African Perspectives of Research in Teaching and Learning Journal
Issue 3, Volume 8, 2024 Special Issue
ISSN Print: 2521-0262
ISSN Online: 2662-012X
ORIGINAL RESEARCH
https://doi.org/10.70875/v8i3article16

Tutors' experiences of implementing a bilingual language policy at the university of KwaZulu-Natal

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Abstract

The University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) identifies with the goals of South Africa's Higher Education Institutions multilingual language policy and seeks to be a key player in the implementation thereof. The multilingual policy recognizes the need to develop and promote the use of indigenous languages as languages of teaching and learning alongside English and Afrikaans. In pursuit of this policy, the University has embarked on a number of programmes, one of which is the Bilingual Tutoring Programme which promotes the use of English and isiZulu as languages of teaching and learning. This paper explores implementation challenges and opportunities experienced by tutors within selected academic programmes. Data were generated through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The study including its inductive thematic analysis was undergirded by Vygotsky's (1978) construct of the Zone of Proximal Development. The study's findings were both positive and negative. According to participants, findings indicate that tutors and lecturers lack understanding of the UKZN Language Policy as a result of what appears to be the University's lack of will to champion its policy. However, the findings also revealed that the use of bilingualism revitalizes student centered learning and animated interactions and raises interest among students. Among the recommendations, is the importance of encouraging the co-operation of all university stakeholders so as to promote success and engender an ultimate sense of ownership.

Keywords: Bilingual tutorials, Bilingual Language policy, Zone of Proximal Development

Introduction and Background

One of the defining characteristics of apartheid South Africa was the use of language as a mechanism for setting in motion strategies of domination and alienation of African identity. The ushering of the new era post-1994 was marked by the adoption of a new constitution that advocated multilingualism. The replacement of bilingualism with eleven previously invalidated African languages spelt the end of the colonizers' language hegemony (Kamwangamalu, 2003). To this end, a range of language planning agencies and language implementation institutions were established to determine the future role and status of South African indigenous languages in areas such as education, government, technology, and the arts. Government signed the Use of Official Languages Act into law in 2002 which sought to promote the equitable utilization of the country's official languages by recognizing the previously subjugated use of indigenous languages. Institutions of higher education (HEIs) were expected to comply with The Higher Education Act 101 of 1997, which called for university councils to work with their senates in formulating their institutional language policy. The policy would detail a plan that stipulates how the institution planned to use language to advance the key goals of social transformation, such as equity of access, success, and participation in higher education. Consequently, the Language Policy for Higher Education (Ministry of Education, MoE, 2002) is driven by the country's Constitution, which promotes multilingualism.

Institutions of Higher Education were given a mandate by the Department of Higher

Education to develop all languages including the previously disadvantaged indigenous languages (The Education White Paper, 1997). As a response to this call, the University of KwaZulu Natal approved its own Language Policy in 2006, which has since been revised in 2014. This policy identifies with the goals of South Africa's multilingual language policy and expresses the university's vision to be a key player in the successful implementation of the country's language policy. The citation below captures one of the university's strategic goals as its way of keeping with the Higher Education mandate:

"Multilingualism will be promoted in the process of curriculum review and transformation. While English will be the primary academic language, the development and use of isiZulu as a medium of instruction will be promoted with associated resources" (UKZN Strategic Plan, 2007-2016).

Research has proven that the use of the learners' mother tongue increases epistemological access (Ouanne & Glanz, 2010). In order to achieve this access, the University's Language Planning & Development Office (ULPDO) was tasked with the facilitation and implementation of bilingual education within the university. In order to initiate the implementation of bilingualism within the university programmes, a Bilingual Education Tutor Training pilot project was then introduced with the goal of facilitating bilingual tutorials in the various schools within the UKZN. The project sought to develop and promote proficiency in the official languages, particularly English and isiZulu.

