship has viewed issues pertinent to South African multilingual education through a political and historical lens. Scholars have conducted extensive research on multilingual education. Journals, books and theses will be critically evaluated to determine trends which have been followed by previous research on multilingualism. Literature will be reviewed to highlight what is already known and still to be exploited in multilingual education.

The South African language-in-education policy advocates the promotion of multilingualism in classroom contexts. The language-in-education policy has culminated in complex

challenges and dilemmas faced by language educators. Promotion of multilingualism has presented a great challenge to common frameworks of education. Foley (2002) identifies two essentially linguistic contradictions which lie in the heart of the educational policies and practices. The first contradiction is that the South African education system purports to be multilingual, and yet most educational institutions do not use the learners' mother tongues as languages of learning and teaching. The second contradiction is that the majority of parents prefer English as the medium of instruction. Parents' preference of English to African languages is an impediment to multilingual education. Foley's study has focused on a discrepancy between language-in-education policy and its implementation. The study highlights the attitudes of parents towards the promotion of multilingualism as well as laxity on the part of institutions to enhance multilingual education. Although Foley's article does not explore teaching experiences of language educators, the paradoxical situation of linguistic ecology explained by Foley, is one of the predicaments in which language educators find themselves.

Chick and McKay (2001) found that the schools they visited were promoting extensive use of English as the medium of instruction. Their study investigates the extent to which schools are attempting to promote multilingual identity for which the language-in-education policy calls. The study focuses on barriers to multicultural socialisation in school context. The study follows a political dimension as it examines whether schools are implementing Section 3(4) (m) of the National Policy Act (act 27 of 1996). The study highlights how some principals feel about using mother tongue as medium of instruction. School principals have a great influence in designing school policies which include language policies. Their perspectives on multilingualism have a bearing on what happens when language educators engage in classroom practices. Language educators have to conform to language policies of schools in which they teach.

Singh (2010) argues that there has been a shift of attention from language to language institutions. This trend resonates with what happens in the South African education system. The South African Department of Education, in its endeavour to promote multilingualism, changed the former model C institutions into multicultural schools. The focus has been thus more on schools as organisations rather than the development of languages. Multilingualism needs to be nurtured. Chick and McKay (2001) contend that little progress has been made in developing language-in-education policies and practices.



Setati, Adler and Reed (2002) examine language infrastructure in rural and urban schools in order to learn about the language practices of educators. Their study was aimed at learning educators' experiences in order to improve the programme for future educator participants and inform in-service teacher education. They conclude that language practices of educators will not only depend on what policy is stipulated, but also on educators' skills, their context of practice and what they perceive to be in the interest of their learners. They use a metaphor of an incomplete journey for educators to depict educators' experiences in multilingual classrooms. Their study elucidates the challenges that educators encounter in multilingual classrooms. However, the study does not examine opportunities that multilingual classes have to offer. Educators therefore need to construct meanings of multilingual education. Studying experiences of language educators will shed light on their attitudes towards policy, their conceptualisation of multilingualism, challenges and complexities of multilingual classrooms which need to be addressed.

Drawing on Aronin and Singleton (2008), Aronin and Hufeisen (2009) contend that multilingualism is crucially integral to the construction of the contemporary globalised reality. They further argue that a new linguistic dispensation has been a culmination of the crucial global shift. They further argue that significant changes in human language practices have yielded contemporary multilingualism. They identify complexity, liminality and suffusiveness as properties of contemporary multilingualism. The new sociolinguistic dispensation in South Africa embraces language practices of communities, teaching languages and teaching or learning through languages. Research in multiple languages learning and teaching is essential as South Africa is one of the countries which has established the learning of many languages in their school curricula. Early research has emphasised the positive effects of being multilingual. Most research in multilingualism has taken a political perspective of multilingualism.

Lasagabaster and Huguet (2007) conclude that the widespread favourable attitudes towards minority languages reflect the changes in linguistic policies promoting protection and recovery of the minority languages. Their study focuses on psycholinguistic aspects. It is evident that research has paid little, if any, attention to educators as resources of fostering multilingualism.

Hornberger and Vaish (2009) explore multilingual policy and school linguistic practice in India, Singapore and South Africa. They express an awareness of the enormous challenges to teacher training, pedagogy and curriculum that must be met in order to achieve equitable access to the linguistic capital. The classroom vignette from South Africa, featured in their study, shows how home life experiences of learners can both connect with and have a place in the classroom. The vignette clearly demonstrates the strategies that educators draw on to develop and support their learners' mother tongue. They conclude that hybrid multilingual classroom practices documented as translanguaging practices (Hornberger 2003) or bilingual supportive scaffolding practices (Brunei 2008) offer the possibility for teachers and learners to access academic content through linguistic resources. Their study emphasises the significance of linguistic resources that multilingual classrooms have to offer.

Wei and Martin (2009) explore classroom codeswitching which is one of the strategies educators employ in order to deal with multilingual classrooms. They emphasise that conflicts and tensions prevail in classroom contexts where English is used as the language of learning and teaching and learners have a limited command of English. Similarly Probyn (2009) highlights conflicts and tensions related to codeswitching in rural or township schools in South Africa. She asserts that educators and learners 'smuggle' the vernacular into the classroom to achieve a range of social and pedagogical goals. Probyn (2009) argues for school language policies that take into account contextual realities in order to enable learners to gain access to both the knowledge and the linguistic resources. The conflicts and tensions highlighted above are not exclusive to rural or township classrooms only. Learners who have limited English proficiency are also found in urban schools and go through the same experience. Probyn (2009) contends that in any classroom, where the language of learning and teaching is not the home language of the learners, teachers are faced with the twin goals of content and language teaching and the inevitable tension between the two goals. Wei and Martin (2009) point out significant issues about the way language is used within the framework of the wider sociolinguistic and socio-political contexts.

O' Connor and Geiger (2009) examine challenges facing primary school educators of English to second or other language learners. They found that learners who attend in metropolitan schools are often frequently inappropriately referred to Speech Language Therapy because educators may interpret language differences as deficiencies. Educators mistook language-based academic problems for learning difficulties. This proves that educators need language

awareness and to provides insight into different environmental contexts such as home, community and school and their effects on learners. In their survey of teachers' needs, Du Plessis and Naudé (2003) found that participant educators expressed a concern that learners do not receive supportive input and indicated a need for collaboration. The call for supportive input is in line with Chick's and Mackay's (2001) notion that the first language can be used as a basis for the learning of another language. Skutnabb-Kangas (2009) *et.al* elaborate on the significance of supportive input. They argue that the literacy situation at home and the neighbourhood determines the degree of disadvantage faced by children in understanding the school's standard language.

In light of the above discussion it is evident that most research has focused on the political, sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic dimensions of multilingualism. Very little empirical research on experiences of language educators in multilingual contexts has come to light. Very little has been studied towards professional development of language-in-education policy which fosters multilingualism. Plüddermann (1999) asserts that the implementation of multilingual education had largely fallen to NGOs. New linguistic dispensation warrants revisiting language teaching methodology. Wright (2004) contends that the key to more linguistic ecological diversity in South Africa is to shift the emphasis from policy development to practical language cultivation. Language educators' experiences are a reflection on practical realities of multilingual education. There is little empirical data on teaching experiences of language educators in multilingual classrooms.

## ***2.5 Theories informing teaching and learning languages in multilingual contexts***

Language teaching is informed by theories and philosophies that are manifest in pedagogical practices and rationales that teachers exhibit in their classrooms. Principles informing language teaching and contemporary approaches to language teaching are analysed to examine whether they are congruent with teaching in diverse linguistic landscape prevalent in South African classrooms.

De Korne (2012) asserts that language teaching or pedagogy is influenced by ideologies which impact perceptions of what language is, how it can or should be used, who can or should use it and how it can be learnt. At school level, certain languages are prioritised and policies of classroom language use are set. Goffman (1981) reiterates the impact of ideologies

on language teaching by maintaining that ideologies of how language should be learnt in classrooms influence the participation frameworks or interactive patterns of language use in schools. Canagarajah (1999) depicts ideologies as preferred ways of learning and thinking of the dominant communities which are biased and can create conflicts for learners from other pedagogical traditions.

De Korne (2012) elaborates on the notion of ideologies by identifying two prominent contrary ideologies about language, namely, monoglossic and heteroglossic ideologies, which influence language pedagogy that prevail in schools. She depicts monoglossic ideology as the perception of language as a rule-governed, discrete entity, often with unidirectional relationship to culture. In terms of monoglossic ideology, learners are expected to acquire and use languages as separate entities, mixing them as little as possible. Drawing on Agha (2007), de Korne (2012) describes heteroglossic ideology as an ideology that focuses on repertoires and social registers employed by speakers to meet communicative competence. The latter ideology is congruent with multilingual education as it includes all the linguistic and cultural resources of all children. Thus language pedagogy in multilingual classrooms could be influenced by either monoglossic or heteroglossic ideologies.

Landsman and Lewis (2011) elaborate on how teachers' ideologies can affect language teaching. They contend that teachers' thinking about their learners, about their learners' abilities and about learners' established knowledge and possibilities can serve as a precursor to what is possible instructionally. Teachers could hold certain stereotypical beliefs and view their learners through deficit lenses. Such views hamper teachers from realising that learners are knowledgeable and bring a wealth of knowledge into the classroom. Landman and Lewis (2011) further argue that teachers' thinking bears on how they develop the curriculum, whose voice they allow to speak in the classroom and how they enact and teach the curriculum.

Multilingual classrooms warrant a multilingual approach to language teaching. Basing her argument on Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, Nieto (1996) maintains that multilingual approach values diversity and encourages critical thinking, reflection, and action. Critical pedagogy acknowledges cultural and linguistic diversity. Therefore teaching in a linguistically diverse environment implies being engaged in social inequities. Landsman and Lewis (2011) argue that teachers must understand that diversity awareness is a process that

moves individuals from a monolithic perspective to more critical and divergent thinking. They assert that cultural literacy is essential as it fosters an awareness of learners and parents.

Skutnubb-Kangas *et.al* (2009) contend that the most inviolable principle of a good curriculum and teaching practice is that teachers need to build on the child's existing knowledge and move from the known to the unknown. Educational practices are based on a theory of constructivism. Constructivism is associated with Jean Piaget whose constructivist thought states that learners use their existing knowledge actively to construct new knowledge. Skutnubb-Kangas *et.al* (2009) depict constructivism as promoting a curriculum and teaching that help children construct knowledge based on their earlier knowledge and experience as well as experiences organised in the classroom. Wessels (2010) maintain that the constructivist ideas have contributed greatly to a more activity based education system. In multilingual classrooms, learners' existing knowledge is a crucial issue. This implies that language practices should be based on what learners already know in their home language.

Spolky and Hult (2010) view teaching in linguistically diverse settings as thinking linguistically. They depict thinking linguistically as teachers' understanding of the contributions that their students' sociocultural and educational backgrounds make in the classroom and how these students participate in lessons and activities. The study examines how this notion is understood and learned by teachers so that they can act linguistically in their classrooms. Thus language teaching in a linguistically diverse environment implies thinking and acting linguistically. This notion is grounded on powerful supposition that classroom practices are socio-cognitive and behavioural undertakings which is associated with Johnson (1999) and Lampert (2001).

