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The strategies in teaching isiXhosa semantics in Foundation Phase: A systematic review

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Author:
Anele Gobodwana[1]

Affiliation:
[1]Department of Primary & Early Childhood Education, Faculty of Education, Rhodes University, Makhanda, South Africa

Corresponding author:
Anele Gobodwana,
aneleandza@gmail.com

Background: Foundation Phase teachers in the South African Department of Basic Education system daily encounter a challenge with learners struggling to read with understanding. This motive was displayed and made available to readers and authors by the recent Progress in International Reading Literacy 2021, which articulated that learners in the Foundation Phase need to be reading their home language (isiXhosa) with understanding.

Objectives: This study sought insights into improving children's reading ability in the Foundation Phase.

Method: The research adopted the quantitative research method through the systematic review of what other authors have conducted. It has focused on children's reading of Home Language isiXhosa with semantic meaning.

Results: The analysis followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses approach. It has shown that teaching semantics of isiXhosa in the Foundation Phase, in the South African context, has been seen as an easy pedagogical strategy. In addition, teachers use the dominant language to make examples.

Conclusion: The article echoed that translanguaging is used by teachers, especially in multilingual classrooms. This approach of translanguaging is not an official pedagogical approach to learning; however, teachers use it to break the barrier of not communicating appropriate skills to children. Translanguaging is an act of acknowledging the diversity of South Africa and embracing it.

Contribution: The impact the study has made and suggested is the use of translanguaging in the classrooms. This is based on and due to the diversity in the classrooms. There are insufficient articles addressing the semantic teaching of isiXhosa in multilingual classrooms.

Keywords: code-switching; translanguaging; isiXhosa teaching strategies; home-language; Foundation Phase.

Introduction

The present study scrutinises the feasibility of introducing contemporary pedagogical tactics and techniques in elementary education to promote optimal reading habits among Foundation Phase learners, and provide professional development opportunities for educators to enhance their teaching methodologies. The study focuses on the challenges experienced by educators during language learning (semantically). Naidoo, Reddy and Dorasamy (2014) reflect that since apartheid, the promise to improve literacy has been a mandate in democratic South Africa (SA). Moreover, it is argued that there is a problem in language literary learning, coining the concept of dual language learning (DLL). The problem with DLL is that it contributes to learners' inability to acquire their home language (isiXhosa), resulting in them leaving the school system without knowing their home language's semantics (Scarpino et al. 2011). Some children tend to forget their home language, spending time mastering their second additional language, and so exit the school, especially from the Foundation Phase, not knowing their home language.

According to Gobodwana (2023), the South African Education Foundation Phase is where teachers in the SA Department of Basic Education (DBE) system face daily encounters with learners struggling to read and understand. The current Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) published this inconsistent outcome in children's reading in the Foundation Phase. Mullis and Martin (2019) articulate that learners in the Foundation Phase need to be reading their home language with understanding. What they read needs to make sense or add to or build up

Note: Special Collection: Literacy in practice.

their language vocabulary. This is well informed by the PIRLS distributed report, indicating that Grade 3 and Grade 6 learners are reading without synthesising (Mullis & Martin 2019).

Figure 1 shows how the results were examined based on the recent announcement of IEA TIMSS & PIRLS (2021). The figure indicates the Grade 4 results achieved by students. In the Foundation Phase, learners are mainly taught and given lessons in the school's home language. Research from earlier PIRLS reports (compiled from data collected between 2010 and 2022) has indicated that reading in the Intermediate Phase appears to have improved slightly. This means that this decade has contributed to epistemology and children's reading with meaning in the Foundation Phase (Hoadley 2023:110). The alarming 2021 report has impacted language and linguistics scholars with its indication that the end outcomes of teaching languages is not being met (Mullis & Martin 2019). This problem is solemnly rooted in pre-schooling; perhaps it is not stable enough.

