THE NARRATIVE OF DUAL MEDIUM IN A MULTILINGUAL CONTEXT OF A BLACK URBAN AREA IN GRADE R

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ABSTRACT

This article is a critical analysis of how a black urban primary school in South Africa used dual medium in two Grade R (Reception year or kindergarten) classes. An ethnographic inquiry was conducted in a township primary school, informed by sociocultural theory. The sample comprised children, teachers and parents of classes divided by the school according to the learners' home languages. Data collection included interviews, observations, artefacts and a reflective journal, analysed using Atlas.ti software and Brewer's steps of analysis. Language code-switching and translation were mainly employed by teachers to address language complexity emanating from internal and external factors affecting the school. Having to learn in a dual medium of one African language or home language and English highlighted the need to revisit the crucial area of language development and acquisition in early childhood development and foundation phase learners.

Keywords: dual medium; early childhood; ethnography; language development; multilingual

INTRODUCTION

Introducing dual medium in teaching and learning of small children in a multilingual environment poses a serious challenge to both the children and their teachers. Many primary schools in South Africa are dual medium, yet the population is very diverse with regard to languages. In black urban areas or townships, an African language

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and English are taught, a practice that, I argue, limits language acquisition and development in small children. Parents' and society's expectations for children to acquire English directly or indirectly promote its teaching in addition to African languages. Considering the socio-economic and political benefits that they attribute to English, the status of African languages being taught as first languages is also compromised. Some of the schools, which claim to be using one home language or an African language, are unconvincing as they operate within the multilingual context of urban areas. As a result, the children appear to struggle to obtain a solid foundation in language acquisition. Of particular concern is the quality and relevance of some of the learning material used to teach primary school children.

Adding to the challenge is that the concept 'home language' has changed in meaning as families are no longer defined by a single language spoken in the domestic environment, but rather two or more. This is compounded by the multilingual context of townships, making the language teaching of small children in schools a complex challenge. The aim of this article is to highlight the challenges faced by the teachers in early childhood education, in particular Grade R in a black urban community school. Relating to early childhood development (ECD), the focus is on learning the prescribed language(s) and on the actual practice of dual medium.

This ethnographic study was informed by a socio-cultural theory of learning and development based on the notion that 'human activities take place in cultural contexts, are mediated by language and other symbolic systems, and can be best understood when investigated in their historical development' (John-Steiner and Mahn 1996: 191). Central to this perspective is the claim that 'any mental activity should be investigated as an interaction between social agents and physical environment' (Kumpulainen and Wray 2002: 16).

METHODOLOGY

This ethnographic inquiry was conducted in a primary school in a black urban community in Gauteng Province. In engaging with my findings, I agree with Brewer (2000) that ethnographic findings must be valid and relevant to issues of public concern. I also draw on Hammersley (1998: 47) for relevant 'descriptions and explanations'. I allude to the concept 'thick description' (Brewer 2000: 138) because of my close involvement in the field. The thick description and verbatim quotations are rhetorical devices used to establish the authority of my voice, and the examples provided in my data presentation convey a sense of immediacy and provide authenticity and support for my analysis. The school was a dual medium school for the two Grade R classes, with their two teachers, and the learners' parents making up the sample. The classes were divided by the school according to the children's home languages, Sesotho (South Sotho) and isiZulu. English was used concurrently with these two home languages.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

In line with Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), data collection included interviews, observations and artefacts. I visited the teachers and learners on site for two hours daily and one full day a week for a year. Unstructured and semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with teachers, children and parents. I used logbook notes and a reflective journal. Artefacts such as charts and books were collected and analysed to discover the unfolding of learning and teaching in this school. I engaged with teachers and children as a participant-observer, a role which involved participating overtly in Grade R children's and teachers' daily lives for an extended period, watching what was happening, listening to what was said, and asking questions through interviews, collecting documents and artefacts.

