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English First Additional Language teachers' perceptions of translanguaging pedagogy: A case of Vhembe District, Limpopo Province

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Abstract

This article reports on Grade 7 English First Additional Language (FAL) teachers' perceptions of their use of a translanguaging pedagogy in teaching English FAL among Grade 7 learners in Vhembe District, Limpopo Province. The Continua of biliteracy model (CBM) underpinned the study. CBM foregrounds the development of biliteracy among bi/multilinguals and supports the view that learners' communicative repertoires and language practices form an integral part of their learning process. The participants in the study were 6 Grade 7 English FAL teachers purposefully selected from three different primary schools. The study collected data through classroom observations, open-ended questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. The overall results of the study revealed two differentiated strands of the teachers' perceptions of the translanguaging approach in the teaching and learning of English FAL among Grade 7 learners. Firstly, the majority of Grade 7 teachers have a positive outlook on translanguaging pedagogy in the teaching and learning of English FAL. Alternation and flexible use of Tshivenḓa HL and English are permitted for scaffolding and acceleration of L2 learning. Secondly, the study revealed that some of these Grade 7 English FAL teachers objected to the use of translanguaging in preference for an English-only approach to accelerate the learning of English in their L2 classrooms. In their view, Tshivenḓa Home Language and English must be taught in isolation because of their distinct linguistic systems.

Keywords: English First Additional Language, perceptions, scaffolding, second language, translanguaging, Tshivenḓa Home Language

Introduction

The motivation to conduct this study on teachers' perspective of the translanguaging pedagogy was derived from the researchers' experience of teaching English First Additional Language (EFAL) to bilingual learners in a South African context. According to the South African Department of Basic Education policy (DBE, 2011), South African schools are expected to conduct teaching and learning through a minimum of two languages, namely, the Home Language (HL) and the First Additional Language (FAL). The language of teaching and learning (LoLT) for content subjects is English only while languages such as isiXhosa, Setswana, Northern Sotho, Xitsonga, Tshivenḓa, SiSwati, isiZulu and isiNdebele, are taught and learned in their respective languages. This policy led to the separation of the above-mentioned home languages from EFAL in language learning and thus served as an advantage to learners whose HL is their LoLT. The focus of this study was on learners whose HL is Tshivenḓa and who spent the first three years of schooling using Tshivenḓa HL (THL) as their LoLT. It is only in Grade 4 that they were introduced to English FAL (DBE, 2012) as their LoLT. Consequently, for these learners their HL, Tshivenḓa, is no longer their LoLT. This is because of the transition process, that is, when in grade 4 the HL is replaced by EFAL, and this puts them at a disadvantage because they have not attained adequate proficiency in EFAL to comprehend the subject matter. In addition, Grade 7 teachers are faced with the challenge of teaching EFAL using English as LoLT because THL is the most prevalent language spoken in the area and it is used by most of the learners to execute their daily activities. Although the Language in Education Policy (LiEP) (DoE, 1997) underpins

the retention of learners' HL for teaching and learning while also encouraging the acquisition of additional languages, the transition to English as LoLT led to some teachers and learners divorcing THL in favour of the English only approach. However, this impacted negatively on learners' academic performance. To improve learners' academic performance, some teachers in Vhembe District, Limpopo Province, adopted the monolingual approach by teaching EFAL using English as LoLT and also encouraged learners to speak English only during the lessons and participate in debate competitions. Learners with a good command of English were considered intelligent and that created the impression that THL is inferior and irrelevant in the learning and teaching of EFAL and other content subjects. However, there was no improvement in their performance during academic assessments. When teachers opted for translanguaging practices there was an improvement in academic performance and participation during the lessons. It was these observations that prompted the researchers to undertake a study on teachers' perceptions of translanguaging pedagogy in the teaching of EFAL. An exploration of the teachers' perceptions would be used to determine the extent to which teachers allow the use of the translanguaging pedagogy and its impact in the teaching and learning of EFAL. Finally, this study also contributes to research on the translanguaging approach among Tshivenḓa teachers offering EFAL to bilingual learners.

Theoretical framework

This study is grounded on Hornberger's continua of biliteracy model (CBM). CBM (Hornberger, 1989; Hornberger, 2007; Hornberger & Skilton-Sylvester, 2000) supports the view of the development of more than one language that emphasises the multidimensionality and complexity of the biliteracy process. Garcia (2001) defines biliteracy as the process of developing academic proficiency through the utilisation of the HL while also fostering the development of language and academic proficiency in the FAL such as English. It is imperative to mention that biliteracy emphasises the development of academic literacy by bilinguals in a simultaneous process as opposed to a sequential or linear form (Reyes, 2012). This ultimately results in bilinguals developing parallel linguistic competency in both the HL and FAL. Here, the emphasis is on developing bilinguals who are competent in at least two or more languages mainly concerning literacy skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Reyes, 2012). A significant factor of biliteracy is that it advocates "students and teachers to access broader and more diverse sociocultural resources and abundant funds of knowledge for thinking" (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992, p.237; Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005, p.52). The continua of biliteracy model fits the present study because it offers teachers the opportunity to have access to and draw from both THL and English in the teaching of EFAL.