Purpose of the research

The study will look at the results that were shared by PIRLS, indicating the learners' language fluency. Reading with the meaning and expression of learners has become an essential fundamental part of the SA education system in the Foundation Phase since it is the main phase where children are allowed to read and write in their home language. Note that it is not identified as a comparison study; it is paramount to look at and investigate good practices when it comes to language learning. Adaptation of other pedagogical styles will be investigated to find the best-improving practice. The article is motivated by the approach and teaching in the North (Europe) education system, where they use home language teaching from early grades until university. The
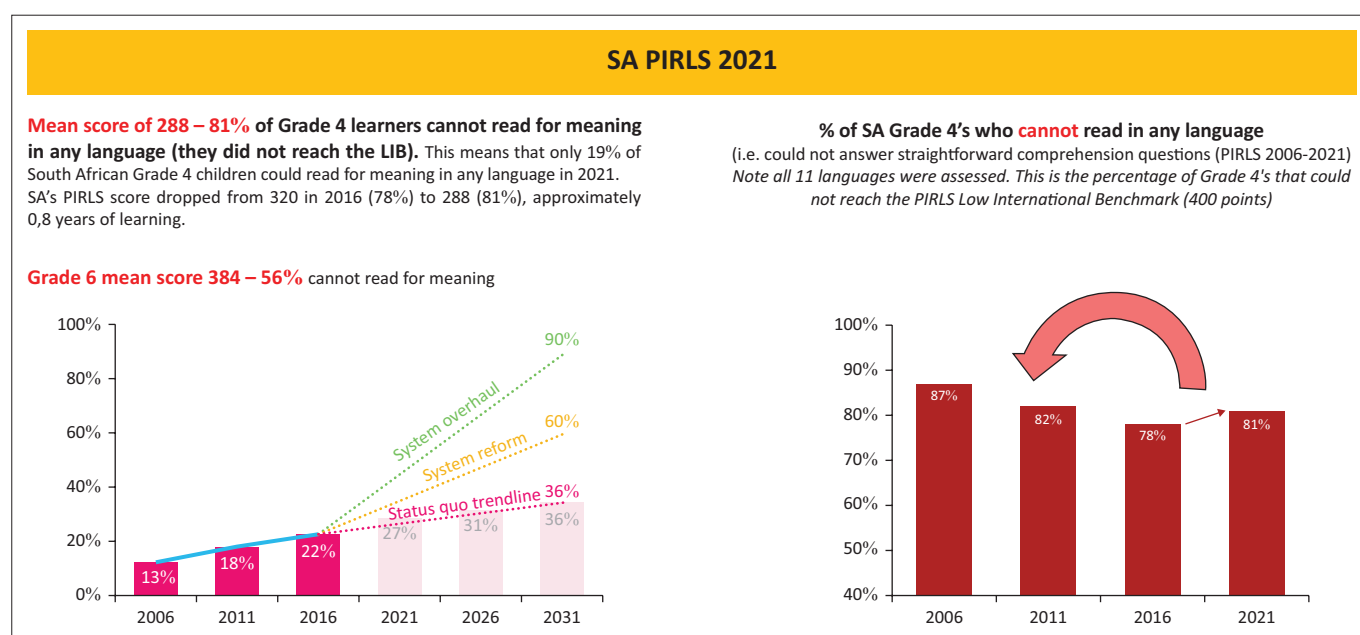
way these countries have structured the education curriculum, when it comes to language, is indeed eye-catching and it is tempting to adopt the style and pedagogies.

Statement of the problem

Reading and writing skills development is an essential aspect of development in childhood, especially in a meaningful and essential aspect of development, and assists children, in literary development in the Foundation Phase. If a child lacks these skills, they may be unable to read, or unable to read competently, and not meet the standards of their group mates (Dewitt, Alias & Siraj 2015). Therefore, educators should be able to offer support in early literacy development so that learners can acquire literacy skills.

In articles published in Scopus and Sabinet journals looking at acquiring home language semantic meaning in SA, the context of literacy becomes the main idea in the Foundation Phase. Although multilingualism is officially recognised and recorded in most constitutional language policies, the language in education policy (LieP) implemented in public schools emphasises the incorporation of additional languages. Notably, African indigenous languages are still seen as marginalised within school teaching in SA. Henceforth, acquiring home languages in a good literacy praxis becomes an enormous gatekeeper to learning (Gobodwana 2023).

However, the alignment between the language used for teacher training and the language of instruction in schools seems to mainly favour dominant languages (such as English) and overlook others like isiXhosa, resulting in teachers switching from isiXhosa to English. Despite the constitutional endorsement of official multilingualism, the national LieP promotes additive multilingualism in public schools (Department of Education [DoE] 1997).