Data was analysed using Atlas.ti software (Friese 2004), involving Brewer's steps of analysis (Brewer 2000), which included organising the data into manageable units; coding, in which key words or tags were attached to segments of text; qualitative description, in which the key events, people, behaviour, providing vignettes were identified; and establishment of patterns by looking for recurring themes and relationships between the data. The information was 'chunked' into logical themes based on the re-occurrence of repetitive information. I generated some of the following clustered data based on my classroom observations and as I engaged with field notes: learning content; language teaching and development; mathematics teaching and development; play; health and nutrition; and critical incidents, such as absenteeism, for all the data sets. This approach helped me to cluster or classify my data using the same concepts as the *preliminary* topics. Thus, the experiences of the teachers and learners were recorded and classified, then compared across categories, which finally led to an overarching theme and sub-themes emerging, in order to conceptualise the narrartive of this developing black urban school. Trustworthiness (Shank 2006) was verified by means of maintaining credibility, triangulation and confirmability. A crystallisation process, including multiple perspectives to provide different ways of seeing and understanding was applied (Merz 2002). Supervision and reflection assisted in this process. During supervision meetings I repeatedly discussed codes, categories and themes with my supervisor by discussing hard copies created through data patterning, thematising and clustering. In the case of reflection I frequently asked myself why my focus was on a particular aspect. For example, I saw more detail in one area of letter recognition. However, when I moved around the letter recognition aspect I saw different things, for example, sound recognition, English letter recognition, perceptual development, language acquisition and second language learning, yet it was still the same object being viewed. Permission to conduct research in the school was obtained from the Department of Education (DoE), parents and teachers. To protect the participants, I adhered to the ethics pertaining to informed consent, avoiding harm, and maintaining confidentiality and anonymity by allocating pseudonyms.

RESULTS

In addition to English, there was an influence from other African languages weaving the narrative of dual medium in the multilingual context in this primary school, as shown in a rhyme 'Hlogo-magetla'– 'Head, shoulders'. This example shows the closeness of the Sesotho, Sepedi and Setswana languages. From what I heard during the lesson, there was a combination of the two languages when the children articulated the phrase 'hlogo-magetla' (head-shoulders), which suggested that they mixed Sesotho (hloho-mahetla) and Setswana (tlhogo-magetla). Historically, in South Africa, indigenous African languages are grouped into two clusters, namely Nguni and Sotho, according to their similarities. Under the Nguni languages are grouped isiZulu, isiXhosa, siSwati, isiNdebele, Tshivenda, and Xitsonga, while the Sotho languages include Setswana, Sepedi/Sesotho sa Lebowa/Northern Sotho and Sesotho/Southern Sotho. As a result, mixing these languages contributes to language acquisition and learning.

The narrative of dual medium education in the multilingual context of this primary school was also based on observations of children-teacher interaction, either during combined group, sports or extramural activities. I tried to make sense of this by looking at the number of languages used during the interaction. For example, I made sense of mainly the teachers' questions, comments and statements during the combined class when it was the general assembly time. In this instance, I also observed that the teachers were faced with the difficulty of reaching out to children by mixing the three languages. It must be noted that not every child in the context of this combined group of mixed languages was conversant with more than one language, in this case, Sesotho, isiZulu and English. The same applied to the children's parents.

The ability to speak English also depended on children's exposure or background. For example, some of the children were already 'proficient' in English when they joined this school because of the English medium pre-schools they had attended. In addition to the history of this black urban community, the parents also contributed towards weaving the narrative of dual medium in this school's multilingual context. Given the diverse languages in the community in which the school was situated and my observation of the children mixing more than three different languages during outdoor play, I asked six parents for their views. They seemed to celebrate dual medium education and the multilingual environment. They believed that the children were learning and would be able to communicate better as South African citizens, but were unaware of how this could impact on language acquisition in early childhood. Pondering why English was part of the narrativeof this primary school, I remembered that it had historically been part of the dual and multiple medium schooling of this specific community and wider South Africa. The school's parents' expectations of learning in English were as follows: 'English is a requirement and popular in South Africa. Wherever you go is English and it is the academic language at school and universities' (Int. 24–26/11/2010). Thus, the privileged position occupied by the

English language in the dual or multi-medium context of South African schools in a black urban community was evident at this primary school. However, it was not evident from this study that parents were not keen to send their children to English-medium schools in predominantly white suburbs or former model C schools.

LANGUAGE CODE-SWITCHING AND TRANSLATION

To deal with language complexities that influence language acquisition in the two classrooms, code-switching and translation became daily practices. This experience appeared to confirm the challenge of introducing the home or first language during early childhood education. It seems that by the time many Grade R children start formal schooling in black urban community schools, such as this primary school, they have already acquired English. It was evident in the two classrooms, regardless of code-switching or mixed languages that the two teachers strove to guide the children to speak the correct prescribed language during the lessons. For example, if it was an English lesson, the children were helped and encouraged to speak English, and similarly Sesotho or isiZulu in those lessons. In addition, there were also instances of teachers and children consistently using English names, such as 'teacher', 'fire fighter', 'librarian', 'pilot' or 'traffic cop', even if the lessons were conducted in isiZulu or Sesotho.