Therefore, the institution opted for a bilingual language policy that would later embrace multilingualism and the equitable use of IsiZulu and English as languages of teaching and learning, research, and knowledge production, with its implementation divided into two phases. Phase one started in 2006 with the introduction of a new bilingual policy for the university and the establishment of the ULPDO. Thereafter, the office became responsible for the implementation of the bilingual language policy objectives. Some of the phase one projects included the development of awareness of Bilingualism policy for the university community and the provision of facilities to enable the use of isiZulu as a language of learning, instruction, research and administration. Finally, phase one sought to develop a hub for isiZulu national corpus and the standardization of isiZulu technical terminology and its dissemination.

In 2019, three colleges within the UKZN, including the College of Humanities, embarked on a bilingual tutorial programme across their different schools. This marked the beginning of the second phase of the implementation of the UKZN's language policy, which started with phase one (2008-2019) and then Phase two: 2019-2029.

Given that the programme has been running for the last five years despite the Covid-19 interruptions, the authors considered that it was the appropriate time to reflect and engage tutors on their experiences of implementing the policy. Hence, this paper seeks to answer the following research question: what are tutors' experiences of implementing a bilingual tutorial programme at UKZN? In addition, the paper seeks to gauge gaps and challenges that might exist in the policy and its implementation and make appropriate recommendations. The brief overview of the UKZN bilingual language policy offered in the article is followed by a literature review section which is related to African Indigenous Languages as languages of teaching and learning in HEIs. Moreover, we deliberate the theoretical perspectives and underpinnings that inform and guide our discussions. The next section deals with methodology-related issues. This is followed by a presentation and discussion of the findings. The final section consists of a summary and conclusions.

An overview of the UKZN Bilingual Language policy

In pursuit of being the premier university of African scholarship, the UKZN opted for a bilingual language policy with isiZulu as an additional language of teaching and learning (Kamwendo et al., 2013). However, following a Revised Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions in 2020, the institution's language policy is currently under review. The programme is run by the ULPDO, and

integral to their agenda is the promotion of bilingualism throughout the university. While this aligns with the university's strategy of being the premier university of African scholarship, it also displays the university's commitment to the intellectualization of isiZulu to be a language of innovation and science.

The core knowledge and concepts used to facilitate the training are based on Tutor Pedagogy, a combination of pedagogy and a recognition of the importance of language usage to facilitate learning. This programme is designed to elevate the use of isiZulu for teaching and learning purposes, especially during tutorials after students have attended their lectures which are conducted through the medium of English. The use of isiZulu is meant to empower students to take ownership of their learning during the tutorials. The Bilingual language policy seeks to make explicit the benefits of being fully bilingual in English and isiZulu. One of the driving goals is to afford isiZulu the same institutional academic status as the English language (UKZN Language Policy, 2014). Bilingualism is defined as the individuals' competent use of two languages, (i.e., isiZulu and English in the context of this study), across a range of everyday activities. Mehisto (2012) defines it as the ability to teach academic content in two languages: a native language and a second language. On the contrary, multilingualism is defined as the ability to speak or use several different languages (White Paper, 1997).

Theoretical framework

Vygotsky's theory of Social Constructivism underpins this study. Vygotsky (1978) noticed that cultural and social tools (language, schools, museums etc.) play an important role in students' understanding of the world. Social Constructivism has many concepts, but this study will focus on the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which refers to the stage where students require assistance from a more knowledgeable other (MKO) to understand new knowledge. According to Vygotsky (1978), knowledgeable persons plan, facilitate and scaffold the learning experience and support students to understand new knowledge. These activities foster classroom interactions which expose students to understanding new concepts.

According to Vygotsky, ZPD is the most important stage where students require support in order to close knowledge gaps and promote cognitive development in their respective fields of study. In this study, we adopted this concept to explore the role of bilingual tutors in planning, delivering and facilitating understanding of new knowledge during learning. This takes place when the effects of culture, such as students' prior knowledge and social tools are considered as learning resources (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Vygotsky, during ZPD, the knowledgeable other (bilingual tutor) draws from students' linguistic backgrounds and prior knowledge to build scaffolding tasks. During this stage, students are offered support to close the existing knowledge gaps through the use of different tools that they bring into the classroom, including students' mother tongue.