Landsman and Lewis (2011) elaborate on the significance of learners' prior knowledge. Drawing on Stremmel (1997), they contend that for teachers to be effective in diverse settings they must understand that children construct their world within a sociocultural context. They further argue that pedagogy has to build and extend on knowledge. In addition, Spolsky and Hult (2010) point out that constructivist educational practice requires learners to develop an individual point of view about the world. This implies that construction of knowledge in language classes should build on linguistic knowledge that each learner brings to their classrooms. Educators are thus expected to bridge successfully or not classroom expectations and practices with those of learners' homes and communities.

Researchers such as Cummins (1986), Skutnabb-Kangas, Phillipson, Mohanty and Panda (2009) contend that thorough grounding in mother tongue yields better results in terms of multilingualism and school achievement. In South Africa this has been proved by the language policy from 1955 to 1976. The then policy offered optimal opportunity for first and second language development alongside cognitive and academic development for African learners throughout their primary school career. Skutnabb-Kangas *et.al* (2009) contend that the policy ironically and accidentally yielded fruitful results as it was intended to further discriminate Africans. However, the policy which advocates thorough grounding in mother tongue has been resented by South Africans as it is viewed as a reminiscence of apartheid. Rassool and Edwards (2010) attest to the notion of mother tongue grounding by citing the Ethiopian model of multilingual education. Ethiopia had adopted a model which provides eight years of education through mother tongue before transition to English which has proved to be successful.

Spolsky and Hult (2010) argue that in classrooms where learners and teachers do not share a common language for classroom instruction language can be correspondingly opaque. On the other hand, for learners who understand and control the language, it can be a relatively transparent window into the content, social processes, and relationships in the classrooms. They further argue that language mediates classrooms on a metaphorical continuum from transparent to translucent to opaque. They contend that for most learners however, language is translucent, that is, the content, social processes and relationships are more or less visible to both teacher and students depending on the content and on how participation in the tasks and activities is orchestrated.

Probyn (2001) maintains that the South African curriculum seeks to move teachers and learners away from a transmission style of teaching and rote-learning to a more learner-centred, constructivist approach and the development of critical thinking skills, through discussion, group work and cross-curricular project work. However, the curriculum does not address learners' diverse backgrounds upon which new knowledge is constructed. It also does not take into consideration the issue of the constraints that language places on classroom discourses. Drawing on Wright (1991), Probyn (2001) argues that learners are usually engaged in passive rather than active productive language skills in the classrooms.

The language curriculum is activity or task based. Drawing on Cummins (2000), Ferreira (2009) asserts that tasks can be either context-embedded or context-reduced. Context-embedded tasks enable learners to use clues outside language to help them make sense of the language. Examples of clues are facial expressions, tone of voice and discernible context. On the other hand, context-reduced tasks are abstract and have nothing beyond language. When learners are engaged on context-reduced tasks, they have to rely on cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) skills. Ferrera (2009) suggests that language should be context-embedded, even when CALP skills are being used. This implies that context could be used as a form of scaffolding in language teaching.

Skutnubb-Kangas *et.al* (2009) also emphasise the importance of learners' background knowledge. They argue that textbooks and instruction which make no reference whatsoever to learners' local culture and traditions do not recognise constructivist ideas. They further argue that pedagogical approaches rarely consider diversity in children's languages and do not encourage a reflective approach to understand real issues in the classrooms in varied contexts.

Three interdependent language teaching approaches, namely, text-based approach, communicative and process, are recommended in the CAPS document. The main goal of the communicative approach is communicative competence. Communicative competence has the following dimensions: linguistic or grammatical competence; sociolinguistic competence; strategic competence and discourse competence. Byram *et.al* (2002) contend that in language teaching communicative competence takes into account social identities of interlocutors. They further argue that communicative competence emphasises that learners need to acquire not just grammatical competence but the knowledge of what is appropriate language. Language teaching in a multilingual environment merits integrating intercultural dimension. Byram, Gribkova and Starkey (2002) assert that language teaching with an intercultural dimension develops learners' intercultural competence, that is, their ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities, and their ability to interact with people as complex human beings with multiple identities. Therefore interaction in a diverse classroom should be an enriching experience for both teachers and learners.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

The chapter has given an overview about multilingual classrooms in South Africa. It discusses the impact of context, that is, multilingual classrooms, has on language teaching and learning. It also examines the position of the South African Department of Education on multilingual education. It looks into dominant trends followed by studies on multilingual education. It also discusses theories informing language teaching in multilingual contexts. Chapter 3 looks at research design and methodology.



## ***CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY***

### ***3.1 Introduction and overview***

The study explores language educators' experiences in linguistically diverse classrooms. The researcher believes that language educators are familiar with linguistically diverse contexts and they therefore can construct sophisticated knowledge about teaching in multilingual environment. As the study is essentially exploratory and descriptive in nature, it starts with questions and does not have a well-defined hypothesis. Knowledge was derived from retrospection and reflection on the terrain of language educators' experiences. Theory was gradually and inductively developed based on or grounded in the collected data.

This chapter describes the study's research methodology and includes aims; rationale for research approach employed in the study; research design; research methods and justification; data collection procedure (sample and methods); data processing and analysis; ethical considerations; ensuring trustworthiness; and potential limitations.

### ***3.2 Aims***

The choice of methodology has been informed by the aims of the study. The study is aimed at interpretive understanding of teaching experiences of language educators. It explores teaching experiences of language educators in multilingual classrooms in selected schools in KwaZulu-Natal. It focuses on lived experiences of language educators as they encounter evolving linguistic realities. The purpose is to create an account of the way these language educators construct their identities in relation to their milieu as well as social and professional aspirations. Borg (2003) contends that teacher cognitions and practices are mutually informing, with contextual factors playing an important role in determining the extent to which teachers are able to implement instruction congruent with their cognitions.

The study purports to explore role redefinitions by language educators as they experience evolving linguistic landscapes in their schools. As a researcher, I deem it necessary that language educators, as key role players in the education system, reconstruct and redefine their roles in the transforming linguistic dispensation. The study focuses on how multilingual contexts impact on language educators' practices. It intends to examine language pedagogy that language teachers use in multilingual contexts.

The kind of collected data is contextual and perceptual information. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) depict contextual information as the context within which the participants work. In case of this study, context refers to multilingual classrooms. English is taught as a home and first additional language in these multilingual classrooms. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) describe perceptual information as participants' perceptions related to the particular subject of inquiry. They further argue that perceptual information uncover participants' descriptions of their experiences related to such things as how experiences influence the decisions they make.

### ***3.3 The rationale for using qualitative research methodology***

The study is qualitative in nature. Jones (2004) depicts qualitative approach to research as an attempt at interfacing with linguistic accounts of the real. Language educators will be interpreting the reality of multilingual classrooms. The choice of qualitative approach is influenced by the nature of the context and phenomenon that are being studied. Cohen *et.al* (2011) identify, among others, fluid and changing situations and evolving events and behaviour which are richly affected by context as characteristic features of the qualitative approach. The context of the study is the changing linguistic landscape in classrooms. de Marais and Lapan (2004) assert that historically, qualitative researchers have assigned value to context and typically study their subjects in their own settings. They further argue that qualitative researchers understand that actions are meaningful as embedded in context. Oliver (2008) argues that as teachers are familiar with so many different facets of the setting, they can often develop interesting lines of research based upon their sophisticated knowledge of the field. Therefore qualitative methodology is deemed appropriate for studying language educators in multilingual classrooms.

The study is premised on interpretive paradigm. Cohen *et.al* (2011) maintain that the central endeavour in the context of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience. Language teachers' experiences were constructed by language teachers themselves. The study explored role redefinitions by language educators as they experience evolving linguistic landscapes in their schools. Cohen *et.al* (2011) maintain that an interpretive paradigm rests on a subjectivist, interactionist and socially constructed ontology. They further assert that interpretive perspective is underpinned by an epistemology that

recognizes multiple realities and the importance of understanding a situation through the eyes of the participants.

The study is most suited for a case study design. Berg (2004) depicts a case study as an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon bounded by time or place. Merian (2009) elaborates on the notion of a qualitative case study by asserting that a case study design is used to gain an in-depth understanding and interpretation of an educational phenomenon. He adds that the interest is in context and insights gleaned from case studies can directly influence policy and practice. The study fits well with these descriptions of case study design because it endeavours to understand language teaching in a multilingual context which could affect schools language policy and classroom practices.

### **3.4 Research design**

Before embarking on the actual collection of data, the researcher reviewed literature related to the study. Following the proposal defence, the researcher acquired permission to conduct research in schools from the Head of Department of KwaZulu Natal Department of Basic Education.

After obtaining ethical clearance certificate, schools were visited by the researcher. Letters requesting permission to conduct research were given to the principals of target schools. The researcher met potential participants and explained the purpose for the study. Voluntary participants were given letters of informed consent which are attached as appendices. Participants were requested to write narratives about their teaching experiences which were collected after six weeks. Narratives were analysed and follow-up interviews were conducted with participants.

Data was critically analysed and synthesised by the researcher. Themes were generated from the data.

### **3.5 Data collection procedure**

#### **3.5.1 Research sample**

The interpretative nature of the study warrants non-probability sampling. As this is a small scale research, the intention is not to generalise. Sampling is purposive. Cohen *et.al* (2011) contend that purposive sampling is used in order to access people who have in-depth knowledge about particular issues by virtue of expertise or experience. The selected teachers

have in-depth knowledge based on their professional roles and experience in teaching in multilingual classrooms. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) assert that the logic of purposive sample lies in selecting information-rich cases, with the objective of yielding insight and understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Cohen *et.al* (2011) elaborate on the notion by stating that purposive sampling puts emphasis on the uniqueness of the phenomenon, group or individuals in question who only represent themselves and nothing or nobody else. They further argue that the purpose is not to generalise but to present unique cases that have their intrinsic value. Oliver (2008) states that, in terms of a purposive sample, a researcher identifies certain respondents as being potentially able to provide significant data on the research subject. As a researcher I deem purposive sampling is appropriate because the study deals with a specific site, that is, multilingual classrooms. The sampling strategy is criterion-based. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) maintain that criterion sampling is effective when all individuals studied represent people who have experienced the same phenomenon. All the selected participants are teachers of English who teach in multilingual contexts and are thus suitable candidates.

The sources of data are three language teachers who teach at high schools. The selection of these language teachers was informed by the nature of the study. As the study is qualitative, the group in question only represent themselves. Qualitative research is inherently ungeneralisable. The study seeks to explore the particular group under study, not to generalise. Selection of the participants was not based on the number of the participants but on in-depth and more detailed data that participants provided. Participation was voluntary. Informed consent was obtained from the participants, principals of the selected institutions and the Head of KwaZulu-Natal Department of Basic Education.

Schools were selected because they serve multilingual communities. The researcher considered context as a determinant of participant selection. Schools in urban areas were selected for ecological validity. Cohen *et al* (2011) depict ecological validity as fidelity to the special features of the context in which the study is located. They further argue that ecological validity concerns the extent to which characteristics of one situation or behaviour observed in one setting can be transferred or generalised to another situation. The situation under investigation is multilingual classrooms. The selected schools are situated in multilingual communities and thus form a research site for the proposed study. The sample is composed of teachers who teach English as a home and first additional language in urban

schools largely populated by learners who speak English, Afrikaans and African languages as their mother tongues.