FIGURE 1: South African Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (SA PIRLS) 2021 layout and summary.

Source: LITASA, 2023, Conference, Literacy in practice: Possibilities for praxis, Nelson Mandela University (Second Avenue Campus), Gqeberha, Eastern Cape, September 8–10, 2023

The research questions addressed in this project are:

1. What problems or hindrances do teachers experience when teaching isiXhosa in the Foundation Phase?
2. What best practices are employed in teaching isiXhosa in the Foundation Phase?
3. What is a suitable phase or grade where the African indigenous languages (isiXhosa) can be best taught to children?

Education language policy in South Africa

The SA language context is demarcated as a multilingual country. The distribution of languages according to regions indicates the multilingualism of SA, with 11 official languages including nine African indigenous languages, and fewer marginalised languages spoken by few people. These marginalised, few languages include sign language and the Nama language.

The acknowledgment of 11 official languages in SA, with nine, namely isiXhosa, isiZulu, siSwati, isiNdebele, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Setswana, Sotho, Sepedi, being African languages, has sparked diverse reactions, ranging from scepticism regarding the feasibility of accommodating all 11 languages to the cynicism that the underlying issues have been obscured. Generally, the majority of South Africans are bilingual (two languages) or multilingual (two or more languages), leading to multilingual classrooms where learners enter school with proficiency in more than one language (Edwards & Ngwaru 2011; Sefotho 2019). This is due to societal engagement outside the classroom, diversity, language shifts and human movement.

In a draft policy release, the Basic Education Department Act 12 of 2012 (2015) maintains that 'every national department, national public entity, and national public enterprise must adopt a language policy on its use of official languages'. Local government and private schools adopt a provincial regional language to be taught in the Foundation Phase. Gobodwana (2023) states:

> [L]earners or schools in the Eastern Cape will choose to make isiXhosa, Afrikaans, Sotho, and English as the home language of the school. Since these are languages that are used in the province. (n.p.)

In addition, the DBE advocates and makes it official that the SA education context provides for multilingual education, as delineated in Table 1.

This table gives a clear official indication of the DBE policy that children are taught two languages in the Foundation Phase.

In this phase of children's schooling, they are expected to be taught in their mother languages, in all subjects, that is, Life Skills, Mathematics, isiXhosa, and English. As such, isiXhosa will be used as the medium of instruction throughout this

TABLE 1: Foundation Phase language distribution.

Foundation phase Grade R–Grade 3	Children (ages)	Language 1 (Home language)	Language 2 (First additional language)
Grade R	6 years	isiXhosa	English
Grade 1	7 years	isiXhosa	English
Grade 2	8 years	isiXhosa	English
Grade 3	9 years	isiXhosa	English

phase: 'In the Foundation Phase the Department will provide all curriculum documents for both the content subjects and the languages in all 11 official languages' (DBE 2015).

During the Apartheid era in SA, the prescribed practice of bilingualism in English and Afrikaans underwent a significant shift with the introduction of a multilingualism policy embedded in the 1996 South African constitution. This policy recognises nine additional (African) languages: isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, and Xitsonga. To regulate and facilitate this multilingualism, which varies by province, several additional guidelines and legal instruments were established, included in the 1996 SA Schools Act, the LieP, and the 2001 National Curriculum Statement (DoE 1997). Moreover, the policy promotes multilingualism in the classroom, as we are in a diverse environment.

Theoretical framework

The article adopts the well-known theoretical framework of language acquisition and behaviourism theory. These two will be interchangeable as study informants and the underpinning development in home language learning in a homogenous manner, such as formal learning (Vygotsky 1979). It should be easy for children to learn a second language, especially if their first language is well developed (Vygotsky 1979). As they initially acquire their native language repertoire, individuals seamlessly transition to their second language during exposure, be it in the home, school, or any environment where they interact with speakers of languages other than their native language (Vygotsky 1979). The discussion made by the behaviourism theory approach vividly explains the underpinning importance of learning any language by children (Vygotsky 1979).

Vygotsky's (1978) theory of child development centres on the concept of mediation. Furthermore, all human mental processes are mediated by psychological tools such as language, signs, and symbols (Vygotsky 1978). These tools are not innate; rather, they are acquired through interaction with the cultural environment. Children learn these skills through interpersonal dialogue with adults or more experienced peers (Vygotsky 1978). Once acquired and internalised, these psychological tools play a crucial role in mediating children's cognitive processes. Vygotsky (1978) distinguishes these higher mental processes, mediated by cultural tools, from the innate lower mental processes present at birth (Karpov 2003).