The importance of scaffolding students' cognitive understanding of core concepts in scientific modules has been widely recognised in higher education. This has been achieved through the introduction of bilingual tutorials and bilingual pedagogy, which seek to recognise students' role in learning and enhance their participation in knowledge discovery and generation. Exploring the role of bilingual tutorials in scientific content modules as a scaffolding strategy can contribute considerably to bridging knowledge gaps and inspiring self-reliant and self-regulated learning (Vygotsky,1978).

Literature review

Definitions of Language Policy, Bilingualism and Multilingualism

According to the National Language Policy Framework (2003, p.20), language policy is "An official decision on the status of various languages spoken in multilingual communities." All languages that were previously marginalized in South Africa need to be developed so that multilingualism is promoted (National Language Policy Framework, 2003:5). Therefore, Higher Education institutions have a role contributing to the elavation of the status of these languages. The

department of Higher Education mandated public institutions of higher learning to include and develop any official indigenous languages into their language plolicies (National Language Policy Framework, 2003). As a result, the UKZN opted for a bilingual language police and to develop isiZulu alongside English.

Prah (2009) asserts that any form of knowledge is encapsulated in the language of its creators and developers. The development of African languages is, therefore, critical for Africa in terms of knowledge creation, invention, and contact with other communities in the world/ worldwide. The centering of African Languages as the main languages should then be one of the primary agendas of the HEIs. Ntombela (2023) highlights that progressive economies like the Chinese package their knowledge in their native language, and that has ensured the country's continuous economic success. This substantiates Makgoba et al's (1999) argument that language is at the core of the development of science, technology, education, political systems, and economics.

The value of using African languages as languages of teaching and learning in a bi/ multilingual programme context has been appraised by various language scholars (Canagarajah, 2018; Cummins, 2009; Kamwendo et al., 2014; Hornbeger & Link, 2012). They acknowledge that these languages help scaffold learning for second-language students who, at times, lack the prerequisite academic literacy required for a successful university education. Ngcobo and Makumane (2023) posit that the use of a bilingual approach in teaching and learning will assist students in navigating academic discourse, which Cummins (2009) claims is cognitively demanding and contextually reduced. South African universities are challenged with developing a multilingual environment where all the marginalized South African languages are developed as languages of teaching and learning, research and scholarship.

The number of HEIs adopting language policies is growing in the world (Tudor, 2008). This is to promote language learning, competitiveness and civilization as this involves the attitudes of students as they contribute to society, skills and knowledge (Bergan, 2005). Multilingualism in education strengthens social cohesion and also promotes language skills (European Union, 2008). Coleman (2005) argues that multilingualism for graduates brings about greater opportunities of employability, as an addition to their professional degree. Tudor (2008) argues that the demands of the knowledge-based economy graduates who prepare themselves for the global workplace must develop multilingual communication skills in parallel with their mainstream academic and professional training (Tudor, 2008).

One of the goals of developing a language education policy is for student achievement as a factor for language competence, be it bilingualism or multilingualism (Cenoz, 2009). From an international perspective, most language policy aims are realized as students enroll with HEIs. This occurs as language policies influence the curriculum in these institutions and how the curriculum is implemented (Garter & Cenoz, 2016). South Africa is not the only country that continues to address issues of language policy. Many other countries like Canada, Spain and America, have various language policies that are meant to promote multilingualism (Crawford, 1989; Genese and Lindholm-Leary, 2013; Basque Government, 2015).

Neves et al. (2021) conducted a case study in Portugal to explore the use of bilingual tutorial development process of a research-based educational video game. The study found that there was a need to design and develop learning tools to support mathematics learning for deaf and hard of hearing students. The study recommended that bilingual learning tools should incorporate playful pedagogy (games) that are inclusive and address several problems that deaf students encounter during learning, such as the simultaneous presence of text and videos in Portuguese Sign Language (LGP) and a careful vocabulary selection.

According to Gracia (2017) poor language competence may lead to lack of understanding of new knowledge, and ultimately result in poor performance of students at

university. This becomes even more frustrating when students have to chase vocabulory while juggling with course content in a complex discipline such as Engineering (Gracia, 2017). A study was conducted by Garcia (2017) that examined the Dual Sub, an open source desktop tool aimed to create bilingual subtitles, evaluate the extent to which bilingual subtitles were perceived by final users in the incidental vocabulary knowledge of a second language. The study also sought to conduct an experimental case study in which dual subtitles were used in the engineering education. The results of these surveys confirmed that bilingual subtitles are perceived as useful in the different dimensions of the incidental vocabulary learning process (form, meaning, use) and are also helpful when applied to the educational domain (deliberate learning).