Literature review

Origins and objectives of translanguaging

Translanguaging originated in a small country called Wales. Williams (1994) an educator worked with Baker (2001), a scholar who dedicated his career to studying bilingualism and the Welsh linguistic community. Trawsieithu is a Welsh word used by Williams (1994) to refer to a teaching method in Welsh secondary schools. Baker (2001) translated the word trawsieithu into English to mean translanguaging. In its origin, the concept meant 'translinguifying' before it was changed to 'translanguaging'. The translanguaging method involves 'the systematic alternation of two languages so that children receive information in one language and produce a piece of work in the other language' (Williams, 1994; Baker, 2011,p.99). The main idea of translanguaging is that one language supports the other to enhance understanding as well as encourage pupils' classroom participation in both languages (Lewis, Jones & Baker, 2012). For example, learners might prepare a poster in English and explain it in their HL. In other words, translanguaging is about 'making meaning, shaping experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge by using two languages' (Baker,2011,p.288). In Garcia's work (2009), the concept of translanguaging is generally known to emphasise the importance of using family

languages/home languages in instruction (Garcia & Li, 2014).

Although there are several challenges in defining the concept of translanguaging due to its multivariant positioning, translanguaging is defined as the utilisation of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire while disregarding the socially and politically defined boundaries of named languages (Garcia, Johnson & Seltzer, 2017; Otheguy, Garcia & Reid, 2015). Within the educational context, Garcia and Kano (2014, p.260) define translanguaging 'as a process by which students and teachers engage in complex discursive practices that take into account all the language practices of all students in a class to develop new language practices while sustaining prior experiences and giving voice to new socio-political realities by cross-examining the inequality of languages. Similarly, Garcia (2009), Baker (2011), Lewis, Jones, and Baker (2012) refer to translanguaging as a planned and systematic alternation of two languages in one lesson in a school context. Garcia, Flores, and Woodley (2012,p. 52) define translanguaging pedagogy from a bilingual viewpoint. They define it as a flexible strategy of building bilingual students' language practices to develop improved understanding and new language practices. Interestingly, all the translanguaging definitions cited above emphasise the deliberate and systematic utilisation of two or more languages by bi/multilingual speakers for meaning-making. However, translanguaging does not imply a separation of two language practices or a hybrid mixture of languages; instead, it refers to a single linguistic repertoire. This view is supported by Vogel and García (2017, p. 6) when they argue that bilinguals do not 'shuttle' between 'two interdependent language systems'; instead they have 'one semiotic system that is comprised of various lexical, morphological, and grammatical linguistic features in addition to social practices'. This is to illustrate that languages such as THL and EFAL spoken by bilingual learners in this study are not compartmentalised but are an integrated single linguistic system that they can use to develop their language competencies. When teachers allow these learners to draw on their full linguistic repertoire, it helps with meaning-making , and thus understanding is improved.

The introduction of the translanguaging pedagogy focused on two agendas, namely, social and political. From the social aspect, translanguaging includes the day-to-day experiences, identities, and language uses of bi/multilingual and plurilingual speakers (Flores, 2014) when compared with other teaching approaches. A variety of strategies employed in the translanguaging approach include among others the following: encourage students to shuttle between all the languages spoken in multilingual contexts (Makalela, 2015), use code-meshing varieties and languages during the process of essay writing (Canagarajah, 2013), and develop 'concept glossaries' which stage the development of terms in African languages through translingual discussions (Madiba, 2014, p.68).

The process of disrupting the hierarchies of named languages and the ideologies of language purity is regarded as a political act' by Flores (2014). In the context of Africa, Makalela (2016) asserts that languages were divided into compartments because political leaders wanted to promote national sovereignty. He, therefore, calls for a change in languages by advocating for the interconnectedness of African languages as it occurred during the 10th century at the Mapungubwe settlement. Concerning the classroom situation, Makalela (2016) advocates for the Ubuntu Translanguaging Pedagogy (UTP), where students are permitted to use their full linguistic repertoires to understand texts or an activity.

Perceptions of the Translanguaging Pedagogy

To date, several studies on teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward translanguaging pedagogy have been conducted. This study cites some examples of studies on perspectives of translanguaging conducted in different contexts by scholars like Pinto (2020), Zhang (2022), and Yusri, Huzaimi, and Sulaiman (2022). These studies report on the overall positive perceptions of translanguaging among teachers who used this approach for learning purposes, managing a classroom, and building a positive rapport with students. Contrary to these benefits mentioned

above, some teachers reject translanguaging in the L2 classroom. For instance, a study conducted in Spain among English teachers reports the exclusion of L1 in teaching because it is considered a hindrance to the acquisition of L2 (Dioz & Lasagabaster, 2017). Anderson and Lightfoot's study (2021) among 169 teachers revealed that half of the respondents mentioned that using L1 in L2 classrooms should be minimised to accelerate L2 acquisition. Lastly, Burton and Rajandram (2019) report that four of five English instructors maintained that translanguaging slows down learners' learning of English and it cannot be considered a resource for learning.