### **3.5.2 Research methods**

Data collection procedures are influenced by interpretive epistemology. Oliver (2008) states that interpretive epistemology treats knowledge as created and negotiated between human beings. Narratives were used as the main instrument to collect data from language educators who teach in multilingual schools. Bruner (1986) and de Marais and Lapan (2004) contend that narrative enquiry changes the epistemological question from “How do we come to know the truth?” to “How do we come to endow experience with meaning?” Language educators had reflected on and conceptualised their teaching experiences in multilingual contexts. They related their experiences by writing narratives which were analysed by the researcher. de Marais and Lapan (2004) depict a narrative approach as both a process and a product in that it is a means by which a researcher gathers data and the discourse or form of the data gathered. De Vos *et.al* (2011) contend that a narrative approach to data collection is based on the assumption that the life world of a person can best be understood from his or her own account and perspective. They further argue that a narrative gives a detailed picture of an individual’s life which becomes the product of the research. The study examines the voices of language educators teaching in diverse linguistic landscape. De Vos *et.al* (2011) elaborate that a narrative is a knowledge generating method which allows experience to unfold in a temporal way and also allows dynamics to reveal themselves in actions and relationships.

Cohen *et.al* (2011) argue that narratives can give added dimension of realism, authenticity, humanity, personality, emotions, views and values in a situation. Using narratives to explore language educators’ experiences has reflected real and authentic issues that prevail in multilingual classrooms. Participants reflected on their views and values in multilingual situations. Drawing on Kerby (1991), de Marais and Lapan (2004) depict narratives as a primary embodiment of our understanding of the world, of experience and ultimately of ourselves. They further elaborate that storied texts prompt our reflections, connect us with our past and present and assist us to envision our future. Narratives allow participants to speak for themselves thus decreasing the researchers’ subjectivity. Narratives are uniquely suited for expressing lived experiences as contextual and meaningful. De Marais and Lapan (2004) contend that narratives provide research participants a natural and unselfconscious way to order their experiences.

Unstructured interviews were used as a secondary method of data collection. After interpreting the data generated from narratives, the researcher probed further into responses by participants. The interviews were based on the narratives and used as an elaboration on narratives. They were used to determine participants' reactions to initial findings and allow meaningful negotiations. The interviews were intended to make events recounted and described experiences more substantial and real. De Vos (2011) *et.al* maintain that at the root of unstructured interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. The researcher used them to negotiate meaning of the data collected from narratives with participants.

A set of predetermined main questions based on narratives was prepared in advance and given to participants to read. Rubin (1995) identifies three types of questions that an unstructured interview entails, namely, main questions, probe and follow-up questions. The main questions guide the conversation, probe seeks clarification, examples and evidence and follow-up questions pursue implications to the main questions. These questions were open-ended as they were intended to allow participants to express their experiences and feelings about teaching language in multilingual contexts.

Unstructured interviews were used as data generation instrument instead of a data collection strategy. They gave participants a voice in the interpretation of data thus helping the researcher to avoid subjectivity. De Vos *et.al* (2011) suggest that the researcher should be engaged in order to avoid subjectivity. They depict engagement as willingness (on the part of the researcher) to understand the participant's response to a question in the wider context of the interview as a whole. Schlebusch and Thobedi (2004) maintain that an interview is intended to allow the researcher to establish quality control for valid data. The researcher is aware that consistency is essential in this regard.

Interviews were also used for triangulation purposes. Cohen *et al* (2011) depict triangulation as using two or more data collection methods in order to explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) define triangulation as a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning and obtain in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study. The type of triangulation which is applicable in the study is methodological triangulation. Cohen *et.al*

(2011) depict methodological triangulation as the use of more than one method in pursuit of a given objective.

In addition, these unstructured interviews served as self-reflections regarding the interpretations of narratives and possible extensions of narrative meanings. Jones (2004) asserts that interviews uncover the possibilities of meanings behind thus illuminating the social contexts. The interviews enabled the researcher to make note of non-verbal language, where necessary, during the interviews thus complementing the information generated from the narratives.

### **3.6 Data processing and analysis**

Language teachers, who were willing to participate in the research, were requested to write narratives about their teaching experiences in multilingual classrooms after the inception of the language-in-education policy in South Africa. The language-in-education policy is a transformative measure which seeks to redress language inequity in South Africa by advocating promotion of multilingualism at classroom level. Data in the form of storied texts was collected from each participant. Participants' narrative accounts were analysed inductively. De Vos *et.al* (2011) maintain that qualitative data analysis is a process of inductive reasoning. Schlebusch and Thobedi (2004) elaborate on this notion by arguing that a narrative is based on the use of analytic induction. Jones (2004) accentuates this notion by adding that a narrative interpretive method culminates in research synthesis which encompasses a process of theory development and creation of a holistic interpretation. Theory will emerge from collected data. Common elements from storied texts were identified. They were categorised as individual and common themes. The researcher categorised and coded content and thematised concept building. Themes are threads that create a pattern with a plotlike structure of a narrative. As the study is premised on interpretivism, data analysis was a reflexive and reactive interaction between the researcher and the data that are already interpretations of language teachers' encounters. The researcher noted down own ideas, insights, comments and reflections on data in a memo.

Data analysis had been a cyclical procedure. Cresswell (2007) states that qualitative data analysis is an ongoing process involving continual reflection about the data, asking analytic questions, and writing memos throughout the study. There was initial collection of data through narratives. Storied texts were analysed. This was followed by reflection on the data.

After reflection initial data was taken to the participants for verification. Transcripts from each interview were handed over to the respective interviewees so that participants could discard any information they would prefer not to be included as data. Data collected from narratives were integrated and consolidated with data from interview transcripts. Jones (2004) asserts that a narrative uses a reflective approach to interpretation.

In order to verify findings, the researcher conducted unstructured one-to-one interviews, also known as in-depth interviews, with each participant. These interviews were conducted once data had been transcribed and were tape-recorded. De Vos *et.al* (2011) maintain that the purpose of unstructured one-to-one interview is to understand the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. These interviews were conducted to determine participants' reactions to initial findings.

In addition, participants had access to the analysed and synthesised data before the research was published. The researcher's interpretations and inferences of the narratives were confirmed through the unstructured one-to-one interviews. Data collected from the narratives and data generated and confirmed through interviews were synthesised as findings of the research.

The researcher allowed the participants to choose a venue in which they would be comfortable to be interviewed in order to make them feel at ease and enable them to feel some degree of control over the data collection process. De Vos *et.al* (2011) contend that in an interview, participants are perceived as experts of the subject and should therefore be allowed maximum opportunity to tell their story.

### ***3.7 Ethical considerations***

The researcher took responsibility to both inform and protect the participants. Marshall and Rossman (2011) maintain that ethical issues relating to protection of the participants are of vital concern. The study endeavoured to ensure protection of rights of participants.

Participation was voluntary. Informed consent was considered as priority. Written consent to voluntarily proceed with the study was received from each participant. The researcher safeguarded participants' rights and interests during the process of reporting the data. The researcher was committed to keeping the names and other significant identity characteristics of the sample institutions confidential. The researcher took cautionary measures to secure the storage of research records and data.



### ***3.8 Measures to ensure trustworthiness***

It is essential that the researcher guards against her own biases. The researcher sent the transcribed interviews or summaries of the conclusions to participants for review. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) identify credibility as a criterion for evaluating trustworthiness. They depict credibility as measuring whether the participants' perceptions match with the researcher's portrayal of them. To ensure credibility the researcher compared interpretations of the narratives through triangulation. Unstructured interviews were used to corroborate the researcher's initial findings. Using more than one data-gathering method can greatly strengthen the study's usefulness to others.

### ***3.9 Potential limitations***

Limitations may arise from issues of researcher bias and restricted sample size. In order to deal with those possible limitations the researcher withdrew mentally from the field and observed social interactions with the eye of a newcomer. The researcher also made provision for two extra participants, should any participant decide not to continue with the study.

It is likely for the teacher researcher to lose sight of significant events simply because they have become part of their routine life as a teacher.

### ***3.10 Conclusion***

The chapter is a detailed description of research design and methodology. It starts with an overview of the methodology. It provides the rationale for the choice of methodology. It explains the appropriateness of a narrative and unstructured one to one interview in exploring experiences. It discusses sampling. It highlights data processing and analysis. It includes ethical considerations and potential limitations of the methodology.

## ***CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH RESULTS***

### ***4.1 Introduction***

As the study is phenomenological, the researcher deems narratives and one to one unstructured interviews to be appropriate research instruments of the study. This chapter involves the analysis of data to ascertain findings. It is aimed at analysing the content of the narratives produced by language educators as well as the transcripts of the follow up unstructured interviews. It is an endeavour to make sense of what language teachers are saying about their teaching experiences in multilingual classrooms. It also attempts to integrate what different language teachers are saying about teaching language in multilingual contexts. The researcher will consider what is said as well as what is not said as data. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) maintain that qualitative research is interested in the language of the participants or texts. De Marrais and Lapan (2004) assert that connotative language best expresses the narrative. Narratives and interview transcripts are analysed in order to seek what emerges as significant and salient from them.

As the study examines experiences, as a researcher I have to understand the point of view of each participant. De Marrais and Lapan (2004) argue that endowing experience with meaning is grounded in a worldview of contextualism and built on a concern for human condition. The study involves a particular context, that is, multilingual classrooms, therefore a detailed description of the setting and individuals will be given. Data are analysed in relation to the key research questions. The process is based on induction, that is, narratives and interview transcripts are narrowed into important groups of key data. Data analysis involves a reduction process. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) assert that the reduction process includes questioning the data, identifying and noting common patterns in the data, creating codes and assigning coded pieces of information to the categories of one's conceptual framework. Patterns, issues and themes will be identified and interpreted in view of the conceptual framework.

In short this chapter entails description of the setting and participants, analytic approach, units of analysis, discussion of results and summary.

## **4.2 Description of the setting and participants**

Two multilingual schools, which are former model C schools, were selected as the appropriate setting of the study. Each school is described in terms of its language profile. These schools are labelled as A and B. Both institutions are high schools starting from grade 8 to 12. Three participants were drawn from the two schools, one from school A and two from school B. Participants' profiles are also described to contextualise the narratives. Pseudonyms are used for the purpose of interpretive clarity.

School A is an institution which was historically reserved for Whites only. It is located in the suburban area which was predominantly occupied by whites before 1994. The language of learning and teaching has been mainly English since its establishment. As the political dispensation changed in South Africa, learners from the neighbouring townships and peri-urban areas enrolled in the school hence the change of the linguistic profile of the school into multilingual. Other learners come from African countries across the borders of South Africa as the school is situated in a highly industrialised town. The school offers English as home language to all learners. Learners have to choose between Afrikaans and IsiZulu as their first additional language.

In school A there are five teachers who teach English as home language. Four of them speak English as their primary language. The grade 10 educator, who is the participant of the study, is from Southern Africa. She learnt English as home language but her home language is an African language. She has taught in several monoracial and multiracial schools. Her language teaching experience includes teaching learners who spoke many different languages as their first language such as Mandarin, English, IsiZulu, Swahili, Kalanga, Setswana, Hindi, Tonga, Bemba and Afrikaans. She will be called Lily for the sake of interpretive clarity.

School B is also a former model C school which was historically accessible to the Afrikaans speaking learners only. It has also experienced fundamental changes to its learner composition since South Africa became a democratic country. It is now a dual medium school. The language of learning and teaching is Afrikaans for learners whose home language is Afrikaans and English for learners who speak English and various African languages. Afrikaans speaking learners learn Afrikaans as home language while the rest of the school population learns English as home language. The majority of learners speak IsiZulu. In grade 8 and 9 the school offers Afrikaans and IsiZulu as first additional languages to learners who

speak English and African languages. In grade 10 learners who are native speakers of English and African languages have to choose either Afrikaans or IsiZulu as their additional language.