Studies have also recognized the roles of lecturers and tutors in bridging the gap of understanding conceptual knowledge through the use of bilingual tutorials in Psychology disciplines (De Groot, 2011; De Groot & Kroll, 2014; Goncz, 2015). These roles include the development of course material that aligns with students' contextual factors, culture, linguistic backgrounds and preparation of tutorial activities that provide support for learning, thinking, constructive instructions and feedback.

Previous studies suggest that languages represent student's identity which is crucial for student learning and educational success (Creese & Blackledge, 2010: Garcia-Mateus & Palmer, 2017). Students' languages carry knowledge and resources that shape their understanding of classroom activities (Garcia-Mateus & Palmer, 2017). According to Garcia-Mateus and Palmer (2017), bi/multilingual pedagogy accommodate students' language diversity, linguistic backgrounds and promote student-centred learning. The use of bi/multilingual pedagogy during learning help students to navigate learning via two or more language resources that they bring into the classroom. Creese and Blackledge (2010) concur that bi/multilingual approach to learning empower students to gain more insights and ultimately improve students' performance and participation during tutorials.

Methods

The study appropriated time to reflect and engage tutors on their experiences of implementing the bilingual language policy with the aim of acknowledging successes and gauging gaps and challenges that might exist with a view to finding solutions. This research was conducted with 20 bilingual tutor participants from different schools at UKZN. Research participants in this study included bilingual tutors from Political Sciences, Social

Sciences, Applied Human Sciences and Foundational courses. A purposive sampling technique was used to invite diverse bilingual tutor participants. Consequently, our sample included novice and experienced tutors and those who had gone through the programme as undergraduate students, as we believed that their insights would enrich our data. According to Bertram & Christiansen (2019), purposive sampling is a technique used by researchers to select participants who have the requisite knowledge and understanding of the focus of the study. Hence, tutors in the current were the targeted participants who provided insights to address the main research question posed.

This research employed a qualitative approach to generate data from participants in the Bilingual Training Tutorial programme. Focus-group discussions, semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were used as triangulated data generation methods in order to maintain trustworthiness in a qualitative study (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). The focus -group consisted of three novice tutor participants, three experienced participants, and three participants who had gone through the programme as undergraduate students. We conducted two focus group discussion sessions where issues of planning, objectives, and implementation of bilingual tutoring were discussed. The rationale for adopting semi-structured interviews was to gain an in-depth understanding of tutors' experiences of implementing bilingual tutoring in their disciplines. Questionnaires were used to elicit participants' biographical data, such as their respective disciplines, experience, and home language. For data analysis, the study adopted a

qualitative inductive approach which was used to arrange data thematically. Data analysis process involved, data reduction, coding, arranging themes and later Vygotsky's theory of Social Constructivism was used as the theoretical framework that undergirded the study.

Ethical approval was granted by the University Research office and consent was sought from all the participants. All the participants were informed about their rights and the purpose behind the use of the various research tools that they had to respond to. Pseudonyms; such as code (Tutor 1, T1) was used to maintain tutor's confidentiality.

Findings and Discussion

This section presents data and discussion of findings. The study's main focus sought to explore tutors' experiences of implementing a university's bilingual tutorial policy. Opportunities for better implementation of the policy were also explored.

Lack of support for policy implementation

Tutors' responses during the focus group discussion revealed a lack of knowledge and understanding regarding the bilingual tutorial objectives and delivery on the part of lecturers and module coordinators. According to the tutors, lecturers believe that the programme is not meant for their consideration:

T4: I feel like, as tutors, we have been made the custodians of the implementation and success of this bilingual language policy. The lecturers seem to have been left out. They do not see themselves as having any role in implementing this programme. We are on our own; for instance, where are the lecturers in this workshop?