In Tanzania, lower primary education, Mwambula (2021) reports that teachers accept the HL as a fundamental resource for teaching and learning English. In addition, these teachers conclude that learners are "quicker to learn to read and acquire other academic skills in their mother tongue" than when an unfamiliar language is utilised as a medium of instruction (Mwambula, 2021, p.45). Despite the varied perspectives of translanguaging pedagogy, most of the studies above cited a positive outlook towards the utilisation of the HL. Simply put, students' linguistic repertoire is regarded as a resource for learning English in L2 classrooms (Garcia & Kano, 2014; Makalela, 2015) and does not hinder the acquisition of L2 as advocated and widely spread by those who believe in language separation in education (Cook, 2001; Cummins, 2001; 2007).

Aim of the Study

The study aimed to explore Grade 7 teachers' perceptions of the translanguaging approach in the teaching and learning of English FAL among Grade 7 Tshivenḓa learners in the selected South African primary schools in Vhembe District, Limpopo Province. The intention was also to determine the extent to which teachers allow the use of the translanguaging pedagogy and its impact in the teaching and learning of English FAL.

Methods

The research methodology used in this study is a qualitative approach defined as the process of understanding and learning about various experiences from the perspectives of a person or a group (Yilmaz, 2013; Neumann, 2016). This qualitative approach was considered an appropriate research method for the following reasons:

- First, the researchers were able to conduct classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews and administer open-ended questionnaires to teachers to understand the unified overview of the research and explore their perceptions of translanguaging pedagogy utilised during English FAL lessons.
- Second, the study intended to collect and present data in a more descriptive and narrative form so that the researchers could convey the experiences and opinions of teachers.

Population

The study's population comprised 55 rural primary schools situated southeast of Ṱhohoyanḓou town, Vhembe District, Limpopo Province. In these schools, the LoLT is Tshivenḓa from Grades R to 3 and English from Grades 4 to 7. The population in terms of participants comprised 123 Grade 7 English FAL teachers who are Tshivenḓa mother-tongue speakers. These teachers teach learners, who are Tshivenḓa mother-tongue speakers.

Sampling

The researchers applied purposive sampling to the population, that is, a non-random sampling technique to solicit persons with specific characteristics to participate in the research study (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2011; Gray, 2014; Schreiber & Asner-Self, 2011). 3 schools and 6 Grade 7 English FAL teachers from Luvuvhu Circuit in Vhembe District were purposively sampled. That is, 2 Grade 7 English FAL teachers were selected from each school to participate in the study. These teachers were selected because they taught English FAL in Grade 7 and are Tshivenḓa mother-tongue speakers.

Ethical Considerations

In order to get access to the three sampled primary schools, ethical considerations were requested from the Limpopo Provincial Department of Education to allow the researchers to conduct the research. Moreover, informed consent from all participants who participated in the study was obtained.

Data Collection

In this study, data were collected using the following instruments:

First, a checklist for classroom observations was used to write down all instances of translanguaging pedagogy during the lessons conducted by the 6 Grade 7 English FAL teachers. Notes were written down about the language(s) used in the following aspects: teaching the subject matter, explaining new or difficult concepts, summarising the lesson, giving tasks or homework, the interaction between teachers and learners, and classroom management. Second, open-ended questionnaires were used to collect data from the 6 Grade 7 EFAL teachers. These open-ended questionnaires provided an opportunity to obtain in-depth responses that the researchers would not have anticipated (Fribourg & Rosenvinge, 2013). Third, semi-structured interviews were utilised to probe the 6 Grade 7 EFAL teachers to determine their perceptions of the translanguaging pedagogy in the teaching and learning of EFAL among Grade 7 Tshivenḓa learners. Additionally, these semi-structured interviews elicited crucial information that was not obtained through questionnaires and classroom observations. Interviews were recorded with the participants' permission and later transcribed for data analysis.

Data analysis

Data collected for the study were analysed using qualitative content analysis to interpret the content of text data using the classification method of coding and identifying themes or patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The researchers identified and formulated themes that emerged from the participants' transcribed semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires.

Findings

This study presents in-depth information gathered from classroom observations, questionnaires, and interviews to determine teachers' perceptions of the translanguaging pedagogy in the teaching of EFAL among Grade 7 Tshivenḓa learners.