Participants from school B are grade 10 English teachers. One teacher, Jean, (pseudonym) teaches English first additional language to Afrikaans speaking learners. Cathy (pseudonym) teaches English as home language. Both started teaching language in monolingual institutions. They are now teaching in school B whose linguistic ecology has evolved after they had already joined the teaching fraternity. This means that they had taught in monolingual contexts until their institution underwent linguistic evolution.

### **4.3 Analytic approach**

The researcher has adopted an analytic approach which is a blending of editing and immersion approaches. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) depict an editing approach as an approach which is interpretive, flexible and with emergent codes. They further describe the immersion approach as most interpretive, emphasising researcher insight, intuition and creativity. As a researcher I had immersed myself in collected data by reading and rereading data in order to make sense of nuances, subtleties and contradictions.

All data was collected before the researcher engaged in data analysis and interpretation. The study portrays the innermost teaching experiences of language teachers as the product of the research. De Vos *et.al* (2011) argue that the approach to data analysis, that involves interpretation and retelling, not only focuses on analysing the subject matter but also emphasises the gathering and presentation of the data in such a way that the subjects speak for themselves. Data were checked and rechecked to see what was emergent from them and to identify ideas that need to be followed up. As a result unstructured one to one interviews were conducted with participants as a follow up.

The study adopts a way of organising the analysis by research question. Cohen *et.al* (2011) identify, among others, a method of organising the analysis by research questions. They contend that organising the analysis by research question enables patterns, relationships, comparisons and qualifications across data types to be explored conveniently and clearly. All

relevant data from narratives and interview transcripts are collated to provide a collective answer to research questions.

## **4.4 Units of analysis**

Data are in the form of written texts, namely narratives and interview transcripts. Therefore the researcher starts with content analysis. Cohen *et.al* (2011) maintain that content analysis involves coding, categorising (creating meaningful categories into analysis - words, phrases, sentences), comparing (categories and making links between them), and concluding - drawing theoretical conclusions from the text. Major themes and other significant issues which emerged from the data are discussed. Narratives and interview transcripts are broken down into phrases and sentences. This section discusses themes and other significant issues.

### **4.4.1 Themes**

The researcher derived themes from words, phrases, concepts and sentences that are frequently used by participants in narrating their experiences. Verbatim quotations are extracted from the narratives and interview transcript to crystallise or exemplify an issue. These verbatim quotations are interpreted in terms of their connotations. The following major themes emerged from the data:

- Challenges of teaching in multilingual classrooms
- Strategies for addressing challenges
- Dynamics of multilingual classrooms
- Role redefinition of a language educator

Words, phrases, metaphorical language with their connotations as well as statements used by the participants described succinctly the challenging situation they find themselves in as they engage in their professional routines in multilingual classrooms.

#### **4.4.1.1 Challenges of teaching in multilingual classrooms**

Given the unique character of multilingual classrooms, language teaching tends to be more challenging. The word “challenge” frequently features in all the narratives. It is evident in the narratives that these teachers view teaching language in a multilingual classroom as a real

challenge. Lily from school A depicts her language teaching experience as follows: *“An educator in South Africa has such a colossal task, to facilitate effective teaching and learning experiences, due to cultural diversity.”* This concern is a thread which permeates the three narratives.

The following challenges emerged from the participants’ reflections:

#### **4.4.1.1.1 Learners’ preference of English**

In terms of the South African language-in-education policy school governing bodies are endowed with the power to choose languages which should be offered to their children. The choice of languages is apparently an uninformed choice. The problem of wrong choice is best encapsulated by Lily from school A: *“English home language was meant for learners whose mother tongue is English; however, the reality was that the learners who opted to do English home language were second language speakers of English”*. Unfortunately learners and teachers in both schools are not part of the decision making when it comes to language preference. In school A all learners learn English Home language irrespective of their mother tongues. In school B only learners whose home language is Afrikaans learn English Additional language. The rest of the learners learn English Home language regardless of their mother tongues. Lily attested further: *“Many would have probably profited from learning English as an additional language”*. The metaphor of *“profited from learning”* connotes that learning English home language by speakers of other languages is an impediment to successful language teaching and learning.

The situation of uniformed preference of English is aggravated by learners’ perceptions of English. Lily’s reflection on her experience, in one of her previous schools, where English was offered both as home and additional languages portrays learners’ perception of English and how such perception influenced learners’ language preferences. She noted: *“Many of them saw themselves as “better” speakers of English than their peers who had to do English as a second language.”* Parents’ and learners’ preference of English shows the persistence of English hegemony which puts language teachers in a predicament. In this study, the preference of English by learners makes it inescapably more dominant than other languages. This is a political dimension in which language teachers are trapped.

#### **4.4.1.1.2 Different levels of language proficiency of individual learners in one class**

Individual learners doing the same grade are rated at different language proficiency levels. To illustrate poor language proficiency Lily cites an example of a Chinese learner, Fang, who was admitted to her English class: *“Fang had learnt many of the technical aspects, that is, the grammar of the language. She was able to name (in parrot-like fashion) the various parts of speech. She was barely able to speak English and she had difficulty in understanding everything that was spoken.”* The use of *“parrot-like fashion”* implies that rote learning may occur when language is a barrier to learning. Poor language proficiency hinders the development of communicative competence on the part of learners. This teacher could not assist the learner to be communicatively competent.

Teaching Fang was a challenge to Lily because her language proficiency level was not on par with the language proficiency level of her classmates. Lily further elucidates the impact of learners’ different language proficiency levels on language teaching and learning in the following quotation: *“The class could not be taught at her level as she could not understand what the class did.”* Cathy from school B expresses her concern as follows: *“Students are at different levels with their competences in English. Trying to reach each student at their level is a concern.”* She further adds: *“Other institutions using ‘Readers are leaders’ programme have found their learners to have an average of grade 6 learners.”* This proves that learners are at proficiency levels which are too low for their grades.

Proficiency levels in terms of different language skills of one learner also vary. Individual learners are rated at different proficiency levels with respect to speaking, reading and writing skills. Learners show incompetence in writing. Lily from school A comments: *“There were many whose spoken English was quite satisfactory, but whose written competence was quite the opposite.”* Lily emphasises this notion in the following quotation: *“Most learners who come to high school have a scholastic backlog in language writing and the high school educator has to rectify the problem if academic growth has to take place.”* This implies that conversational skills of most learners are at a higher level than writing skills.

Unbalanced language proficiency levels are also evident when learners are engaged in academic activities. Cathy’s statement epitomises this kind of language proficiency imbalance: *“Teachers of other subjects complain about learners’ conceptualisation of*

content. The great concern is that learners fail to understand instructions and questions in other subjects.” Jean adds: “Language is a barrier in other subjects as vocabulary is limited.” Lily also comments: “a lot of problems arise because of the use of English as a language of instruction. Now the educator has to teach the rudiments of the language and then also teach the language as a subject.”

Related to poor language proficiency levels of learners, is lowering of standards of English language which is evident in language classrooms. This is implied in the statement made by Cathy from school B: “Although learners can converse in English, they cannot differentiate between language usage and bastardising. This assertion connotes that speakers of other languages may unintentionally lower the standards of another language due to linguistic diversity as they are unable to differentiate between language usage and low standards of a language. She further illustrates the idea when she says: “Cellular phone language is a greater challenge.” This implies that learners use cellular phone language being unaware that that they are lowering the standard of English hence poor language proficiency is the result.

#### **4.4.1.1.3 Teaching literature**

All three participants view teaching literature in multilingual classrooms as a challenge. Cathy from school B epitomises the challenge that language teachers face when teaching literature in multilingual classrooms: “Literature is racially based and in a way promotes racism. When teaching literature one has to consider different religions to which learners belong. For example the way one says something could be interpreted as an insult by other cultural groups.” This implies that language teachers have to read more about other religions and cultures so that they can be able to handle religious and cultural issues inherent in literary works. Elaborating on racial element inherent in literary works she further adds: “Literature is prescribed. Certain cultures are not considered. Authors portray certain cultures through their works. Set works are open to suggestive ideas.” This assertion proves that when literary texts are selected for learners, cultural diversity of learners is not taken into consideration. For example Shakespearean works dominate English literature in high schools. Thus literature is not inclusive as it promotes the dominant culture and culminates in the marginalisation of other cultures. Shakespeare is an important canon but learners should be introduced to other canons as well.



Jean from school B describes her experience of teaching literature as follows: *“There is apathy towards learning literature. Learners do not take literature seriously.”* Lack of learners’ enthusiasm in literature lessons is possible if literature is remote to learners’ culture. The problem could be that, what learners learn in literature lessons is farfetched and could not be related to their real life experiences or culture.

Assessing literature is another form of challenge. In the words of Jean from school B: *“When phrasing question for literature tasks you should be careful of religion and cultural issues.”* Lily from school A explains what happens in multilingual classrooms during literature lessons: *“The presence of several learners from different cultural backgrounds in one classroom results in miscommunication amongst learners, conflicts due to different beliefs and sometimes isolation of minority groups.”* Elaborating on miscommunication instances she adds: *“For instance, in terms of African culture children have to look down when talking to adults to show respect but with other cultures they have to look straight in the eyes of the person they are talking to.”* Miscommunication is therefore possible when learners analyse the behaviour of a certain character in a literary text. They may misinterpret a character’s behaviour as unacceptable if it is contrary to their cultural expectations.

#### **4.4.1.1.4    *Unsystematic codeswitching***

All the participants pointed out that learners frequently switch codes during the teaching learning situation. Jean from school B relates her experience of learners’ codeswitching in the following quotation: *“Learners mix languages. They tend to switch to mother tongue especially when they are engaged in group activities. They discuss tasks in Afrikaans. Learners expect me to allow them to use Afrikaans during English lessons because they know that my home language is Afrikaans. We share the same experience with my colleague who teaches English home language to speakers of English and African languages. As his home language is Zulu, learners say, “Sir, you speak our language, so you understand us.”* Jean’s explanation shows that codeswitching is uncontrollable in multilingual classroom. It is not systematic. Learners do not understand why they are not allowed to mix languages. Despite the school policy which insists on the use of English only during English lessons, learners express themselves in the first language of a teacher.

During unstructured one to one interview, Lily, after being asked whether learners use their mother tongues during English lessons, made the following submission: *“They do use Zulu to*

*a minimum extent but for the sake of harmony we use one language.” Codeswitching is a problem to language teachers as they do not know how to control it. “Minimum extent” is not explicit as to what degree should codeswitching be allowed. This implies that teachers are uncertain about how to control codeswitching. They do not see any significance of codeswitching. Trying to control the situation, teachers, in Jean’s words, “insist on the application of the school language policy which states that learners have to use English only.” The following statement extracted from Lily’s narrative reflects language teachers’ predicament with regard to codeswitching: “The major challenge is what language should have dominance in learning teaching environment.”*

#### **4.4.1.1.5 Continual changing of language curriculum**

All participants voiced their confusion about continuous language curriculum changes which are effected by the Department of Basic Education. Jean expressed her confusion as follows: *“Another great challenge is continual changing of language curriculum. Mindsets are different. Curriculum documents, such as CAPS, do not offer a wide variety of information. They have some limitations and are prescriptive. It’s just documentation only - not hands on. Workshops are not informative. Facilitators simply read documents aloud for teachers who attend the workshop”* This assertion proves that teachers barely use Departmental documents as they experience a problem in unpacking them. This is also an indication that there is no provision made by the Department of Education to help them implement multilingual education. The policy documents do not spell out appropriate guidelines that will help teachers to facilitate language lessons effectively in multilingual classrooms. There is a lack of effective in-service education programmes on multilingual education. Teachers cannot cope with unstable language policies. Lily also expressed her concern about inadequate information with regard to multilingualism in the following quotations: *“In terms of the policy you have to practise inclusive education. Yes, it is there in the policy, but there should be elaboration on how to implement it. There are no clear guidelines.”*

Related to insufficient information about multilingual education is the lack of support which is the next topic for discussion.