T8 expressed similar sentiments in the following extract:

...yes, it is sometimes disturbing when lecturers expect only us tutors to implement the policy…now really? Lecturers do not even help you design of a suitable bilingual tutorial worksheet. They say that as tutors, that's your responsibility. That's why you, tutors, attend Bilingual Tutoring workshops, and we don't.

T12: Eish…mina vele angazi [I don't know…] …. I feel I'm on my own really….no one in my discipline seems interested…I was told I should attend as this might help me as a tutor.

The data below, further clarify this lack of support for policy implementation of the bilingual tutorial programme's objectives between the tutors and module lecturers as manifested during focus group discussions. Some participants reported that when they consulted with the module coordinators (lecturers) in preparation for tutorials, most of them emphasised that it was not really their role to "fix students' language problems". Tutors felt that the university exerted too much pressure on them with the implementation of the policy, whereas practitioners of the content were left free:

T3: Most of the lecturers in my discipline have said they do not need to attend these workshops; they are strictly designed to equip us tutors to help students who are struggling with the material in class because of poor language mastery by the majority of students.

T5: My lecturer told me to use my discretion when I approached him for help in designing a bilingual friendly tutorial exercise.

The lack of support and buy-in from fellow lecturers who coordinate modules as reported by some tutors, shows the urgent need for designing bilingual workshops suitable for content practitioners at the university. Among other aspects, these workshops would need to address pedagogical aspects of the university language policy, such as applying translanguaging to enhance students' learning experience and decolonise higher education in South Africa by embracing students' home languages. The Vygotskian theories of learning remain influential in their impact on learning. The Sociocultural theory emphasises the pivotal role of social interaction in constructing one's knowledge and that of the world. According to Zuangler and Miller (2006), language becomes 'the resource of participation in one's learning'. This is the ultimate goal of implementing bilingual learning at the university.

Osei-Tutu (2023) emphasizes that incorporating Indigenous African languages in higher education marks an important leap towards decolonization. She further explains that changing perspective is imperative in 'educating and preparing the next generation of teachers, professionals and political leaders (Osei-Tutu, 2023: 8)'.

Tutors' Views on Assessment and Learning Empowerment

From the data generated through face to face interviews, it would seem that lecturers, unlike tutors, perceive tutorials as nothing more than slots created for student assessment on what would have been taught in the main lecture. This view contradicts both the key rationale behind introducing bilingual language policy at UKZN and experiences of some tutors, particularly those who have already been exposed to bilingual teaching and learning, either as novice tutors or as undergraduate students before becoming tutors. The following extracts from the interview data corroborate the claim made above:

T16: ...it becomes very confusing you know… when they [lecturers] want to know from you if "your students" can now take the test!

T18: ...yes…you can tell by how lama tuts abo are designed…. there's too much work …you can tell it's meant to give the poor students enough practice for the exam…this is blatant drilling! It doesn't matter ukuth'labantwana bayezwa or… [whether these children understand or…] …

The above statements from tutors encapsulate some lecturers' deep-seated perceptions of tutorials and what they are designed to achieve. When probed about their personal experiences of tutorials as undergraduate students, some tutors explained that it was very different:

T 17: It is clear that our tutor back then had already been introduced to bilingual teaching methods…in every tutorial, we were given time to discuss among ourselves…some of us would even discuss and argue in isiZulu… and…mhh… our tutor would also join in using isiZulu…

T1: Our tutor would ensure that every student in our tut understood what was being discussed… wayez' achaze nangesiZulu (he would even explain in isiZulu) …

This is in line with Vygotsky's (1978) tenet of the MKO, who would be the lecturer or the tutor in the context of this study. According to this tenet, the MKO should give the necessary support to the students to help them understand the content of their module.

The perception among lecturers that tutorials should mainly prepare students for assessment was further noted in the focus group discussions. Below is what some tutors shared which depicts this perception among certain lecturers:

T 11: ...just the other day, my coordinator wanted to know if we could do all the tuts for the week....you can tell it's the syllabus they're concerned with...so they can then assess...

T 20: In our recent departmental meeting we...tutors....were asked if our students were "acing" the tutorial tasks...