The field note extract below is an example of how the two teachers translated the learning material, despite the language challenges they experienced with the Grade R children. If the lessons were conducted in, for example, Sesotho or isiZulu, the teachers would translate into English, or vice versa:

> They started their classroom activities with an English rhyme/song: Good morning everybody, how do you do? … The teacher asked them what they would say in Sesotho. They kept quiet and then she asked: Le dumedisa joang ka Sesotho? (How do you greet in Sesotho?) They answered by saying, Dumelang. Then she translated the song for them, Dumelang batho kaofela, le kae, le ka' (Logbook 17/02/10).

The artefacts were used to enhance learning through translation. For example, a chart of 'My Senses' translated from English to isiZulu was displayed on the board in the isiZulu classroom. Dual medium artefacts were used to enhance teaching and learning of language and mathematics. They were put on a display table in each classroom and on the walls. For example, in the Sesotho class, a heading of the chart would be written as follows in both Sesotho and English: 'Matsatsi a supa a beke' - Seven days of the week. I also observed and noted the available translated learning material used by the teachers, such as charts and books. For example, a box containing Grade R books on the teacher's table drew my attention. On its cover was written: Laying Solid Foundations for Learning – Grade R Resource Kit. My attention was drawn as I paged through the document to the following translation of the months in isiZulu (Table 1).

Table 1: English to isiZulu translation of the months

January	uJanuwari
February	uFebhuwari
March	uMashi
April	uEphreli
May	UMeyi
June	UJuni
July	uJulo
August	uAgasti
September	uSeptemba
October	uOkhtoba
November	uNovemba
December	uDisemba

I was concerned by the manner in which isiZulu months were written (Table 1), as it was borrowing rather than translation. I immediately asked the teacher why the months were not written in idiomatic isiZulu, for example, 'uJanuwari' instead of 'Masingana', to which she also reported surprise. The principal had brought the material from a workshop she attended. The teacher showed me a paper on which she wrote the months in the correct isiZulu, for example, 'January' – 'Masingana', 'March' – 'Ndasa'. This was an example of the teachers' challenges of having the dual role of making means to ensure that they themselves developed the translation material in addition to teaching. This cost them more planning time, rather than providing them with the appropriate material from the beginning.

The Sesotho class appeared to have an additional challenge, considering that three Afrikaans-speaking 'coloured' children coming from the same neighbourhood and few multilingual children were placed in this classroom. For example, there were two children whose home languages were both Sesotho and isiZulu. Based on my classroom observation, I found the situation too complex and challenging for both the teacher and the affected children, in her attempt to accommodate all children equally. I considered how many children could be affected by similar encounters in the two classrooms, given the complexity of determining the home languages of the children in this community. It later emerged that there were also children who spoke, for example, Tshivenda and isiXhosa at home, in the Sesotho classroom. I argue that because of the background of the community in which this primary school is situated, it will not be easy to find the target group in terms of the language requirement or prescription of the school. All 11 official South African languages are spoken in Gauteng province, and in this particular black urban area.

This is not like other provinces, in which indigenous languages tend to be localised and distribution varies considerably. So, it was not a surprise that the school studied struggled with its initial plan of registering children whose home languages were strictly Sesotho and isiZulu during its registration and placement process. I also tried to make sense of this by looking at the wider context of the community in which the school is situated, where the speakers, once they realised that their group comprised various languages, switched to multiple or mixed languages or code-switching. This is mainly to accommodate everyone in the group in the spirit of 'botho' (ubuntu) and survival in South Africa. However, I wondered about the influence of this practice on literacy acquisition in the Grade R classroom environment and learning in general.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Dual medium in multilingual context

Teaching and learning in a dual medium seemed to make the acquisition of language during early childhood complex and difficult because of the nature of the multilingual environment in which the school is situated. The Grade R children appeared to be disadvantaged in one or both languages, as practices of translation and language code-switching had to be applied, resulting in more time and energy for both the teachers and children. However, Ucelli and Paez (2007) assert that, considering words a child knows in one and/or the other language, bilingual children's skills may equal or exceed those of monolingual children. One also has to acknowledge the benefits of being bilingual in South Africa's diverse and multilingual context. However, my concern was the extent to which the language issues faced by the Grade R learners were impacting on those children who were *struggling* to learn at least two prescribed languages, isiZulu and English or Sesotho and English. The adults involved with multilingual learners, who carry responsibility for meeting these learners' needs, are challenged considering the ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity of the South African population (Du Plessis and Louw 2008). In as much as parents want their children to learn English in addition to an African language or home language, they also expect teachers to support the cultural values and norms of the home environment. As a result, teachers of small children in dual medium schools are faced with additional linguistic and cultural dilemmas or tasks as compared with those in a monolingual environment.