Classroom observations

During the process of classroom observations, researchers took notes of all instances of translanguaging pedagogy as indicated on the designed observation checklist and as they transpired during each lesson. The key points observed in each of the six lessons conducted by Mr Phosa, Ms Londolani, Ms Elisabeth, Mr Bheki, Ms Blandina, and Mr Pitso (pseudonyms) were the following:

In the first lesson, Mr Phosa introduced the researchers to learners in their HL. To catch learners' attention and maintain discipline in the classroom, Mr Phosa said: [ndi khou lavhelela uri hu ḓo vha na vhuḓifari havhuḓi sa vhu nga ri na vhaeni!], I expect good behaviour from all of you because we have a visitor! Thereafter, Mr Phosa informed the class about reading a comprehension passage from the prescribed textbook entitled, "Weighing the Elephant." The text was read interchangeably by the teacher and the learners. Mr Phosa used both English FAL and Tshivenḓa HL to explain what was happening in the story so that learners gained a better understanding of the subject matter. During the lesson, learners were asked to explain the meanings of words such as scale, weigh, and elephant in their HL. Mr Phosa reiterated the explanation in THL as follows: the word scale [ndi tshikalo tshi no shumiswa u kala vhuleme ha tshithu], an instrument used to determine the weight of something; weigh [ndi u kala vhuleme ha tshithu], meaning, to put something on a scale to determine its weight and elephant [ndi phukha ya ḓaka i ḽaho maṱari na mahatsi nahone yo hula u fhira vhunzhi ha zwipuka zwa ḓaka], it is a wild animal, herbivore and the biggest of all wild animals. The researchers noted the active participation of learners when asked to debate about the possibilities of weighing an elephant in their Tshivenḓa HL. In another instance, the HL was utilised to request learners to

applaud a fellow learner when a correct response was given to the teacher's questions or performed well in the activity. Mr Phosa would instruct other learners to applaud. He would say: [kha ri do mu rwela zwanḓa rothe, o shuma zwavhudi!], Let's clap hands, he/she has done very well! In this lesson, Mr Phosa adopted the translanguaging pedagogy to maintain discipline, teach the subject matter, explain the meanings of new words, commend learners, and interact with learners to discuss strategies to weigh an elephant and manage the classroom.

In the second lesson, Mr Bheki started his grammar lesson about Nouns. He emphasised the strict usage of EFAL but opted to switch to THL to explain the subject matter realising the poor participation of learners when asked questions orally. Noting the lack of learners' understanding, Mr Bheki uttered the following expression: [ndi khou zwi vhona uri vhańwe a ni khou mpfa]; I can see that some of you do not understand. As a result, the teacher opted to teach the subject matter in THL. Mr Bheki provided two main types of nouns, namely, abstract nouns and concrete nouns. The teacher explained the meaning of each concept and learners provided relevant examples of nouns, in each case either in EFAL or THL. A concrete noun, [zwi ambaho tshithu tshi ne tsha farea nga tshanḓa, tsumbo, bugu kana muthu], a thing that can be touched by hand, for example, a book or person. An abstract noun, [ndi tshithu tshine u nga si zwi fare nga tshanḓa, tsumbo, vengo kana dakalo a zwi farei], meaning, an untouchable thing, for example, jealousy or happiness can't be touched. The researchers observed that the translanguaging approach was used to teach the subject matter, interact with learners, and explain the meanings of new concepts. In addition, the expression, [ndi khou zwi vhona uri vhańwe a ni khou mpfa], meaning, I can see that some of you do not understand, was intended to grasp the learners' attention to listen attentively. That was an instance of classroom management.

In the third lesson observed, Ms Londolani was teaching a comprehension passage entitled 'Why Mapule did not go to school'. The reading of the text was done by the teacher to model a reading style to the learners. The teacher provided a thorough explanation in each paragraph about what happened to Mapule in both Tshivenḓa HL and English FAL to enhance learners' understanding. Furthermore, Ms Londolani summarised the entire lesson while also prompting the active participation of learners; they could discuss the story in pairs and respond orally to the teacher's questions. In concluding the lesson, Ms Londolani gave learners a task to write as a form of an assessment to determine if the subject matter was well understood. Instructional words such as underline, tick, cross, mention, and complete were explained in Tshivenḓa HL to ensure the learners' clear understanding of the questions as follows: underline, [zwi amba u talela ipfi], tick,[ndi u raithisa], cross, [u vhea tshifhambano], complete-[u fhedzisa]. Learning new or difficult words in THL and English such as absent[u sa vha hone tshikoloni], hut [ndi nnḓu ya ṱhanga ya hatsi], fire [ndi mulilo], neighbours [muhura/mudzula-tsini], and school uniform [ndi zwiambaro zwine vhana vha tshikolo vha ambara musi vha tshi ya tshikoloni], increased the learner's vocabulary while also developing the two languages equally.

In the fourth lesson, Ms Elisabeth used English when she started her lesson based on the reading comprehension passage entitled, Thabang's mother, Mama Duduzile. As she facilitated her lesson, she alternated between the Tshivenḓa HL and English FAL to explain the meaning of new words such as illness [vhulwadze], daughter [ńwana wa musidzana kana ńwananyana], relatives [mashaka], eldest [muhulwane kha vhoṱhe], and village [kusi] and clarified information from the story to enhance learners' understanding. The explanation was followed by a few content-related questions from the teacher, and when learners could not respond, Ms Elizabeth would switch solely to Tshivenḓa HL to clarify the questions from the story. Learners raised their hands to respond to the questions they previously could not respond to. In this lesson, the teacher used the alternation of languages to teach the content of the story and explain new words.