From the tone of voice and the words lecturers choose to use when discussing the tutorials, one can easily deduce that they do not perceive tutorials as learning empowerment sessions for students. According to their tone of voice, among other things, tutorials are either sessions designed to prepare students for assessment or they, in themselves, are assessment sessions designed to expose how much the students do not know. Lecturers sometimes design tutorial worksheets with drilling exercises based on the lecture, not as scaffolding tasks aimed at enhancing students' levels of understanding:

T13: …There are times when I wish to design my own tutorials… instead of these we have to work with…mina, I don't even see how they help the students…it's just task after task…sometimes with no clear connect…connection, [whatever!] between them...ayboh!

Poor Policy Advocacy in Teaching and Learning

Some of the participants' responses reveal a lack of knowledge and understanding of the policy and its objectives on the part of the lecturers and module coordinators. This can be blamed on

the university's failed Bilingual Language policy advocacy initiatives. According to tutors, some lecturers believe that the programme is not meant for them. The extracts below capture some tutors' frustration at the sheer ignorance of lecturers who believe they have nothing to do with this policy:

T8: ...yes, it is sometimes disturbing when lecturers expect only us [tutors] to implement the policy…now really? Lecturers do not even attend these workshops…only tutors are made to attend…

T6: This is very unfair…. just look around here….eh…eh…. I'm…I'm the only one from my discipline….do you think you'll ever see the big professors here? They think it's for us tutors…ama-novice…bona bazi konke! [they know it all]

T2: Well…two of my senior colleagues…both professors…. AP and FP, were brutally frank with me…. heh…. heh…they said they had no time to waste on language issues…you could tell they were not convinced it was for them…

This apparent dearth of knowledge among academic staff members that is mentioned in the extracts above, directly alludes to the university's failed policy advocacy.

Other tutor participants admitted that they only learned about this policy after attending the Bilingual Tutor Training workshops:

T14: ...Honestly speaking, most tutors don't know the policy... no one exposes them to it. As I mentioned... I only learned about it because my Academic Leader was very interested. If it wasn't for him, then no one... no platform could've exposed me to this information. Yes, it's readily available but many academics don't know it. We do, however, know that bilingualism is a thing at UKZN... although we have never had a platform where the policy is unpacked...or workshopped...

Tutorials as a catch-up Programme for students who have poor language competence and as an opportunity to facilitate understanding of content knowledge during learning

Findings indicate that tutors have different views on tutorials. These views emanate from the nature of tutorials, strategy and language used during tutorials. It was clear that first-time tutors still used English as a primary language during the tutorials. Also, mention was made of tutorials being used as a catch-up programme to assist students with poor language competence. This was in contrast to the experienced bilingual tutors who interpreted tutorials as an opportunity to facilitate understanding of content knowledge during learning. In addition, tutors who have been part of bilingual tutorials as students mentioned using students' home language as a tutorial strategy to scaffold understanding of new concepts during learning. Even though tutors have different views on tutorials, it is evident that tutorials, by their very nature, are student-centred and meant to scaffold students' abilities, language competence, or understanding of content knowledge. This relates to the Zone of Proximal Development, where the more knowledgeable other helps scaffold understanding of new knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). While these findings revealed tutors' different views on their understanding of a tutorial, they also showed that students' poor language competence and lack of subject content are primary challenges that students encounter in their learning. The extracts below show tutors' discussions on their understanding of their role during a tutorial.

T1: I ensure I ask question to get students' attention during a tutorial session. Questions help me a lot to steer classroom engagements. The more I ask questions, the more they interact with each other and the course content. Initially, it was not easy because they were used to being told what to do, and they would keep on writing notes without even questioning anything. After attending bilingual tutorial training, I even gained the confidence to encourage my students to use their home language during tutorials, as long as that would enable them to engage with the content.

T2: I understand tutorials are for students who battle with English. Sometimes, students struggle to understand during the main lecture because they 'lack' language competence. So, during the tutorial, we help them to write their assessments by showing them how to solve

problems and simplifying and interpreting instructions for them to understand.

T3: In our discipline, we use tutorials to catch up on the difficult topics covered in the lecture. Mostly, tutorials are voluntary. Students are not forced to attend, only those who did not understand during the main lecture.