Children from Grade R (aged 5–6 years) arrive at formal schooling. At the least, they are expected to have language

vocabulary, even if it is not formalised (Gobodwana 2023). They can speak and quickly identify some objects even if they do not have full syntactical speech (Skinner 1957). Moreover, their attention is drawn involuntarily and influenced by external stimuli, indicating cognitive language acquisition now observable in the classroom setting (Skinner 1957). Adults and peers guide and regulate children's behaviour through language, interpersonal discourse, and collaborative activities. With the school environment comes the acquisition of a new formal language (Gobodwana 2023).

According to Lightbown and Spada (1999), verbal abilities that regulate attention become internalised, leading to the development of self-control and voluntary attention in children. This emphasis on mediation as a key factor in children's development allowed Vygotsky (1978) to offer a distinctive interpretation that diverged significantly from nativist, behaviourist, or constructivist perspectives on child development. However, a notable limitation of this paradigm is Vygotsky's partial elucidation of the role of children's actions in the process of mediation.

On the other hand, Skinner's (1957) theoretical view of behaviourism is also adopted for identifying the problem that exists in the study. Children develop habits through reinforcement from their environment. They cultivate habits of precise language usage by engaging in the pronunciation and patterns of the language available to them and receiving encouragement and reinforcement from their immediate surroundings (Lightbown & Spada 1999). Skinner posits that language originates from a bodily urge to communicate and serves a purpose, with parental reinforcement being a crucial component of this process. Furthermore, Skinner aims to improve language instruction efficiency through the study of language acquisition in the home environment. Viewing language learning as habit formation, he investigates observable behaviours in language learners. This idea developed by Skinner was extended in the 1950s and 1960s, based on observation of children's learning of their home language.

Upon entering a linguistic community, a child feels compelled to engage in conversation with its members (Chambers et al. 2003:165). This inherent drive prompts the child to replicate the sounds and patterns present in the environment, a desire that is fulfilled when caregivers produce utterances that the infant imitates. Skinner (1957) explains that positive reinforcement is provided when the child's imitation utterances mirror those of the caregivers, with positive reinforcers including pleasurable experiences such as incentives or praise. Conversely, if the child's imitations diverge from those of the caregivers, negative feedback is given to encourage the development of proficient language habits, which are subsequently rewarded positively. These rewards and feedback mechanisms play a crucial role in assimilating the novice learner into the realm of new language behaviour and persist until the novice learner conforms to the standards of this new verbal culture (Littlewood 1984). The two discussed theoretical frameworks explain that they

are likely interrelated with one another as their focus is on children's learning acquisition. They can then be used to describe and give answers to the study.

Literature review

Reading is a complex process, complex to learn and complex to teach (Carnine et al. 2010). Furthermore, it is challenging to teach Foundation Phase learners English, considering that learners come from different home backgrounds where only some of them are exposed to books and reading.

Mohamed and Laher (2012) say that flashcards can be used freely outside and inside the classroom, and they help a learner focus on the words at a time when they are struggling. This will help learners break each word into letter sounds and phonetic segments and then read the word by blending the letter sounds. During the research, the researcher used flashcards by writing words that learners were struggling with from their books, and they would read them before reading a book. If they worked to read the words on the flashcards, the researcher would ask them to sound the letters and blend them, and I would also show a picture so that they know what the word means. This helped learners to read words, even though some struggled with linking the letters to a word, and understand the meaning of each word. Mohamed and Laher (2012) explain the process as follows:

> [L]earners must learn the letter sound correspondence, considering that learners might know the letter sound in their home language other than English. However, this will help learners differentiate letter sounds and letter names in English and other languages they speak at home. During this research, the researcher observed that learners needed help with letter sounds because they would say them in isiXhosa, leading them to misread the words. Another challenge the researcher watched was that learners needed help blending letters into a word. This is because they speak or say the word as it is written. Mohamed and Laher (2012), support my observation by saying that foundation phase learners, especially those from homes where they speak languages other than English, struggle to display the correct letter sound and blend letters. (p. 136)

Moreover, reading requires lots of practice to develop accuracy and fluency (Ehri 2020). Therefore, since this is essential at schools, they are expected to master the skill of reading with meaning (Ehri 2020). Carnine et al. (2010) and Ehri (2020) suggest ways learners can be taught reading skills, including a planned, logical, progressive sequence of knowledge units that teach a selected set of letter sound relations in a logical order.