The fifth lesson was conducted by Mr Pitso, who taught a lesson on articles. The lesson aimed to provide definitions of definite and indefinite articles and examples from the text. Furthermore, learners were expected to know how to use these articles in spoken and written texts.

During the lesson, English was used as the LoLT to define definite and indefinite articles and explain how to use them with nouns. In addition, learners were referred to the glossary sections in their textbook and notes on the chalkboard to check the meanings of new concepts or difficult words. Learners responded to the questions using English only as instructed by the teacher. In his comment, Mr Pitso said, "This is an English FAL lesson, I expect you all to respond to the questions in English." In concluding the lesson, Mr Pitso assessed learners by giving them a class activity to fill in the correct articles to complete the sentences. The instructions for the task were explained in English. The teacher led the class when corrections for the activity were done. Learners who obtained 50% and above were requested to raise their hands, and it could be observed that only half of the class passed the activity.

The last lesson taught by Ms Blandina was about adjectives. She defined the meaning of adjectives and explained how they are used with nouns. The LoLT used throughout the lesson was English. Learners were informed to ask questions using English only. In her comment, she said, "You must listen attentively to the lesson, otherwise you won't grasp anything because I am not going to explain in your mother tongue." During the lesson, it could be observed that there were minimal responses from learners when responding to oral questions. Ms Blandina dominated the lesson and learners were mostly silent and hesitant to ask questions.

Questionnaires

Open-ended questionnaires were administered to 6 teachers because they had the potential to provide in-depth responses that the researchers would not have anticipated (Fribourg & Rosenvinge, 2013). Participants were provided with ample time to complete the questionnaires in the comfort of their homes. Open-ended questionnaires allowed the participants to reflect on the questions, as questionnaires are regarded as a non-threatening way of obtaining information.

A sample of the following questions were asked:

Question 1: What are your perceptions towards the use of both Tshivenḓa HL and English FAL during the teaching of English FAL?

Question 2: What are your fellow teachers' attitudes towards learners who interact with them using Tshivenḓa HL during an English FAL lesson?

Question 3: What are your learners' perceptions towards the use of both English and Tshivenḓa HL when teaching English FAL?

Question 4. What is your opinion about the use of both Tshivenḓa HL and English in teaching other content subjects?

Question 5: What do you think are the possible benefits if any, of using both English and learners' HL in your teaching?

Question 6: If you allow learners to interact with you in their HL during your English FAL lesson, for what purpose is the approach used?

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used as the third instrument, to collect data from 6 Grade 7 EFAL teachers. Semi-structured interviews were utilised because they allowed the researchers to probe the interviewees about their perceptions of the translanguaging pedagogy in the teaching and learning of EFAL for Grade 7 Tshivenḓa learners. Interviews were conducted in places and times that were suitable for the teachers and the researchers. With the permission of the participants, the interviews were audio-recorded, and data were stored for comparison and discussion as well as for transcription. Each interview session lasted between 20-30 minutes during which in-depth information from the teachers about the translanguaging approach was recorded.

The following interview questions were asked:

Question 1: How do your learners cope with English as LoLT?

Question 2: What are your learners' perceptions towards the use of both Tshivenḓa

HL and English during an English FAL lesson?

Question 3: If you use both Tshivenḓa HL and English FAL during your lessons, what is the purpose of using this approach?

Question 4: Do you think the use of Tshivenḓa HL and English FAL during your lessons is an effective approach? Provide a reason for your answer.

Question 5: Do you allow your learners to ask questions in their Tshivenḓa HL during English FAL lessons? Provide a reason for your answer.

Question 6: If you allow your learners to use Tshivenḓa HL during English FAL lessons, to what extent is the approach used?

Question 7: Do you think using both Tshivenḓa HL and English FAL during the lessons has

any improvement in academic performance? Provide reasons for your answer.

Discussion and Interpretation of Findings

The overall results of the study revealed two differentiated strands of the teachers' perceptions of the translanguaging approach in the teaching and learning of EFAL for Grade 7 learners. The 4 Grade 7 teachers have a positive outlook on translanguaging pedagogy in the teaching and learning of English FAL while the other 2 teachers objected to the use of translanguaging in preference for an English-only approach to accelerate the learning of English in their L2 classrooms. The findings of the four lessons above revealed that there was an alternation of THL and EFAL because the teachers permitted this approach. The 4 teachers alternated between THL and EFAL for the following purposes: to enhance learners' understanding of the subject matter, to explain new concepts or difficult words, to summarise the lesson, to explain instructions on how to complete tasks in the classroom, to prompt learners to ask questions during the lessons, and to build learners' confidence.

The following purposes were recorded during the classroom observations and are discussed in detail below:

To enhance learners' understanding of the subject matter

During Mr Bheki's lesson, learners' understanding of the subject matter was enhanced by emphasising the two concepts about nouns solely in Tshivenḓa HL. Below is an extract of his presentation.