According to Riley and Reedy (2003), there may be a need for specific considerations for children for whom English is an additional language and who are at various stages of developing their competence in language during the early years of their school career. These children may be bilingual, trilingual or multilingual and, as such, 'will bring to the classroom a wide variety of experience and use in their first additional languages' (Riley and Reedy 2003: 71). Sometimes, settings

may have substantial numbers of bilingual learners with one dominant first language, while others may have a small group or individual learners who have a range of home languages. As indicated in the previous section, this school was characterised by both situations and this is typical of the South African context. In addition, the children represented several different categories of bilingual learner, at various stages of competency of English, with some taking it for the first time and others having attended English medium pre-schools and therefore showing some competency. This is an important aspect to also consider during Grade R registration and to determine the level of support these children need.

The dual medium of instruction and the high status attributed to English indicate the pressure that was exerted on teachers and children in terms of language acquisition in the Grade R classes. Given the diverse South African context, I observed how difficult it was for the children and teachers as they struggled to communicate during classroom interactions. It took several months for teachers to formally engage the Grade R children in the two prescribed home languages and English second language. Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2010) state that while there is a need to address language challenges at all levels of the system, a teacher's role in the classroom is particularly important. This means that the teachers must also inform the decision-making processes with regard to language, and empower and enlighten the role players such as their managers and parents about their plight in dual medium teaching and learning of small children.

Adding to the challenge of language teaching, development and acquisition were the parents' established views and attitudes towards language education. They expressed sentiments that echoed those of Biersteker and Robinson (in Donald *et al.* 2010) that South African parents or caregivers often choose English as the preferred first language for their children. I agree with Donald and his colleagues' assertion that there are political and socio-economic views that indigenous first language instruction limits students' access to further education and opportunities. This puts more pressure on schools, despite the complex issues associated with being bilingual, multilingual or even monolingual.

Schools teach English as a result of the general public's expectation that knowing it is an advantage and a privilege because it is a global language. Furthermore, schools in black townships, such as the one studied, are considered to lag behind when children (both black and white) attending schools in affluent former model C schools in suburbs take English as their first or home language. Even the Grade R learners who travel from the black townships to these suburban schools learn in English, irrespective of their rich background in African languages. English is pre-eminent, even if supposedly on par with or below others when a school is declared as dual medium. Thus English is held in high esteem in South Africa, which means it will continue to play a significant role as part of dual medium education.

Code-switching and multiple languages

The mixing of English and vernacular languages in the same conversation is a common feature of black South African discourse (De Klerk 2003). It is necessary to 'make a distinction between employing the African languages as authentic media of instruction throughout the curriculum and using the languages in the classroom in an informal, ad hoc manner in some or other form of code-switching' (Foley 2008: 6). He adds that, given the diverse linguistic profiles of many South African classrooms, in black urban schools such as this primary school in particular, it is inevitable that teachers will resort to a mixture of languages for purposes of clarification and explication. The situation is made worse by learners' limited grasp of English. If the goal is to develop the African languages into genuine academic languages, and have teachers use them as such, then code-switching cannot be viewed as anything more than a partial and transitional support mechanism. While the practice of code-switching currently plays an important role in many South African classrooms, I argue that it also poses a challenge for laying a solid foundation for language acquisition in Grade R, especially in terms of the acquisition of African languages as first languages or their deserved status as languages of teaching and learning.

According to Murray (in De Klerk 2003), the level of code-switching evident in some simple exchanges suggests there may be problems in determining which language is being used, and it may even be problematic for the speakers themselves to say what language they are speaking. I think this raises more concern when the speakers are small children such as the Grade Rs being studied. Murray further points out that code-switching is not always a signal of ease and competence in two languages, but is often a signal of lack of competence in both. This applies to teachers' competencies and I wonder what the impact of this factor is on language acquisition in early childhood. It appears that limited access to English and multilingual contexts makes code-switching appear as a viable option.