#### **4.4.1.1.6 Lack of support**

All narratives do not indicate any measures that are taken to support learners and teachers who find themselves in multilingual classrooms. It is ironical that institutions admit learners

who speak different languages but do not make provision for the promotion of such languages. Institutions admit learners who are from different cultural backgrounds in order to be politically correct. The following quotation, extracted from Lily's narrative, reflects a language educators' view about school language policies: *"The inclusion of various languages in the learning teaching environment should not be a mere tokenism but a genuine process that envisages bringing an enriched learning experience."* This implies that schools admit learners from multicultural backgrounds for the sake of conformity to the rules of the country.

All the participants indicated that their schools' language policies state that learners should express themselves in English only. The school policies do not include anything about multilingual education. Lily depicts lack of support as follows: *"Although the school accepted learners like Fang (Chinese learner), there was no special provision to aid her language education. Her progress primarily depended on her eagerness to learn and the willingness of the educator to give extra help."* Teachers are also not given appropriate support. Jean states: *"There is lack of training."*

In the absence of departmental and institutional support language educators have designed some strategies in order to cope with teaching in multilingual classrooms. These strategies are discussed below.

#### **4.4.1.2 Strategies for addressing challenges**

The data do not reflect strategies which are specifically devised for multilingual contexts. Cathy comments: *"When they are in Grade, they learnt what you teach them."* This implies that teachers are still reliant on the transmission approach and expect learners to be receptive.

There are only few strategies that teachers employ in order to assist their language learners. Lily's teaching experience has taught her *"to research almost each and every lesson, the reason being that, what can be viewed by people as a minor aspect can disturb the whole teaching learning experience."* This implies that this particular language teacher reflects on all lessons in order to ascertain whether teaching and learning was effective or not. She, in a way, conducts classroom research in order to come to terms with the intricacies of multilingual classrooms.

Another strategy evident in Lily's narrative is offering additional classes for struggling learners. Additional classes are given to improve learners' language proficiency. Lily comments: *"Fang's progress depended on the willingness of the educator to give extra help. The educator had to constantly encourage her to talk and reinforce the natural talent she seemed to have for subjects like Mathematics."*

Both Cathy and Jean from school B heavily rely on technology to make their language lessons effective. Jean says: *"As a language teacher you have to be technologically minded. I have found smart boards to be effective tools in language teaching."* Smart boards are colourful learner teacher support materials which enhance collaborative learning. Trying to teach each learner at their language proficiency level, teachers from school B have proposed that the school purchase the *"Readers are leaders"* programme. Cathy highlights the significance of the programme thus: *"Each learner is calibrated and reads at their level and can improve their reading to expected level. I am hoping to see that their reading translates into improved writing."*

#### **4.4.1.3 Dynamics of multilingual classrooms**

It emerged in the data that language teachers and learners behave and react to one another in an interesting manner in multilingual classrooms. Jean explains how her learners and her colleague's class interact with them in the following extract: *"Learners treat language teachers differently. They express themselves in the first language of a language teacher."* It shows that learners have certain expectations about teachers who share the same first language with them. Jean gives instances of multilingual classroom dynamics in the following quotation: *"Classroom dynamics are manifested when they (learners) discuss gender and culture related topics. They sometimes discuss oral tasks in Afrikaans."*

Lily also attested to multilingual classroom dynamics during the interview: *"We condone the use of other languages...Of course, the knowledge from their background is acknowledged."* This implies that language learners bring knowledge from their environment which they share with their classmates and teachers. It is clear that language teachers are conscious of multilingual classroom dynamics, but how they utilise these dynamics for the benefit of their language learners is an issue that requires attention.

Teaching in multilingual classrooms has made language teachers reflect on their professional roles which are redefined on the following page:

#### **4.4.1.4      *Role redefinition of a language teacher***

Role redefinition of a language educator emerged as an incidental result. This was not a response to any of the key research questions. Participants reflect on their role in the changed linguistic landscapes. Lily depicts her language teaching experience as a “*journey*” in her introductory statement of her narrative: “*My journey as a language educator started a long time ago.*” She uses a metaphor of a “*journey*” to show that she moved from one point to another. She further adds: “*Being a language educator in multilingual classrooms has brought to me many eye opening experiences.*” She redefines her role thus: “*Learners in multilingual classrooms come from different multicultural backgrounds and the educator has to reconcile the differences amongst the learners in order to achieve academic goals of the curriculum.*” This connotes that a language educator has to learn from what learners bring with them to their language classrooms. There should be co-existence and recognition of different languages in multilingual classrooms.

Looking at some of the possible challenges in multilingual classrooms, Lily explains how a language educator could hinder language learning in a multilingual context in this quotation: “*Though a difficult point to address, the educator can also be a challenge to the teaching-learning process in multilingual classrooms. The educator has his or her cultural background that will obviously impact on the teaching-learning situation, either positively or negatively. The educator has to rise above this complex scenario and obtain defined neutrality that will enable her to embrace diversity.*” Rising above the situation implies that the educator should not be biased and promote one language at the expense of other languages. Embracing diversity connotes that being tolerant of different cultures expressed through languages is part of a language teacher’s responsibility.

Lily suggests that language teachers have to revisit their approaches to language teaching. She depicts an approach that is relevant to teaching language in multilingual contexts in the following statement: “*The educator has to reconstruct the whole learning process and develop an inclusive approach to every aspect of language learning.*” Revisiting teaching approaches implies that language teaching approaches to which teachers were exposed in teacher education institutions are outdated. All the participants were introduced to monolingual approaches as they were prepared to teach in monolingual institutions.

## 4.5 Discussion of results

Collected narratives and interview transcripts reflect language educators' perceptions of multilingual classrooms. The main thrust of the study is the interplay between departmental language-in-education policy with regard to multilingual education and the micro-level practices in schools and multilingual classrooms. The language educators paint a vivid picture about the realities of multilingual classrooms. What emerges from the study is that classroom ecologies are influenced and shaped not only by the South African language-in-education policy and its underlying ideologies but educators' perceptions of multilingual classrooms as well as their own classroom policies. The painted picture of multilingual classrooms reflects some limitations which will also be discussed.

The collected data portrays bilingualism or multilingualism as a challenge. Participants consider learners' codeswitching as a problem. Lily writes: *"The problem is that other learners won't be able to understand."* Jean does not allow her learners to switch to Afrikaans. *"We insist on the application of the school language policy..."* Bi/multilingual learners' facilities across languages are viewed as a problem rather than a resource. Furthermore, there is a lack of support for learners with difficulties. It becomes difficult to use codeswitching as a strategy to support struggling learners as the teachers do not speak the learners' languages. Language teachers do not attach any significance to translanguaging practices. Moodley (2007) argues that the use of codeswitching by learners serves as a means of fulfilling both social and pedagogical functions.

It is also evident from the data that language educators view bilingual or multilingual learners from a monolingual perspective. Mitchell (2012) argues that treating monolingual learners as monolingual promotes a deficit perspective of multilingual learners and makes it difficult for teachers to realise the linguistic skills and strengths multilingual learners have. Setati and Adler (2001) contend that the monolingual view always compares the linguistic ability of bi/multilinguals with that of monolinguals of the languages concerned, English in case of this study. In school A all learners learn English as a home language irrespective of their mother tongue. Speakers of other languages find themselves in the same classrooms as mother tongue speakers of English. In school B, speakers of other language, with the exception of mother tongue speakers of Afrikaans, learn English as a home language. Their linguistic competences are compared with their classmates who are native speakers of English.

Analysis also takes an ecological approach which is based on Hornberger's continua of biliteracy framework. Drawing on van Lier (2000), Hornberger (2002) contends that an ecological approach to language learning emphasises emergent language development in terms of interaction with the environment. Mühlhäusler (2000) accentuates this notion by arguing that the ecological metaphor illuminates the functional inter-relationships between the inhabitants of the ecology. The interest of the study is in the co-existence of languages in multilingual classrooms practices and the degree to which such practices represent a healthy ecology of equity and development for all languages and their speakers. In school A there is overt English hegemony and other languages are not valued. English is learnt at the home language level and is used as the language of learning of teaching for all learners. In school B Afrikaans speaking learners are catered for academically because they learn other subjects through the medium of Afrikaans. African language speakers do not enjoy the same treatment as Afrikaans speaking because they learn English as home language and it is also used as their medium of instruction. Data reveal that language teachers find themselves in a dilemma, in that they have to enable access to English alongside the valuing of multilingualism. Setati and Adler (2001) argue that the demands of teachers in multilingual contexts are that they have to embrace an additive model of bi/multilingual learning and at the same time, deal with the dominance of English. Therefore language practices in both schools do not represent a healthy ecology of equity and development for African languages and their speakers.

An issue of unbalanced language proficiency levels emerged from the data. Hornberger (2002) notes that in educational practice regarding biliteracy, there tends to be an implicit privileging of one end of the continua over the other, such that the end of each continuum is associated with more power than the other, for example written development over oral development. In case of this study oral proficiency of learners is well developed in comparison to written development. It shows that learners master Jim Cummin's basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) but fail to master cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). Teachers of other subjects complained that learners fail to understand instructions and questions which is evident in written assessment. The teachers' complaint indicates that they experience difficulty in diagnosing learning difficulties of multilingual learners. O'Connor and Geiger (2009) contend that educators need to know language-based academic problems.

Another evident issue is a misunderstanding resulting from cultural differences between teachers and learners. Such a misunderstanding hampers inclusivity in multilingual classrooms. Language teachers in the study experience a difficulty in accommodating the needs of all learners. Thus language planning and teaching, in the studied schools, do not take the ecosystem in which the schools are intervening into consideration. For instance, not a single participant has ever modified their teaching strategies according to learners' needs. The studied participants do not learn from their experiences in multilingual classrooms.

It is also evident that language teachers' attitudes towards learners who do not speak the standard school language affect the learning situation. Learners are labelled as incompetent in cognitive academic proficiency. They are also blamed for "bastardising" English. Moodley (2007) proposes that teachers should adopt attitudes of inclusivity which implies drawing on learners' own cultural values and home languages.

Another issue that is a bone of contention in multilingual classrooms is teaching literature. The study reveals that there is no significant curricular attention paid to minority and contextualised language texts. Hornberger and Link (2012) depict minority texts as those written by minoritised authors, written from minoritised perspectives. They also describe contextualised whole language texts as those read and written in the context of biliteracy events, interactions, practices, and activities of biliterate learners' everyday lives. In the schools studied, literary texts are prescribed and selection is not based on the context.

The collected data show a mismatch between language educators' expectations and the realities of multilingual classrooms. Cathy from school B remarks: *"Although language learners can converse in English, they cannot differentiate between language usage and bastardising. Cellular phone language is a greater challenge than cultural diversity."* When asked about how she deals with language "bastardising", she answered as follows: *"I insist that they familiarise themselves with language usage."* This proves that teachers have certain expectations. It also proves that learners' repertoires are not recognised thus constraining the possibility of constructivism, that is, teachers' and learners' collaboration in creating meaning. Gibbons (1998) contends that children's current understanding of the curriculum topic, and their use of familiar everyday language to express these understandings, should be seen as the basis for the development of the unfamiliar registers of the school. She further argues that teacher-student interactions arising out of such understandings serve as a shared



contextual basis from which these new meanings can be jointly constructed. Apparently, language educators still use the transmission approach to language teaching.