Mr Bheki: *[Madzina ana tshaka mbili khulwane dzine dza vha 'abstract noun'- heḽi ndi dzina ḽine ḽa vha tshithu tshi sa farei nga zwanḓa kana u tshi vhona. Tsumbo ndi lufuno, dakalo, vivho na dzinwe-vho. 'Concrete noun' ndi iṅwe tsumbo ine ya vha tshithu tshi ne tsha farea kana u vhonala. Tsumbo ndi nnḓu, bugu, muthu, bola, dzinwe-vho].*

English translation: *There are two main types of nouns namely abstract noun- which refers to something intangible. For example, love, happiness, jealousy and so forth. Concrete noun is another example that refers to something that is tangible. For example, a house, a book, a person, ball, and so forth.*

Learners would either nod their heads or raise their hands to respond to the questions that were previously asked to indicate that the subject content was well understood.

To explain new concepts or difficult words

In the four lessons taught by Mr Phosa, Ms Londolani, Mr Bheki, and Ms Elisabeth, new or difficult words were explained in THL. For instance, in the lesson conducted by Mr Phosa based on the passage entitled '*Weighing the elephant*,' learners were introduced to new words such as *weight*, *scale*, and *elephant*, while Ms Londolani's class learned the following new words: *absent, hut, fire, neighbours*, and *school uniform*. For the learners to understand the new words, Mr Phosa and Ms Londolani explained the meaning of the difficult words in THL. The explanation assisted with both understanding and development of their vocabulary (Khojan, 2022) in both English and THL. Learning new words in THL and EFAL increases the learners' vocabulary (Madiba, 2014; Mwinda & van Der Walt, 2015; Galante, 2020) while also

developing the two languages equally. The process of skills transfer is evident, that is, knowledge gained in the HL is transferred to English FAL during the learning process (Cummins, 2007).

To summarise the lesson

Ms Londolani summarised the story, '*The day Mapule did not go to school'* by explaining it in THL from the beginning until the end. There was a slight use of English to emphasise the adjectives to describe what happened on *'The day Mapule did not go to school'*. Additionally, in Mr Bheki's lesson, a summary of the lesson was provided in both THL and EFAL by explaining and citing the different examples of nouns in the learners' HL. This was intended to provide a greater understanding of the text passage that was being taught.

To explain instructions for the completion of tasks or activities in the classroom.

At the end of the lessons, Ms Londolani and Mr Bheki gave their learners tasks to write as a form of an assessment to determine if they adequately understood the subject matter. To clarify the instructional words (Madiba, 2014) for the tasks given, Ms Londolani explained the meaning of instructional words such as *underline, tick, cross, mention,* and *complete* in THL. Additionally, Mr Bheki used THL to explain what was expected of the task given. For example, the following instructional words were explained to the learners in their HL, *identify, name, mention, classify,* and so forth. The explanations in the two instances were pivotal to ensuring the learners' clear understanding of the meaning of the words. After the detailed explanation and clarification, learners understood what was expected and what to do in the activities provided (Khojan, 2022; Silalahi & Santoso, 2023). In all these instances, learners gained a better understanding of what to do in each activity.

To prompt learners to ask questions

In this study alternation of languages was used to prompt communication between teacher and learners during the lesson. Learners' participation improved because of the relaxed environment created by teacher when allowing the use of the HL in the classroom. Ms Elisabeth and Mr Bheki affirm with these points by expressing the following comments:

Ms Elisabeth: *Translanguaging helps them (learners) speak in the classroom. They ask questions when they don't understand, and my explanation makes them to want to learn more.*

Ms Bheki*: ...they (learners) ask (questions) in their language they understand, and they can know what is happening in the classroom.*

In these classrooms constant communication between teachers and learners improves understanding of the lesson content while also building a good rapport.

To build learners' confidence.

When learners' English proficiency is low, it this leads them to become nervous and anxious. They grow reluctant to learn the L2. However, using learners' HL in the L2 classroom reduces their anxiety (Romanowski, 2020) while boosting their confidence because they can relate well with their first language (L1). In support of this assertion Mr Phosa said:

You will find that they (learners) will struggle here and there, but when times goes on… they become confident and understand the subject matter and improve academic performance.

To avoid losing learners' interest, the translanguaging pedagogy can be used to build confidence to learn English as FAL.

To convey the informal message for classroom management

The messages conveyed were meant to grasp learners' attention, maintain discipline, and praise the learners for their good performance (Zhang, 2022; Yusri, Huzaimi & Sulaiman, 2022). For instance, when Mr Phosa introduced the researchers to the learners, greetings and introductions were done in

Tshivenḓa. He instructed the learners as follows: [*ndi khou lavhelela uri hu ḓo vha na vhuḓifari havhuḓi sa vhu nga ri na vhaeni*], I expect good behaviour from all of you because we have a visitor. The use of THL was intended to grasp the learners' attention while maintaining discipline among them. Ms Londolani maintained discipline in the classroom by calling out to the learner in his HL: [*hee ḽa muṱhannga, sedzani ngeno ni litshe u ita phosho!],* hey young man, look here and do not make a noise. The teacher switched to the learner's HL to get him to pay attention to the lesson. Finally, when learners responded correctly to the teachers' questions or performed well in the activity, Mr Phosa would instruct other learners to applaud him or her (Nambisan, 2014). He would say: *[kha ri do mu rwela zwanḓa rothe, o shuma zwavhudi],* Let's clap hands for him, he/she has done very well. In all these instances, it was noted that learners would adhere strictly to the teacher's message as requested indication of well-conveyed information.