T5: Ey, things have changed since I started engaging them on the content knowledge they learned in the previous lecture; students became more active during tutorials. They would engage and debate with each other about what they learnt in the main lecture. I have witnessed their performance improve because they also prepare before coming to the tutorial. It was no longer like what it used to be, depending on me for all the information. Our classroom discussions created a student-cantered environment, and students were responsible for their learning.

Findings show different views among tutors. In-experienced tutors indicated that they use English as a medium of instruction during tutorials and as a catch-up program for students with poor language competence. Meanwhile, experienced tutors indicated that they use bilingual tutorials to facilitate understanding of content knowledge and application of new concepts. In addition to that, during focus group interviews, tutors who have been part of the bilingual tutorial programmes as students, indicated that they had experienced an improvement in grasping content knowledge since the programme's introduction. For instance, they mentioned that tutorials became more task-based and student-oriented rather than a repetition of the lecture. These discussions show that in bilingual tutorials, lecturers and tutors should develop inclusive learning tools to support students with different barriers, such as poor language competence, vocabulary, and knowledge gaps (Neves et al., 2021, p. 16). Moreover, Gracia (2017, p.29) believes that tutorials should bridge the gap between students' prior knowledge and discipline-specific vocabulary to scaffold understanding of conceptual terminology.

When analysing tutors' responses, two tutors who attended the Bilingual Tutorial Tutors' workshop for the first time, understood tutorial sessions as a catch-up programme for students who lacked language competence. T2 mentioned that the coordinator emphasised the importance of assisting students struggling with English during tutorials. Similarly, T3 mentioned that tutorials are used to catch up on the content that students did not understand during the main lecture due to a lack of comprehension skills. Such responses indicate that two tutors were under the impression that tutorials were for catching-up whereas T1 and T5, who had attended before, indicated that their focus had shifted to facilitating understanding of content knowledge and new concepts. The above responses indicate that remedial activities, incidental vocabulary learning processes (form, meaning, use), and content-specific activities (deliberate learning) are needed to scaffold a deeper understanding of new concepts (Gracia, 2017, p.29). T1 mentioned that she prepared her own questions she would use during the tutorials to probe students' discussions. She believes that a tutorial becomes more of an engagement based on the content studied in the main lecture if thorough questions are planned before the tutorial. There was also an emphasis on meaningful engagements when the task-based group work which engenders discussion during tutorials. T5 mentioned that he has witnessed the improvement of students' participation and their assessment grades during tutorials due to the support students give to one another during tutorials. T5 mentioned that discussions allow a tutorial to be more student-centred, which results in self-regulated learning, while a tutor becomes a facilitator not an individualist. Goncz (2015) believes that students' critical thinking ability develops when contextual factors, culture, linguistic backgrounds, and preparation of tutorial activities provide support for learning, thinking, constructive instructions, and feedback considered during learning. Tutors' responses showed that using the home language as a resource during learning in bilingual tutorials addresses the language competence issues during learning and scaffolds understanding of new knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978).

Conclusion and Recommendations

There is a lack of bilingual language policy advocacy within the university. Most staff and some students do not have adequate knowledge of the policy. Whenever there is a

bilingual Tutorial Tutor training workshop, the same groups of tutors (not lecturers) from the same disciplines seem to be regular attendees every year. It would seem that there is a need to enhance clear understanding, buy-in, and advocacy of the bilingual language policy across the university. Although the bilingual language policy has inherent academic value, there is uncertainty concerning the realization of its goals due to poor advocacy by the university, which continues to engender confusion on the part of its intended beneficiaries and their tutors and lecturers.

Through the unequivocal acceptance of the bilingual language policy by all tutors and lecturers, students can discover new knowledge by creating new vocabularies and terminology in their home languages in tutorials. Consequently, given a chance, bilingual tutorials have the potential to create opportunities for students to be co-contributors in the journey of knowledge discovery and knowledge creation. This facilitates a better understanding of content as students inexorably engage in it, further leading to the intellectualization of their languages (Letsoalo, 2021).

Acknowledgements

This research paper reports on the project that we are currently involved in, Bilingual Tutorial Project under University of KwaZulu-Natal Language Planning and Development Office (ULPDO). Learning

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