On the other hand, learners have their own expectations about language practices. In all the narratives it emerged that learners switch from English to their respective mother tongues even though they are aware of the language policy of their schools. Learners' expectations are apparently grounded on the experiences of language educators who have never been empowered to deal with diversity. Teachers disapprove of codeswitching. Setati and Adler (2001) depict codeswitching as a practice that enables learners to harness their language. Teachers' disapproval implies that they do not view multilingualism as a resource. Constant codeswitching by learners implies that they need a lot of scaffolding. It also implies that they lack language skills and required background to deal with curriculum content. Moodley (2007) asserts that codeswitching is a natural phenomenon that occurs in the speech patterns of those who have the linguistic repertoire to do so. This notion connotes that it is impossible for teachers to rule against codeswitching in multilingual classrooms. In the study learners do not adhere to the school policies which stipulate that English only has to be used as the language of communication.

Additive multilingualism, which is enshrined in the language-in-education policy, is not promoted in both schools. Hornberger (2005) argues that multilinguals' learning is maximised when learners are allowed and enabled to draw from across all their existing language skills. Setati and Adler (2001) contend that problems arise when learners' main languages are not drawn upon. Drawing on Arthur's study (1994), they argue that the absence of appropriate use of learners' main languages subtracted an opportunity for exploratory talk, and thus meaning-making.

On one hand teachers need to be conscientised about the values of translanguaging practices. On the other hand, learners must be alerted about when and why they can switch codes. Codeswitching must be used systematically as a learning and teaching technique for positive purposes. For instance, learners must not exploit codeswitching for exclusion purposes. Data reveal that learners switch codes when they are engaged in group activities. The banning of codeswitching in the studied classrooms subtracts opportunity for exploratory talk.

Another emergent issue was lack of support on the part of educators as well as learners. The educators are thrown into the deep end of multilingual classrooms and have to find their way

out. They have no say in language related decision making. For example, language preference is decided by the school management and school governing bodies. The following comment made by Lily, when she was reflecting about her experience in a school which offered English at home and additional levels, shows that learners' choice of the language was not an informed choice and was a kind of misconception: *"There were those who did ESL because it was "easier". Easier didn't naturally convert to excellence, but some were at a better place than those who really struggled."* In all the three schools, schools decide on the level at which learners have to learn English. Teachers do not receive professional support. Departmental workshops are not fruitful and this leaves language educators no option but to use whatever is available to them. There are no bi/multilingual teacher education programmes aimed at capacity building empowerment of in-service teachers who teach in multilingual contexts. Information on multilingual education is cascaded from subject advisors to subject teachers. cursory academic and professional attention is given to how additive multilingualism is to be practised.

Although much of the data answered the key questions of the research, some narratives have some limitations. Most data reflected challenges faced by language teachers in multilingual classrooms. This shows that much needs to be done with regard to language education in order to alleviate the situation in which language teachers find themselves. Information regarding strategies that language educators employ when dealing with multilingual contexts is scanty. Language teachers do not have specific strategies that are intended for multilingual classrooms. They use their discretion to deal with realities of multilingual classrooms. They are disempowered to tackle educational issues and lack teaching skills which are appropriate to multilingual contexts. Language teachers' instructional practices or classroom policies are thus not linguistically responsive.

Little was said about dynamics of multilingual classrooms. Little data about classrooms dynamics indicate that language teachers do not attach any significance to dynamics of multilingual classrooms. They lose sight of intriguing situations that prevail in multilingual classrooms. They also cannot make sense of the intricacies of multilingual classrooms.

Limitations could also be attributed to a narrative as the method of investigation. Probably, focus group interview would have helped to probe more data on strategies to address challenges as well as dynamics of multilingual classrooms. Language teachers could have

shared their experiences. However, due to time constraints it was impossible for a researcher to bring participants together and conduct focus group interviews.

## **4.6 Summary**

The study portrayed a picture about the interactions between a language, that is, English and its environment. In case of this study the environment refers to learners as well as the wider linguistic environment. What can be inferred from the study is that the theme of language ecology permeates the ideas expressed by all the participants. Examining what participants said about school language policies, it shows that schools do not take linguistic ecologies into consideration when policies are made. Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) note that efforts to plan language without an awareness of the eco-system in which one is intervening can be dangerous to the health of the community.

The South African language-in-education policy in a way considers the linguistic environment as it states that schools have to promote additive multilingualism. However, that statement is a mere lip service as teachers are not prepared on how to promote multilingualism. At school level language planning has ripple effects as the schools language policies are discretionary. For instance, in this study, in both school learners whose home languages are African languages learn English as the home language. There is significant contradiction between the language-in-education policy statements on multilingualism and the school language policy. On one hand, the language in-education policy advocate multilingualism while on the other hand, school language policies promote unilingualism.

Language ecology also appears when planning everyday lessons. In this study, teachers voiced literature teaching as one of their challenges. Mühlhäuser (2000) contends that ecological planning needs to take into account the interrelationships between language and the wider cultural and political environment. This argument is relevant to planning literature lessons. Creese and Martin (2003) assert that classroom ecologies are shaped by the teachers' own classroom policies with regard to language and culture.

Data clearly portray what Blommaert (2010) refers to as language-in-motion. However, learners' communicative repertoires are not recognised in the studied multilingual classrooms. As translanguaging practices of multilingual learners are not permitted in any of

the schools, Jean Piaget's theory of constructivism is not practised. Garcia (2009) argues that the notion of translanguaging focuses on how multilinguals intermingle linguistic features that have been administratively or linguistically assigned to a particular language or language existing knowledge, provide the means to facilitate the construction of new knowledge. It is thus clear that teachers still employ transmission approach and expect learners to passively receive knowledge from the environment. Constructivism resonates with Cummin's (1996) notion of tapping into learners' pre-existing knowledge and the affective and cognitive benefits that ensue in a learning situation. It is thus clear teachers still employ a transmission approach and expect learners to passively receive knowledge from the environment. Thus teaching practices in this study do not enhance constructivism.

The study also reflects that the principle of inclusivity is not adhered to in multilingual classrooms. Ferreira (2009) argues that learners' home languages, which are carriers of their culture and identities, should be recognised to address inclusivity. The studied schools language policies do not create and nurture inclusive environments.

Examining strategies employed by teachers, it became evident that there are linguistic infrastructural limitations. For instance, no scaffolding was given to struggling learners. One may conclude that the greater the interest a learner has in a language, the more effort he/she will expend on it. The statement extracted from Lily's narrative attests to the lack of learners' support: *"Her (learner's) support primarily depended on her eagerness to learn and the willingness of the educator to give her extra help."* Language educators need to be reskilled and empowered in order to be able to deal with multilingual contexts.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

In light of the above discussion, one may conclude that the studied multilingual classrooms are not ready for multilingual education. Although the schools linguistic profiles have changed, nothing has been done by the schools to cater for multilingual learners. School language policies hinder translanguaging practices such as code switching. The studied schools are still influenced by the old perception that the learner must be ready for the school as they have not devised solutions to address the needs of multilingual learners. There is no infrastructural support of the whole school for enhancing multilingual education. Heugh *et.al* (1995) contend that the minimum conditions for the establishment of additive

multilingualism is that there is a genuine commitment to change and that teachers and the whole school community are able to recognise the value of the diversity of experience and knowledge which learners bring into the classrooms. The studied schools therefore do not meet the minimum requirements of promoting additive multilingualism. Multilingual approach to teaching is delayed in the classrooms. The delay does not only affect learners' performance in languages but also in other subjects as this is highlighted in the study.

Learners fend for themselves in multilingual classrooms as their repertoires are not recognised. English hegemony affects the promotion of multilingualism. Most learners are interested in English. The greater interest a learner has in a language, the more effort he or she will expend on it. In this study learners' progress depends on their eagerness to learn as there are no support structures in place. The Department of Education and the whole school community need to work in collaboration in order to inculcate multilingual education.

As a researcher I had thought that prolonged experiences of language educators could have yielded better understanding of teaching in a multilingual context. I also regard practice to be reflective as a means to understand and recognise teaching relevant to multilingual classrooms. The results reflect that language teachers do not learn from their experiences instead they are bewildered and no specific context responsive approaches are adopted to address the needs of multilingual learners.

## ***CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS***

### ***5.1 Introduction***

The purpose of the study was to explore with a sample of language educators their teaching experiences in multilingual classrooms. The conclusions from this study are based on the research questions and findings and therefore address the themes that emerged from the data: the key challenges experienced by language educators in multilingual classrooms; strategies used by language educators to address the challenges and dynamics that prevail in multilingual classrooms. The theme of language educators' redefinition of their roles in multilingual contexts is not an answer to any of the key research questions but an additional theme that emerged from the collected data. The conclusions are followed by the researcher's recommendations and a summary which is a final reflection on this study.

### ***5.2 Conclusions***

All the participants regarded teaching in a multilingual context as a challenge. One of their concerns was learners' preference for English. A conclusion to be drawn from this finding is that there is a tacit English hegemony although classroom linguistic landscapes have changed. School management (through school language policies) influences language choice by learners. These language policies do not consider linguistic diversities that characterise classrooms. A related conclusion is that learners make uniformed choices about language and language educators have no say in learners' language choice.

Another challenge that emerged from the data was the different levels of proficiency of individual learners in one class. Language teachers expressed their concerns about learners who lack different kinds of language proficiency, which is usually manifested in written assessment activities. This problem does not only affect language learning but also affect learners' performance in other subjects. A conclusion to be drawn from this finding is that language learners with different language competences are grouped in one class, which becomes an impediment to successful language learning and teaching. Pitching learners at the same level becomes a problem for language teachers. Grouping of learners, which is a school management responsibility, may affect the learning and teaching situation in a negative manner.

Teaching literature was also identified as one of the challenges faced by language educators. Data showed that literary texts are fraught with sensitive cultural issues of which both

learners and educators should be mindful. English literature is substantially eurocentric hence, it is a challenge for learners from other cultural backgrounds to contextualise what they learn in English literature lessons. A conclusion to be drawn from this finding is that literary texts may promote linguisticism in multilingual classrooms, that is, they may promote superiority of English culture at the expense of other cultures. A related conclusion is that, language educators, when selecting texts and resources for their classrooms, should consider the multilingual contexts in which they teach and select teacher learner resources, which accommodate a variety of cultures.

Another challenge of multilingual classrooms is unsystematic and uncontrollable codeswitching, which takes place in multilingual classrooms. Language teachers regard codeswitching as a challenge although the South African language-in-education policy advocates additive multilingualism. A conclusion to be drawn from this is that, learners' communicative repertoire is not regarded as a resource. A related conclusion is that, in the absence of language teacher development programmes on language policy conceptualisation and implementation, teachers are uncertain about what to do with learners' communicative repertoires. Another related conclusion is that, teachers' disposition towards codeswitching is negative as they regard codeswitching as the violation of the school policy.

Language teachers also raised a concern about continual changing of the language curriculum. Language educators have to grapple with the ongoing language curricular changes that are effected by the Department of Education. A conclusion to be drawn is that curricular documents are not explicit about multilingual education. There are no clear guidelines on multilingual education.