They support what is commonly called mother tongue-based bilingual education in SA, as outlined by Alexander (2003). This approach is supported by extensive global research that highlights its numerous benefits. Studies indicate that students with a solid foundation in their native language tend to exhibit higher levels of participation and increased self-confidence in their learning abilities and often outperform peers who are solely educated through a second language (Baker 2011). In SA, where each of the nine provinces boasts

a unique linguistic repertoire, entities such as the Pan South African Language Board (PANSALB) and other governmental stakeholders play significant roles in promoting language equality, particularly within the realm of teaching and learning.

The DBE aligns its policies with the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), emphasising that children in the foundation phase should receive instruction in their native language, as identified by school and district authorities. While schools may vary in their designated home language, they typically share a first additional language. The choice of home language is primarily influenced by the community in which the school is situated. For example, a school in the Eastern Cape (EC) would not adopt Sepedi as its home language due to regional language preferences. Similarly, in Cape Town, schools would not utilise Sesotho as a medium of instruction, reflecting linguistic differences across provinces. Thus, the societal context surrounding a school significantly influences the selection of a home language, highlighting the importance of considering local linguistic dynamics in educational policies and practices.

When devising instructional strategies, educators must consider not only the group's capabilities and the developmental stage of most learners but also their individual experiences, interests, language proficiency, and prior knowledge (Dean 1994; Hussein 2013). Gravett and Geyser (eds. 2004) echo Dean's (1994) sentiments, emphasising the importance of considering various factors when selecting teaching strategies. They advocate for viewing learning as an active process in which students actively engage, comprehend the learning objectives, and benefit from techniques that enhance the classroom language repertoire. Individual differences in goals, attitudes, beliefs, and motivations also influence the learning process, with immediate reinforcement playing a vital role in promoting learning. Therefore, educators should provide students with diverse learning opportunities to cater to these individual variations.

Active learning emerges as another practical approach for enhancing student learning. It involves students' active participation in the learning process, as highlighted by Faust and Paulson (1998). They emphasise that children use their learning experiences to actively engage with classroom instruction, spending time listening and ultimately contributing based on their learning repertoire. This active learning approach encompasses various activities, ranging from basic writing tasks where students respond to lecture content to more complex group exercises where they apply course concepts to real-world scenarios or novel challenges. According to Meyers and Jones (1993), active learning is characterised by students' involvement in speaking, listening, reading, and writing activities. By actively participating in these activities, students not only enhance their listening skills but also develop their ability to reflect on and internalise new knowledge effectively. Therefore, fostering active participation among learners is crucial for promoting meaningful and compelling learning experiences.

Research methods and designs

The preferred reporting items for a systematic review and meta-analysis (PRISMA) are included in the methodology for the study (Liberati et al. 2009). This will consist of the search strategies used in the Scorpus and Sabinet engine search. The PRISMA meta-analysis will be used to analyse the data found in the journals.

Search strategies

The search strategy was developed to identify relevant studies on characteristics tailored towards using the anywhere option; when I used the keyword option, data was just too limited and irrelevant to the study. This search was done in Sabinet since Scopus did not have data related to the anywhere search option. The keywords related to the study did not have as many related outcomes. I only managed to find eight articles relevant to the achievement of the study. I decided to use the whole title, and that is when I found about 68 articles. This was to say that I had sufficient data to work with.

The articles were assessed using inclusion and exclusion criteria to arrive at two articles that were eventually selected for review. The inclusion and exclusion criteria are presented in the next section.

Selection criteria

The selection procedure adopted in the present review follows PRISMA, as reported by (Moher et al. 2009). This was followed by mapping extant literature and recent empirical studies on teaching isiXhosa semantics in the Foundation Phase. The search was streamlined to studies that inform isiXhosa semantics in the Foundation Phase. The inclusion criteria for review are as follows:

- Studies were related to the teaching of isiXhosa
- Studies talk of strategies adopted in teaching isiXhosa
- Studies address isiXhosa teaching by preservice teachers and in-service teachers
- Studies were published from 1995 to 2023 (because of the limited data lifted, the duration is limited)
- Studies addressed the PIRLS 2011 result and discussions
- Studies discussed the experiences of preservice teachers in teaching home language.