Further analysis of data from open-ended questionnaires and interviews using the qualitative content method resulted in the identification of additional purposes presented in themes.

Theme 1: Enhance learners' understanding of the subject matter

The 4 teachers (Mr Phosa, Ms Londolani, Mr Bheki, and Ms Elisabeth) stated that the most important objective they wanted to achieve at the end of the lesson was to ensure that learners had grasped the subject matter. This resulted in most of them allowing learners to use their full linguistic repertoire during the English FAL lessons. This idea was justified by the following comments from Mr Bheki and Mr Phosa:

Mr Bheki: *Let me say, I am teaching English and I am using English only, they will understand but the use of the home language will make them understand more. When it comes to writing there is no compromising. It is good when you are teaching in another language (English) and then you explain in their home language, so they can have an idea of what is taught.*

Mr Phosa: *I use the two languages (English and Tshivenḓa HL) because I want these learners to grasp the subject matter easily. We must swim in the same boat. If you start using bombastic language, they will not hear you. They just started using English three years back. This is a transitional stage and we need to go with them step by step.*

It is evident from the responses above that the 2 teachers recognise the significance of THL during the EFAL lessons because it fast-tracks the understanding of the subject matter (Cummins, 2000; Baker, 2011; Garcia & Li, 2014; Madiba, 2014; Makalela, 2016; Mbirimi-Hungwe & Hungwe, 2018). The use of THL in EFAL classrooms is not considered to have a detrimental effect on the learning of the second language (Palmer & Martinez 2013; Romanowski, 2020), but it is viewed as a useful resource and a convenient tool to help learners process their understanding and learning of the subject matter (Cook, 2001; Cummins, 2001; 2007).

Theme 2: Maximise learners 'participation

Grade 7 EFAL teachers used translanguaging pedagogy to prompt communication between them and their learners during the EFAL lessons. For instance, during Mr Phosa's lesson, learners could discuss the possible ways of "weighing an elephant", among themselves while interacting with the teachers in either Tshivenḓa HL or English FAL. Furthermore, Ms Elisabeth opted to utilise Tshivenḓa HL to explain the subject matter and learners could ask questions and respond to the questions orally. The researchers observed the improved learners' participation in the classroom (Yavayapan, 2019) because of the relaxed environment created and consequently a good rapport (Fang & Liu, 2020; Pinto, 2020) between the teacher and the learners was built. Ms Elisabeth and Mr Phosa expressed their views as follows about improved communication and participation in the classroom:

Ms Elisabeth: *Translanguaging helps them (learners) speak in the classroom. They ask questions when they don't understand, and my explanation makes them want to learn more. Those struggling, they mix the two languages and I can help them say it in English.*

Ms Phosa*: They (learners) ask (questions) in the language they understand, and they can know what is being taught in the classroom.*

Therefore, it is evident that when the HL was used for communication in these Grade 7 classrooms, learners felt comfortable asking questions for clarification purposes about the topic being taught or the task to be completed (Silalahi & Santoso, 2023).

Theme 3: To improve academic performance

The main objective of Grade 7 teachers during their EFAL lessons was to ensure that their learners understood the subject content matter and ultimately improve their academic performance. However, when the language of instruction shifted from English only to include THL, there was a noticeable change. The understanding of the subject matter was improved when the HL was alternated with EFAL in a single lesson and hence there was also an improvement in academic performance. Bheki and Elisabeth commented as follows in support of the view above.

Mr Bheki: *It is good when you are teaching English you explain in their home language and they will get an idea of what is taught, and their performance is improved.*

Ms Elisabeth: *When two languages are used, there is an academic improvement. This is good for the learners.*

The aforementioned comments illustrate that a translanguaging pedagogy is significant for their learners' academic improvement in their classrooms. Therefore, THL cannot be ignored and cast away from Grade 7 English FAL learners because this would deprive them of making use of their full linguistic repertoire which could improve their performance in the learning of English FAL. Although this view above is contrary to what some scholars believe, namely, that the presence of the HL in the L2 classroom detracts from the learning of English and delays academic development and progress, the findings of this study suggest that the monolingual approach cannot be an appropriate strategy to help learners acquire English, but that the translanguaging approach would better serve the THL learners.