Another key challenge was the lack of support on the part of learners as well as teachers. Institutions accept multilingual learners but on the contrary, the school language policies do not cater for multilingual education. It could be concluded that much needs to be done to help learners learn effectively in multilingual contexts. Schools need to transform the nature of teaching and learning in order to create suitable learning milieu for learners from diverse cultural backgrounds. Language educators need professional support in order to teach effectively in multilingual classrooms.

It is clear from the collected data that there are no teaching strategies that are specifically aimed at targeting multilingual learners. Language teachers rely on what they deem

appropriate for their learners. A conclusion to be drawn from this finding is that, teachers employ different strategies in order to cope in multilingual contexts. These strategies are determined by the availability of resources in the institutions. A related conclusion is that, teachers use their discretion and rely on their experience when dealing with multilingual classrooms.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

The recommendations that follow are based on the findings, analysis and conclusions of the study. They are for language practitioners, namely, language educators, school management, Department of Education language curriculum designers, language teachers' education programmes and further research. The researcher is aware that suggested changes cannot be effected overnight but proposes that the school population in its entirety be constantly made aware about the recognition of diversity.

#### **5.3.1 Recommendations for language educators and school management**

School management and language educators should revisit their school policies. School language policies should be informed by linguistic profiles of learners. Based on the problem of learners' preference of English, learners should be advised about language choice in the same manner in which they are guided in choosing other subjects. Schools should issue guidelines to help learners make an informed language choice. Parents, the whole school communities should be conscientised about academic implications of language choice.

The researcher recommends that school management teams fully involve language teachers in designing the school language policies. Language teachers should play a leading role in language policy making. Contextual realities should dictate the contents of institutional language policies. Schools should adopt an ecological approach to language planning. School language policies should be learner-centred. Busch (2010) depicts a learner-centred language policy as a policy which acknowledges and valorises the resources and aspirations that the learners, teachers and parents bring with them.

School Development Teams should prioritise language educators' in service development programmes for multilingual education. Language educators should be encouraged to engage



themselves in self-development professional programmes and read about new global developments in language education.

Language educators should recognise learners' communicative repertoires. They should accept diverse forms of expression. They should also regard multilingualism as a resource upon which learners could construct their new knowledge.

In addition, the schools have a responsibility of providing a linguistically-supportive environment for all learners which entails raising the status of the marginalised and minoritised languages. This could be done through team teaching, interpreting and bringing languages, other than those preferred by the schools' management, into the print of the classroom environment.

### ***5.3.2 Recommendations for the Department of Education and language curriculum designers***

Multilingual education merits full attention of the Department of Education. The Department of Education has to prioritise the promotion of additive multilingualism at school level. As the language curriculum has undergone many changes, language curriculum designers should simplify language-in-education policy and language Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements. It is also recommended that they elaborate on additive multilingualism which is enshrined in the South African language-in-education policy. They should develop an appropriate framework and implementation plan for multilingualism. Advocacy for multilingualism only, neither fulfils the needs of multilingual learners nor helps language educators to meet the demands of an evolving linguistic ecology. When designing language curriculum, designers should recognise context as an important factor in language practice. Setati and Adler (2001) contend that contextual diversity needs to be recognised in language-in-education policy, research and practice.

Language curriculum designers should work hand in glove in conducting intensive workshops that will enhance capacity building and empowerment of language educators' linguistic and pedagogical skills in multilingual contexts.

### ***5.3.3 Recommendations for language teachers' education programmes***

Language teachers' education programmes should be informed by classroom contexts. Monolingual approach to language teaching should be phased out. Language pedagogy should be ecologically and sociolinguistically informed and cultivate multilingual practices inclusive of learners' own local languages.

### ***5.3.4 Recommendations for further research***

The researcher recommends that further studies be conducted in order to develop a larger database of information and gain a more comprehensive understanding about teaching language in a diverse linguistic landscape in South Africa.

In view of the limitations of the study, a study of a large sample of language educators should be conducted to examine the extent to which such study could yield the same or similar findings.

The researcher also recommends a further longitudinal and ethnographic study which could explore the functional inter-relationships between the inhabitants of ecology, that is, the classroom, and the housekeeping that is needed in multilingual classrooms.

## ***5.4 Limitations***

One of the limitations of the study is that it examines a small sample of language educators. There were time constraints as the educators were busy with year-end assessment activities. Among the three participants, one participant was available for interview. As a result, the researcher heavily relied on the written narratives as the source of information.

The storied texts are told from the perspective of the participants only. Language educators depicted learners from their own perspectives. It was possible for educators to lose sight of significant learning and teaching issues in multilingual classrooms. The unstructured one to one interviews were aimed at uncovering subtle issues which emerged in the narratives.

As a researcher, I suppose that results would have turned out differently if a cluster of language educators had shared their experiences in a focus group interview. Time did not permit the researcher to organise a focus group interview. Teachers could have acquired enriching and empowering knowledge from their colleagues.

## **5.5 Summary**

This study was an endeavour by the researcher and was greatly enhanced by the insight and the feedback of the language educators who voluntarily gave their time to share their teaching experiences in multilingual classrooms with the researcher. The researcher hopes that the study has shed some light on the realities of multilingual classrooms. The study endeavoured to highlight the importance and the impact of context on the teaching learning process.

The research shows that context, that is, multilingual context, plays a pivotal role in the interaction between learners and educators and in the learning teaching situation as a whole. Multilingualism has impact on learners' communicative competence as well as performance in other subjects. It is evident in the research that realities of multilingual classrooms necessitate the change of language teaching approaches. In view of many challenges that emerged in the study, one may conclude that monolingual approach does not work for multilingual classrooms.

The study also shows that capacity building on multilingual education is a necessity and a priority for language educators. It emerged that educators do not recognise learners' communicative repertoires as they do not encourage codeswitching. Participants highlighted dynamics of multilingual classrooms but they lack the skill to deal with them. Trying to reconceptualise their roles, language educators indicated how challenging and demanding their roles are. As a point of departure, schools need to develop an awareness of and an orientation to bi/multilingual communication practices prevalent in classrooms with learners from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This could provide teachers with a fuller understanding of the resources learners bring to school and help them identify ways in which to draw on these resources for successful learning and teaching. Hornberger and Link (2012), viewing multilingual classrooms through the lens of the continua of biliteracy, contend that it is in the dynamic, rapidly changing and sometimes contested spaces along and across multiple and intersecting continua that most biliteracy use and learning occur.

Language educators characterise dimensions of bi/multilingualism in terms of oppositional pairs such as home and additional languages and monolingual and bilingual individuals. These opposites represent theoretical endpoints which are a continuum of features. In order to demystify the complications of multilingual classrooms and misconceptions language

teachers have about multilingual contexts, multilingual education should be a fully-fledged undertaking by the Department of Education as well as teacher education institutions in South Africa. Research shows that Western Cape and the University of Cape Town have taken an initiative to reskill teachers in multilingual education. Pedagogy on multilingual education should be accessible to all pre- and in service language educators in South Africa.

Hornberger (2005) argues that education policies can be seen as carving out implementational spaces at classroom levels. Chick (2003) accentuates this notion by suggesting that in South Africa the multilingual language policy has opened the ideological space which yielded multicultural discourses among teachers. Teachers have a responsibility to fill ideological spaces by allowing and trying to understand languaging practices readily observable in their multilingual classes. However, language teachers in this study are unable to fill ideological spaces in their classrooms. Although they are aware of challenges and dynamics of multilingual classrooms, they are not empowered on how to deal with multilingual contexts. For language teachers to accomplish multilingual teaching, thorough grounding on multilingual education is essential.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

Language educators' experiences are influenced by factors such as laxity on the part of Department of Education, school policies, persistence of English hegemony, availability of resources and teachers' cognition about multilingual education.

In view of the number of challenges identified by the studied language teachers, one may conclude that multilingual education has virtually not taken off. The South African language-in-education policy has clearly opened ideological and implementational spaces for the practice of multilingual education but nothing has been done to inculcate multilingual education. Hornberger (2009) maintains that opening up spaces for multilingual education is taking into account all languages in the ecology and recognising that those languages are situated in social spaces and contexts. The studied language teachers view these implementational spaces as challenges.

Advocacy for additive multilingualism is a top-down policy which is not backed up by bottom-up local support. The whole school community such as parents, school management

and teachers play a significant role towards filling up implementational spaces. In this study the school policies are an impediment to the implementation of multilingual education. Hornberger (2009) contends that local actors may open up or close down agentive spaces for multilingual education as they implement, interpret, and resist policy initiatives. In the studied classrooms language educators close agentive spaces for multilingual education because they do not recognise learners' repertoires and ban translanguaging practices. Language teachers view multilingual learners through deficit lenses because they do not value linguistic assets that multilingual learners bring into their classrooms. Landsman and Lewis (2011) contend that teachers' thinking bears on how they enact and teach the curriculum. Parents close implementational spaces by valuing English at the expense of African languages. Parents' preference of English to African languages defeats the idea of promotion of multilingualism

The Department of Education and the whole school community have to work in collaboration in order to cater for multilingual learners and promote additive multilingualism which is enshrined in the South African language-in-education policy.

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## ***LIST OF APPENDICES***

### ***APPENDIX A: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN EMPANGENI DISTRICT AT EMPANGENI AND RICHARDS BAY***

PO Box 367  
Esikhwini  
3887  
8 October 2012

The Head of the Department  
The KZN Department of Basic Education  
Private Bag X 9137  
Pietermaritzburg  
3200

Dear Sir/Madam

#### **RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS UNDER KZN DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION**

I humbly request permission to conduct a research project entitled, “Teaching experiences of language educators in selected grade 10 multilingual classrooms” in schools under your department. I am a Master of Education (Language and Media Studies) student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). I am conducting this research as a requirement for completion of my degree.

Research will be conducted in former model C schools within KwaZulu-Natal. Participants will be language educators who teach English in multilingual classrooms. Educators are key role players in education and they are also crucial as mediators of educational change. Linguistic ecology in schools has fundamentally changed but language educators’ profiles have remained unchanged. An awareness of language educators’ experiences in multilingual classrooms is vital if educational and language curriculum reform is to succeed. In multilingual classrooms educators possess different racialised and cultural experiences as well as repertoires of knowledge which may have some effects on classroom practices.

Voluntary participants will relate their experiences in the form of storied texts. Data generated from the narratives will be interpreted by the researcher. One-to-one unstructured interviews will be conducted with each participant to verify interpretations by the researcher. Data obtained from the proceedings will be used for academic purposes.

For further clarification on the study you may contact me at 0829029663 or 035 9026266. My email address [hlatshwayoz@unizulu.ac.za](mailto:hlatshwayoz@unizulu.ac.za)

My supervisor is Prof A. Sheik who may be contacted at 031 2603138 or [Sheika@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Sheika@ukzn.ac.za).

Thanking you in advance

Yours faithfully

.....  
Zandile V. Hlatshwayo (Ms)  
Student no.: 951020364

## ***APPENDIX B: A LETTER OF REQUEST TO THE PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS' PRINCIPALS***

LETTER A

PO Box 367  
Esikhawini  
3887  
8 October 2012

The Principal  
John Ross College  
Richards Bay  
3900

Dear Sir / Madam

### **RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL**

I humbly request your permission to conduct a research project, entitled “Teaching experiences of language educators in selected grade 10 multilingual classrooms” in your school. I need English educators to participate as respondents in the research project. I am a Master of Education (Language and Media Studies) student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). I am conducting this research project as a requirement for completion of my degree.

My study is aimed at exploring teaching experiences of language educators in multilingual classrooms. It is also aimed at identifying challenges and dynamics that prevail in multilingual classrooms. I also intend to examine strategies that language teachers use to address challenges dynamics in their multilingual classrooms.