Figure 2 presents the selection procedures based on PRISMA outlines and the final corpus articles that were eventually selected for the review.

Data extraction and analysis procedure

As a sequel to the selection process, some thematic areas identified in the selected articles based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria are outlined in Appendix 1. The identified
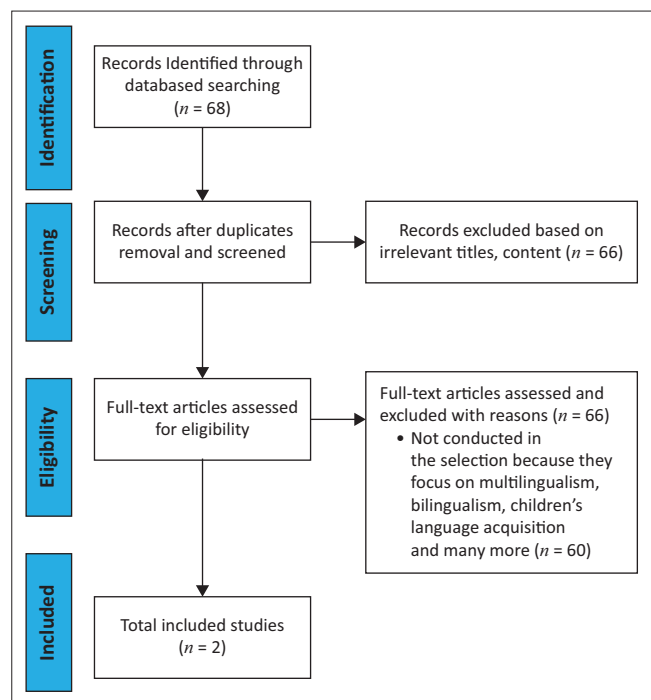
FIGURE 2: Adapted preferred reporting items for a systematic review and meta-analysis framework for study selection.

thematic areas were later used to answer the research question raised in the review. Both reviewed articles included qualitative research approaches. Articles that employed the review method were used to explain the importance and further the understanding of home language complexities. The current review is interested in articles that foster the study conducted during the instruction of preservice teachers in preparing them for their teaching careers. The other article speaks of the PIRLS 2011 results (Van Staden & Bosker 2011) where the learners were assessed across the 11 SA languages. The overview of the extracted information and the findings of the selected articles are presented in Appendix 1.

Results

The study focuses on a systematic literature review of teaching isiXhosa semantics in the Foundation Phase. This study reviewed two articles because of the unavailability of data. Appendix 1 shows the articles selected, their methodologies, countries of study, the period in which the study was conducted, organisational variables investigated alongside the context of the study, and the findings of each article. The data contained in Sabinet was insufficient to make a wide-reaching judgement or inclusive interpretation. However, the two chosen articles address the PIRLS 2011 report (Van Staden & Bosker 2011). The other presents the experiences of preservice teachers in teaching language in the Foundation Phase.

The two chosen articles discuss the semantic learning of isiXhosa and other reports on home language results. Throughout the discussion, these articles inform the reader of the semantic view of home language proficiency.

The PIRLS 2021 (Mullis & Martin 2019) report addresses the assessment of semantic language acquisition across the 11 official languages of the country. Whereas the other article demonstrated preservice teachers' preparedness to teach languages. The findings from the two analysed articles are presented under each identified research question that guided the study. The two selected articles will answer the questions the study wishes to address. In contrast, some learners are exposed to books, reading, and speak other languages as their language of communication or home language. Many methods can be used to teach Foundation Phase learners English, including flashcards and picture cards (Mohamed & Laher 2012). Mohamed and Laher (2012) say that flashcards and picture cards are good tools for teaching English learners. They also help with vocabulary acquisition, one of the most critical aspects of language learning (Gobodwana 2023).