It is important to note that it was not my intention to determine if code-switching practice in the two classrooms was due to a lack of competency, and I acknowledge that it could assist in later acquisition of English. However, based on Sesotho and isiZulu home languages, my question is: Will competence in the mother tongue later help children who will have to learn in English? In terms of my question, Foley (2008: 1) asserts that research suggests that 'learners entering school are able to learn best through their mother-tongue, and that a second language (such as English) is more easily acquired if the learner already has a firm grasp of his or her home language'. This seems to be a good argument for mother tongue teaching to be introduced in the beginning of formal schooling, considering the high rate of language and mathematics illiteracy in the Foundation Phase in South Africa. I agree with Donald *et al*. (2010) that the language issue is complex and has specific cognitive, scholastic, social and emotional implications for educational development. However, Turnbull and Dailey-O'Cain (2009: 186) caution that 'there is simply no evidence that a

prescribed target-language only environment is beneficial to learners, and there is ample evidence that it may be detrimental'. It is therefore essential for instructors and policy-makers to begin envisioning learners not as ineffective and imperfect monolingual speakers of the target language, but as aspiring bilinguals.

Translation as a strategy: Successes and pitfalls

Based on the translated learning material the teacher used, I asked myself the following questions with regard to the dual medium of English and one African language: Why was the additional information on proper isiZulu months not readily available for the teacher in the first place? Who recommends and has the final say on the prescribed material: the school, the Department of Education or the publishers? What role do publishers play in promoting the indigenous languages of South Africa? Which practice is the most appropriate or to be prioritised when declaring African languages a medium of instruction? How and when do we use translation or borrowing in learning content and the language acquisition of young children?

Even if Sesotho teachers and the children translated appropriately ('Dumela' - Morning), the Sesotho translated version needs to be clarified. In Sesotho, unlike in English, the greeting 'Dumelang' represents any time, for example, morning, noon or evening. This example shows how the meaning can be lost in the process of translation, especially when the concepts are not adequately explained or clarified to young children. This means that, depending on how it is done, translation can even make language development of young learners more complex.

The challenge to translate is also attributed to the language context of this black urban community and South Africa in general, making the practice of using borrowed nouns take precedence over the appropriate vocabulary as far as the African languages are concerned. The second challenge was that the school belonged to a planned bureaucracy (Hansen, in Derada 2007) as indicated by the learning material provided to schools, and blurred cultural definitions. This highlights the importance of early childhood teachers critically applying their minds to learning material such as the Grade R resource kit explaining isiZulu months (Table 1). The positive aspect of my exchange with the isiZulu teacher concerning the translated isiZulu months was to notice her pro-activeness, because she took it upon herself to prepare a list of months in appropriate, idiomatic isiZulu, instead of the borrowed names. This finding showed the challenge faced by the two teachers in promoting dual medium during early childhood development and education. Foley (2008: 5) contends that for translation to be conducted successfully, 'it is imperative to amplify and clarify the subject-specific terminology in the African languages, as well as to develop their capacity for generic academic discourse'. I argue that before we grapple with the issue of dual medium in early childhood in South Africa, the important issues such as translation should first be resolved. Foley adds that it is necessary to develop the

African languages as academic and scientific languages, at least to a certain level, before the Foundation Phase curriculum can be translated. In the South African context, the Foundation Phase refers to Grades R (Grade 0) to 3. Consequently, I align myself with Foley's proposition that this development of African languages has to take place before one can expect teachers to begin teaching the curriculum in the learners' mother tongues with any degree of consistency and precision. If this is the case, what is the point of introducing dual medium or English as additional language to Grade R children? I agree with Donald *et al*. (2010: 184) that at all times respect for the first language and all that is culturally associated with it need to be maintained alongside any other language(s). Furthermore, Donald *et al*. assert that positive value must be attributed to the language, particular knowledge, experience, and world views that learners from different sociocultural contexts bring to the classroom. The findings of this study show the importance of drawing a clear distinction between teaching the home language or first language and the second or additional language in the context of dual medium. The findings highlight the respect and equality that all languages deserve in early childhood education as well as the promotion of quality education for young children.

Furthermore, Cummins (in Street and Hornberger (2008)) caution us about the relevance of the basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and academic language proficiency (CALP) for bilingual students' academic development, which was reinforced by Cummins's research studies in 1980 and 1981. The studies showed that educators and policy-makers frequently conflated conversational and academic dimensions of English language proficiency and that this conflation contributed significantly to the creation of academic difficulties for students who were learning English as an additional language. I think that this becomes even more problematic during early childhood development and education. In summary, the challenges of focusing on two prescribed languages in the classroom in a multilingual context were evident, as were the expectations that young children would also learn in English irrespective of their readiness to do so.