Data will be collected through narratives. Language educators will write narrative essays in which they reflect about their teaching experiences in linguistically diverse classrooms. The narratives will be interpreted by the researcher. After interpreting data, the researcher will conduct unstructured one-to- one interview with each participant in order to verify findings. These interviews will be audio recorded and thereafter transcribed by the researcher.

It is vitally important to take into account the following issues:

- The study focuses on lived experiences of language educators as they encounter evolving linguistic realities. The purpose is to create an account of the way these language educators construct their identities in relation to their milieu as well as social and professional aspirations. Borg (2003) contends that teacher cognitions and practices are mutually informing, with contextual factors playing an important role in

determining the extent to which teachers are able to implement instruction congruent with their cognitions.

The study purports to explore role redefinitions by language educators as they experience evolving linguistic landscapes in their schools. As a researcher, I deem it necessary that language educators, as key role players in the education system, reconstruct and redefine their roles in the transforming linguistic dispensation. The study focuses on how multilingual contexts impact on language educators' practices. It intends to examine language pedagogy that language teachers use in multilingual contexts.

- Information about participants' profiles will not be divulged under any circumstances.
- There is no right or wrong answer.
- All the response will be treated with strict confidentiality.
- Data will be accessible to the researcher, supervisor and the examiner for academic purposes only.
- Names of the participants' schools will not be disclosed. Labels such as A, B, C, etc will be used instead of names.
- Pseudonyms will be used to represent informants' names and this will be done throughout the research process.
- Participation is voluntary; therefore participants are at liberty to withdraw any time without negative or undesirable consequences to them.
- They will not be coerced to divulge the information they do not want to reveal.
- Audio recording of interview will be done with their permission.
- Data generated will be stored in safe place by the supervisor for a period of five years and be disposed thereafter.

The key research questions are as follows:

- What are teaching experiences of language educators in multilingual classrooms?
- What are challenges and dynamics of multilingual experienced by language educators in multilingual classrooms?
- How do language educators address challenges and dynamics that prevail in multilingual classrooms?



For further clarification on the study you may contact me at 0829029663. My email address is [hlatshwayoz@unizulu.ac.za](mailto:hlatshwayoz@unizulu.ac.za)

My supervisor is Prof A. Sheik who may be contacted at 031 260 3138 or [Sheika@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Sheika@ukzn.ac.za).

Thanking you in advance

Yours faithfully

.....  
Zandile V. Hlatshwayo (Ms)  
Student no: 95102036

LETTER B

PO Box 367  
Esikhawini  
3887  
8 October 2012

The Principal  
Empangeni High School  
Empangeni  
3880

Dear Sir / Madam

**RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL**

I humbly request your permission to conduct a research project, entitled “Teaching experiences of language educators in selected grade 10 multilingual classrooms” in your school. I need English educators to participate as respondents in the research project. I am a Master of Education (Language and Media Studies) student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). I am conducting this research project as a requirement for completion of my degree.

My study is aimed at exploring teaching experiences of language educators in multilingual classrooms. It is also aimed at identifying challenges and dynamics that prevail in multilingual classrooms. I also intend to examine strategies that language teachers use to address challenges dynamics in their multilingual classrooms.

Data will be collected through narratives. Language educators will write narrative essays in which they reflect about their teaching experiences in linguistically diverse classrooms. The narratives will be interpreted by the researcher. After interpreting data, the researcher will conduct unstructured one-to-one interviews with each participant in order to verify findings. These interviews will be audio recorded and thereafter transcribed by the researcher.

It is vitally important to take into account the following issues:

- The study focuses on lived experiences of language educators as they encounter evolving linguistic realities. The purpose is to create an account of the way these language educators construct their identities in relation to their milieu as well as social and professional aspirations. Borg (2003) contends that teacher cognitions and practices are mutually informing, with contextual factors playing an important role in determining the extent to which teachers are able to implement instruction congruent with their cognitions.

The study purports to explore role redefinitions by language educators as they experience evolving linguistic landscapes in their schools. As a researcher, I deem it necessary that

language educators, as key role players in the education system, reconstruct and redefine their roles in the transforming linguistic dispensation. The study focuses on how multilingual contexts impact on language educators' practices. It intends to examine language pedagogy that language teachers use in multilingual contexts.

- Information about participants' profiles will not be divulged under any circumstances.
- There is no right or wrong answer.
- All the response will be treated with strict confidentiality.
- Data will be accessible to the researcher, supervisor and the examiner for academic purposes only.
- Names of the participants' schools will not be disclosed. Labels such as A, B, C, etc will be used instead of names.
- Pseudonyms will be used to represent informants' names and this will be done throughout the research process.
- Participation is voluntary; therefore participants are at liberty to withdraw any time without negative or undesirable consequences to them.
- They will not be coerced to divulge the information they do not want to reveal.
- Audio recording of interview will be done with their permission.
- Data generated will be stored in safe place by the supervisor for a period of five years and be disposed thereafter.

The key research questions are as follows:

- What are teaching experiences of language educators in multilingual classrooms?
- What are challenges and dynamics of multilingual experienced by language educators in multilingual classrooms?
- How do language educators address challenges and dynamics that prevail in multilingual classrooms?

For further clarification on the study you may contact me at 0829029663. My email address is [hlatshwayoz@unizulu.ac.za](mailto:hlatshwayoz@unizulu.ac.za)

My supervisor is Prof A. Sheik who may be contacted at 031 260 3138 or [Sheika@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Sheika@ukzn.ac.za).

Thanking you in advance

Yours faithfully

.....  
Zandile V. Hlatshwayo (Ms)  
Student no: 951020364

**APPENDIX C:      *CONSENT FORM FOR PRINCIPALS OF PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS***

If you agree that your school participates in this study, please fill in the attached consent form.

***“TEACHING EXPERIENCES OF LANGUAGE EDUCATORS IN SELECTED GRADE 10 MULTILINGUAL CLASSROOMS.”***

**DECLARATION FORM**

I..... (Full names of the principal) hereby confirm that I have read and understood the contents of the document requesting permission to conduct research in my school and the nature of the research project. I understand that information will be treated as confidential and will not be disclosed for other purposes other than this study. I also understand that participants are at liberty to withdraw from the research project at any time. I therefore, give my consent to staff members to participate in the study.

Principal’s signature: .....

Date: .....

**APPENDIX D:      A LETTER REQUESTING LANGUAGE EDUCATORS TO  
PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY**

PO Box 367  
Esikhawini  
3887  
8 October 2012

Dear English Educator

**RE: REQUEST FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH PROJECT**

I humbly request you to participate in my research project entitled, “Teaching experiences of language educators in selected grade 10 multilingual classrooms” I am a Master of Education (Language and Media Studies) student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus). I am conducting this research as a requirement for completion of my degree.

My study is aimed at exploring teaching experiences of language educators in multilingual classrooms. It is also aimed at identifying challenges and dynamics that prevail in multilingual classrooms. I also intend to examine strategies that language teachers use to address challenges dynamics in their multilingual classrooms.

Data will be collected through narratives. Language educators will write narrative essays in which they reflect about their teaching experiences in linguistically diverse classrooms. The narratives will be interpreted by the researcher. After interpreting data, the researcher will conduct unstructured one-to-one interviews with each participant in order to verify findings. These interviews will be audio recorded and thereafter transcribed by the researcher.

It is vitally important to take into account the following issues:

- The study focuses on lived experiences of language educators as they encounter evolving linguistic realities. The purpose is to create an account of the way these language educators construct their identities in relation to their milieu as well as social and professional aspirations. Borg (2003) contends that teacher cognitions and practices are mutually informing, with contextual factors playing an important role in determining the extent to which teachers are able to implement instruction congruent with their cognitions.

The study purports to explore role redefinitions by language educators as they experience evolving linguistic landscapes in their schools. As a researcher, I deem it necessary that language educators, as key role players in the education system, reconstruct and redefine their roles in the transforming linguistic dispensation. The study focuses on how multilingual contexts impact on language educators' practices. It intends to examine language pedagogy that language teachers use in multilingual contexts.

- Information about participants' profiles will not be divulged under any circumstances.
- There is no right or wrong answer.
- All the response will be treated with strict confidentiality.
- Data will be accessible to the researcher, supervisor and the examiner for academic purposes only.
- Names of the participants' schools will not be disclosed. Labels such as A, B, C, etc will be used instead of names.
- Pseudonyms will be used to represent informants' names and this will be done throughout the research process.
- Participation is voluntary; therefore participants are at liberty to withdraw any time without negative or undesirable consequences to them.
- They will not be coerced to divulge the information they do not want to reveal.
- Audio recording of interview will be done with their permission.
- Data generated will be stored in safe place by the supervisor for a period of five years and be disposed thereafter.

The key research questions are as follows:

- What are teaching experiences of language educators in multilingual classrooms?
- What are challenges and dynamics of multilingual experienced by language educators in multilingual classrooms?
- How do language educators address challenges and dynamics that prevail in multilingual classrooms?

For further clarification on the study you may contact me on 0829029663 or 035 9026266.

My email address is [hlatshwayoz@unizulu.ac.za](mailto:hlatshwayoz@unizulu.ac.za)

My supervisor: Prof A. Sheik, Telephone number: 031 260 3138

Thanking you in advance

Yours faithfully

.....  
Zandile V. Hlatshwayo (Ms)  
Student no: 951020364

**APPENDIX E: A CONSENT FORM FOR A PARTICIPANT**

If you agree to participate in this study, please fill in the attached consent form.

***“TEACHING EXPERIENCES OF LANGUAGE EDUCATORS IN SELECTED GRADE 10  
MULTILINGUAL CLASROOMS”***

**DECLARATION FORM**

I..... (Full names of the participant) hereby confirm that I have read and understood the contents of the letter and the nature of the research project. I understand that my information will be treated as confidential and will not be disclosed for other purposes other than this study. I also understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the research project at any time. I therefore give my consent to participate in the study.

Signature of participant: .....

Date: .....

## ***APPENDIX F: UNSTRUCTURED ONE TO ONE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE***

### Interview questions

The interview schedule is informed by data collected from narratives written by participants.

1. In your narrative you mentioned that miscommunication takes place in your classroom because of the diverse nature of your classroom. Can you give instances of miscommunication that take place in the classroom?
2. What does your school policy say about multilingual education?
3. Do learners sometimes expect you to use their mother tongue during the lesson?
4. Do learners exchange ideas in their mother tongue during group discussions? How do you deal with such practices?
5. Are curriculum documents, CAPS or NCS explicit about multilingualism?
6. Are there any guidelines on how to implement multilingualism in classroom situation?



## APPENDIX G: ETHICAL CLERANCE CERTIFICATE



26 February 2013

Ms Zandile Virginia Hlatshwayo 951020364  
School of Education  
Edgewood Campus

Dear Ms Hlatshwayo

Protocol reference number: HSS/0089/013M

Project title: Teaching experiences of language educators in selected grade 10 multilingual classrooms

### EXPEDITED APPROVAL

I wish to inform you that your application has been granted Full Approval through an expedited review process.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Professor Steven Collings (Chair)

/pm

cc Supervisor: Professor A Sheik  
cc Academic Leader: Dr MN Davids  
cc School Admin.: Miss Bongekile Bhengu

Professor S Collings (Chair)  
Humanities & Social Sc Research Ethics Committee  
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building  
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa  
Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 3587/8350 Facsimile: +27 (0)31 260 4609 Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za / snymanm@ukzn.ac.za  
Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

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