Carnine et al. (2010) say that the most important thing teachers need to teach learners before they learn to read is letter sound correspondence and letter names so that learners know the sound of each letter and are able to differentiate between the letter sound and the letter name, because some letter sounds are the letter names of other letters. For example, the letter sound of 'u' is 'a', (i.e. umbrella) in English phonic awareness. They also added that teachers should teach learners the sounding strategy so that they are able to differentiate between sounds that sound similar, like the letters 'a' and 'e' (i.e. airplane); this will enable learners to read any word that contains different letter sound that may be similar or different (Carnine et al. 2010; Mohamed & Laher 2012).

Research question 1: What problems or hindrances do teachers experience when teaching isiXhosa in the Foundation Phase?

Kamwangamalu (2003) echoes other research in stating that the DBE language policy failed to work for all languages, a sentiment also voiced by Taylor (2007), who says that despite the recommendation from the government for children to be taught in their mother tongue, African children specifically, who constitute not only the majority but also the poorest fractions of society, are primarily schooled in English from Grade 4 onwards, a second or third language to most of these children. As a result, goals to promote the use of indigenous African languages have yet to be reached. Kamwangamalu observes a language shift from indigenous African languages to English, specifically in urban Black communities. He goes on to cite evidence that learners regard English as the language of learning, without which one 'can do nothing', 'cannot get a job', and 'cannot succeed in life'. Kamwangamalu (2003) observes:

> Zulu is not associated with any of these attributes. On the contrary, the purpose of learning Zulu is to keep the language and the culture it embodies alive so that the children do not forget their roots. (n.p.)

This article advocates that there is indeed a gap in having a sound scientific approach to teaching isiXhosa semantics in

the Foundation Phase. With the current intercultural experience in the country, the standardised and best pedagogical approach is challenging to implement. Moreover, with the curriculum derived from English, it is also impossible for teachers to be free in their language repertoire.

Research question 2: What best practices are employed in teaching isiXhosa in the Foundation Phase?

Article 1 addresses the PIRLS 2011 results, where the data was administrated across all 11 official languages (Howie et al. 2012). The discussion presented by Van Staden, Bosker and Bergbour (2016) makes a fascinating argument that in attempting to achieve a range of cognitive and effective teaching and learning goals, teachers in SA classrooms use code-switching. The definition made and included in this discussion by Ncoko, Osman and Cockraft (2000:3) says that code-switching is using two or more languages in the same conversation.

These two discussions explain what the main question seeks to answer. Code-switching has been adopted in the multilingual classroom, not in monolingual classrooms. Classrooms in the SA context are either monolingual in policy or are multilingual. This approach of using code-switching might be helpful in the multilingual setup, but this is not always the case in monolingual classroom. Other scholarly writings indicate that code-switching between African indigenous languages and English is the best approach. The study supports this approach as the children are exposed to the internet, which is English-dominant (Heugh 2002).

The response to this question indicates that code-switching is the best practice in teaching African languages in a monolingual or multilingual classroom. However, this project sees code-switching as an informal approach to teaching, as it is not well established. The use of the newly coined 'translanguaging' is common when teaching in multilingual classrooms (Gobodwana 2023:115). Children demonstrate proficiency in learning a second language due to their initial acquisition of their native language repertoire. They seamlessly transition to learning a second language, whether at home, in school, or in any environment where they interact with individuals who speak a language other than their native language. This ability to adapt and master a second language is facilitated by their exposure to diverse linguistic contexts and interactions with speakers of different languages. As a result, children exhibit a remarkable capacity to study and become proficient in the world's most frequently spoken languages (Vygotsky 1979). Therefore, the result of PIRLS 2011 may be an accurate reflection that children struggle with learning their second language, English. According to Van Staden et al. (2016):

> Classrooms often offer a mix of English content but switch to their mother tongue for elaboration and discussions. In this way, learners hardly ever engage in active language production or meaningful discourse in English. Additionally, such practices set in place patterns of rote learning and dependency on the teacher as 'keeper of knowledge', which is likely to continue to secondary schools and have implications for learners' cognitive development. (p. 3)

Multilingualism impacts the strategies to teach isiXhosa

In addition, the challenge remains to provide quality education to a multicultural learner population who speaks 11 different languages, and there is evidence that a solid native language foundation forms the basis for second language acquisition. Brock-Utne (2007) supports the argument of a lack of a solid native language by stating that millions of children enter school without knowing the language of instruction. When they get formal schooling, the new language in the Intermediate Phase is introduced to them.