Theme 4: Positive and negative perceptions

Theme 4 does not pertain to one of the purposes of the translanguaging approach, however, it was identified as a theme that determines the participants' perceptions of the use of THL and EFAL in a single lesson. Data collected from teachers regarding their perceptions of translanguaging in EFAL classrooms revealed two different views. Firstly, the 4 Grade 7 English teachers had a positive view towards the use of Tshivenḓa HL during their English FAL lessons. Secondly, the 2 teachers preferred the use of the English-only approach for greater exposure to the second language (L2) to help learners acquaint themselves with the medium of instruction (Lado, 1957; Philipson, 1999; Escobar & Dillard-Paltrineri, 2015).

Teachers who preferred the use of a translanguaging pedagogy during the English FAL lessons indicated that the strategy serves as an aid to clarify or explain difficult concepts (Makalela, 2015) that learners are unable to grasp in English. Additionally, it enhances the understanding of the subject matter during a lesson. The benefits of the translanguaging pedagogy were fully supported by the 4 teachers, namely, Mr Phosa, Ms Londolani, Ms Elisabeth, and Mr Bheki. This is further supported by Mr Phosa and Mr Bheki's statements below:

Mr Phosa*: I support the use of both home language and English in the teaching of English FAL because learners learn and understand better in their mother tongue. These kids are interested in learning English, but they want to understand the subject matter, that is*

why we translanguage…we use both English and Tshivenḓa.

Mr Bheki*: Alternation of languages is good considering that our children are from another phase and are in a transition stage, I use Tshivenḓa to help them understand what I teach. Depending on the language proficiency, I apply this strategy (translanguaging) from term 1 up to 3 or proceed with it until I see that their understanding has improved.*

The teachers' responses above clearly depict that the use of Tshivenḓa HL should not be considered a hindrance to the learning of the L2 but as a useful resource tool (Cummins, 2007; McCabe, 2013). Thus, it can be concluded that the 4 Grade 7 English FAL teachers have positive perceptions of the translanguaging pedagogy in the teaching of EFAL.

Despite the benefits of the translanguaging pedagogy listed above, contradictory statements of concern against the use of THL in the EFAL lessons were expressed by two of the Grade 7 EFAL teachers. These participants argued against the use of THL in the EFAL classroom in favour of monolingual pedagogy and linguistic purism. The reasons below were mentioned in support of the isolation of languages:

Mr Pitso*: I do not mix the two languages because I will not be doing justice to the learners, I will be lowering their vocabulary, you know. It will discourage learners to learn English. You know what? I want them to have skills of listening, writing, reading, and speaking English fluently.*

Ms Blandina*: I teach English using medium of instruction only so that I build their vocabulary. Translanguaging will discourage them not to master English as medium of instruction. Learners will lack interest in English FAL. So, me… I want learners to be able to communicate using English fluently.*

The comments above signify that these teachers still hold the separatist's view that the learners' HL is an obstacle that disturbs the acquisition and mastering of the target language and delays academic development and achievement. The isolation of languages during the teaching and learning of L2 is supported by other scholars when they claim that:

- Allowing the use of learners' full linguistic repertoire deprives them of mastering English, and English remains the Language of Teaching and Learning (LoLT) and the language of communication (Krashen, 1981; Brown, 1994).
- A learner's HL and English FAL are two distinct languages and cannot be mixed in a single lesson due to their diverse linguistic systems (Selinker, 1972; Jacobson & Faltis, 1990; Cenoz & Gorter, 2014; Escobar & Dillard-Paltrineri, 2015).
- Learners become reluctant to learn and develop their L2 because they rely on the HL for teaching and learning (Khojan, 2022).

The aforementioned points imply that the two teachers are not yet aware of the instrumental value of the translanguaging approach that benefits learners where the weaker language, English FAL, is supported by a stronger language, THL, to enhance better understanding of the concepts and academic performance (Lewis, Jones & Baker, 2011).

The argument presented by the above quotes asserts that effective learning of EFAL among Grade 7 learners could only take place when there is no mixing of languages or switching between languages to avoid one language dominating the other. In these classrooms, the strict separation of languages is prioritised during the teaching and learning of EFAL to maximise the acquisition of the target language (L2) (Lado, 1957; Krashen, 1981; Brown, 1994).

Conclusion

The conclusion drawn from the study is that the majority of Grade 7 EFAL teachers cited the cognitive and affective gains regarding the alternation of HL and L2 during

their lessons. This study reports that the majority of the Grade 7 EFAL teachers have positive attitudes towards the implementation of the translanguaging pedagogy in the teaching and learning of EFAL. Despite the benefits of the translanguaging approach mentioned above, some of the teachers voiced their contradictory views of this approach. They emphasised that THL and EFAL should be taught in isolation from another language, because of their distinct linguistic features. In addition, these teachers' view is that better language acquisition is maximised through exposure to English only. Despite the separatists' ideology still being widely accepted and utilised, it is imperative to raise awareness of the cognitive and affective benefits of the translanguaging pedagogy in second language classrooms to value the funds of knowledge learners bring to their classrooms for learning purposes. The translanguaging pedagogy, although not yet generally accepted, may be found to be a preferred strategy to teach and learn EFAL, particularly among teachers and learners in similar contexts as in this study.

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