CONCLUSION

My observations made me ponder the challenges that many teachers in early childhood education may face in terms of language development and acquisition in young children. The findings raised a concern with regard to the full acknowledgement of African languages such as Sesotho and isiZulu in South Africa when planning for dual medium in schools. Early childhood education included, the African languages deserve the status received by the English language, if not higher than that. My past experiences and observations at this primary school confirmed the challenges posed by the English language considering its global influence, including in South Africa. The promotion of dual medium was not new in the specific context of primary school,

because the children in this community had already been exposed to English upon starting formal education. Television, radio and newspapers are a few examples of media that play a role in giving preference to the English language. In addition, by the time many children start with formal schooling or Grade R, they are already taught English in pre-schools. Growing up in the township, I know how other members of the community used to look down upon many township schools because of their strong stance on African languages. The education standard is generally regarded as inferior when English is not the main medium of instruction or it is mixed with other languages.

I understand the plight of the communities who do not have a problem with dual medium as they were looking at the bigger picture of a diverse South Africa. It is not surprising to see some of the schools recommending English to promote the dual medium. South Africa's linguistic diversity means all 11 languages and scores of unofficial ones have a profound effect on one another. Having grown up in the same context, knowing more than one's home language is an advantage in the community because it makes communication easier. It is a survival skill and empowers individuals to thrive in their community. As a result, these factors caution all those who are involved in early childhood education to consider careful planning, considering the practice of dual medium in pre-schools and schools.

The importance of acquiring English language as part of dual medium and its preference have to be considered in a socio-economic, political context. However, it is important for all education stakeholders to take into account the best interest of children, given the role played by all the areas of child development such as the cognitive, perceptual, emotional and social domain in language development.

Furthermore, given the rich historical multilingual context the black urban area or townships under discussion and their geographical position, there seemed to be challenges to promote dual medium in the school because some of the children reverted to the multiple languages in the community. This indicates the challenges faced by the teachers and children in townships. This means that the ideal dual medium was not easily attainable, as in schools in other areas or provinces (especially rural schools) in South Africa. For example, in KwaZulu-Natal province an entire community in a specific village may speak one home language, isiZulu, while the children learn the second language, English, at school.

This primary school context highlighted the difficulties of dual medium instruction, considering both the home language (first language) and English first additional language (second language) during language acquisition in small children. This difficulty raises the importance of learning support, resources, the children's identity in the school and the important aspect of teacher training and expertise. From a sociocultural point of view, a teacher should be an expert in the transmission of cultural tools, of which language is the most important. I argue that teachers should first acquire academic competency in a language in all its forms, namely, first

language and scientific or academic, before they consider using strategies such as code-switching and translation, including how to teach a second or third language and so on. All ECD teachers, practitioners and student teachers in South Africa and globally should be adequately trained and equipped to cater specifically for the needs of small children with regards to language development and acquisition. In addition to their training, I recommend that teachers be provided with supportive and sympathetic social spaces in which they can discuss collectively their anxieties about the Grade R issues, brainstorm ways in which they might teach and support young children and the type of support they require. There is a need to find ways of supporting teachers, both materially and psychologically, and so enable and encourage them to develop new strategies and approaches that will facilitate the use of contextualisation in the classroom

In conclusion, interpreting sensitively the impact of the dual medium in multilingual context of teaching and learning of small children in South Africa and globally is a complex yet necessary task. Teachers, parents and communities, policy-makers and curriculum planners must devise practical solutions to address the language issues affecting the teaching and learning of the foundation phase, ECD included. This narrartive reflects an urgent need to strengthen early childhood education and development in South Africa and the need to support and promote local perspectives, questions and issues in order to move beyond the singular image of the global child.

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Interviewer: *What is your view on English as language to use in the classroom for all subjects?*
Interviewee **1**: English is a requirement. Wherever you go is English.
Interviewee **2**: I will be happy for her to do everything in English. It is one language that is so popular, especially for our continent Southern Africa.
Interviewee **3**: I don't have problem with English because it is the main language that people use after finishing school, university and for communicating with white people.
Interviewee **4**: It is right because she even tries to communicate in it. I feel good but not to lose her Zulu. She needs to learn English for her future.
Interviewee **5**: It is also a good language. I feel happy because English is an official language.
Interviewee **6**: I feel very strong about it. English is a medium of communication everywhere, although the child must not lose home language (Int. 24-26/11/10).

Int. 24-26/11/10: *Parents' view on English*