According to Wei (2018), the primary goal of language learning is to foster bilingualism and, ultimately, multilingualism rather than replacing children's first language. This approach, known as translanguaging, contrasts with monolingualism. The linguistic landscape of SA classrooms has become increasingly diverse due to the country's language situation (Makalela 2015). Children enter school with a comprehensive understanding of languages they have acquired before formal education (Sefotho 2019). These observations align with the 1996 South African Constitution:

> Everyone has the right to receive an education in public educational institutions' official language or languages if instruction is practical. (s29[2])

This should even be the case in assumed monolingual classrooms where the children's cultural backgrounds impact language acquisition.

Research question 3: What is a suitable phase or grade where the African indigenous languages (isiXhosa) can be best taught to children?

Recent studies show no specific age bracket for teaching home language to children. However, the child can learn through the mother's conversation while pregnant and at birth. Magona advocates and submits that '[*t*]he child learns when she/he is still inside the mother's womb or tummy' (quote from in-person interview). The best way to start reading and teaching language to children should be as early as when they are born. Primary school learning of language and using home language might be a good approach, according to Gobodwana (2023).

Lightbown and Spanda (2006) outline the role of language acquisition in children's cognition and further claim that language acquisition is one of human development's most amazing and fascinating aspects. For example, people enjoy hearing a 3-month-old infant's laugh, reply to older infants' conversational babbling, and share the joy and excitement of parents whose 1-year-old child has uttered their first

goodbye. Learning a language is a remarkable accomplishment that has long piqued the curiosity of linguists and psychologists. Language is a strong social identity factor. One often uses it with other variables, such as religion and ethnicity, to classify people. Social identities are established in this way and are used to attach features, talents, and social rank (Banks 2001, 2002).

Furthermore, knowing more than one language improves interpersonal, academic, and social communication, broadens intellectual horizons, and fosters awareness and tolerance for diverse cultures in the age of globalisation by internationalisation (Burbules & Torres 2000:21). This statement alludes to the very early stages and ages of language development in all contexts with language acquisition. The child learns the language to which they are exposed. This means the role players are expected to model the language, so it starts acquisition.

Main findings on isiXhosa semantics in the foundation phase

Organisational performance

The two chosen papers for this article discussed and presented data on qualitative methods. The first paper addresses the findings of the PIRLS report 2011 on language proficiency in reading and writing across all the country's 11 official languages. The second chosen paper speaks of preservice teachers' experience and approach to the pedagogy of language learning in the Foundation Phase. This project chose these two articles as they best give relevant secondary data required for this article's development and good deliverance. Moreover, the second paper selected for this article does not address the total involvement of the languages as opposed to the first paper. It focuses on the preparation of preservice teachers and how they can produce relevant skills in language teaching for understanding.

Conclusion

Gobodwana (2023) delineates the distinction between code-switching and translanguaging, asserting that while code-switching involves adhering to unique grammatical rules for each language, translanguaging revolves around the practical use of language in multilingual communication. Translanguaging represents a broader understanding of bilingualism and multilingualism, marking a departure from traditional approaches to language learning. This paradigm shift emphasises a holistic perspective on language, speakers, and language repertoires, blurring the boundaries between languages and valuing the unique resources of multilingual speakers (Garcia & Wei 2014).

Using a student's native language as a medium of instruction not only highlights the importance of language in society but also fosters the cultivation of self-esteem and identity among individuals (Brock-Utne 2007; Erickson 2001). Additionally, learning a second language expands an individual's cultural horizons and is deemed essential for success in the contemporary world (Erickson 2001). This approach facilitates coexistence in diverse societies, fostering a balance between cultural, national, and global identities (Banks 2002).

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Appendix 1

Summary of selected articles.

Authors and year	Design	Country	Context	Period of the study	Organisational variable	Major findings
Staden van et al. (2016)	Qualitative	South Africa	Mixed Organization	During the teaching Foundation Phase	Performance	PrePIRLS (2011) analysis indicates that learners are still struggling to perform well in English. As a result, teachers end up code-switching.
Magangxa et al. (2023)	Qualitative	South Africa	Mixed Organization	During lectures	Relationship	Language engagement between student teachers and learners. The language context development and teaching of the language to foundation phase learners.