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Contextual variations and pedagogy in the teaching of first additional languages in Grade 1: A multicase study

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Background: The South African curriculum policy mandates the introduction of the first additional languages (FALs) teaching in Grade 1. Research on FAL teaching has been on the agenda in South Africa for more than a decade now. Several interventions in response to systemic findings have been made, yet little success is noted in terms of the advancement of FAL teaching in the foundation phase to a sustainable degree. Thus, there is a need for ongoing research in this focus area to enrich scholarly debates and the practice of FAL teaching with new insights.

Aim: This paper seeks to further these debates through its attempt to explore and present findings on whether the contextual variations in which schools are located have any influence on Grade 1 FAL teachers' pedagogical practices.

Setting: The study was conducted in three geographically different Grade 1 classroom contexts, namely, urban, peri-urban and rural.

Methods: This is an interpretivism qualitative small-scale multi-case study involving three Grade 1 teachers who taught FAL in three geographically different schools. Data were generated through semi-structured interviews, observations and post-observation interviews. Thematic data analysis was applied, and the results are presented as collated essential findings.

Results: Findings revealed variances in the way teachers taught FAL. These variances were linked to their pedagogical practices as influenced by spatial variation, learners' exposure to second sites of FAL learning, to name a few.

Conclusion: The study calls for teachers to be courageous in developing innovative FAL teaching approaches, thereby influencing curriculum policy on how FAL may be taught in Grade 1 classrooms in different geographical contexts.

Keywords: first additional language teaching; geographical context; Grade 1; pedagogical practices; school categorisation.

Introduction

The Department of Basic Education's (DBE) Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement, known as CAPS, guides the teaching of all subjects in the South Afri basic education system. The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement insists that learners in their General Education and Training band be taught at least two languages that are enshrined as official in the South African constitution (DBE 2011). It further insists that one of these languages should be the learners' home language (HL), and that any other official language can be taught as a first additional language (FAL). Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement obligates teachers to introduce Grade 1 learners to a second language, formalised as a FAL because it is the first language that is added to the language that they had already acquired and are using as the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) (DBE 2011). Central to the entire contents of the foundation phase (FP) curriculum is that Grade 1, learners are to be primarily taught four basic subjects, namely Languages (HL and FAL), Mathematics and Life Skills (DBE 2011). These subjects are strictly to be taught in learners' HL, except for the added language, which is taught as a subject and not used as a LoLT. Hence, LoLT in this phase is the learners' HL. The main intention of CAPS for such plans was to cement the building of a healthy oral foundation in the FAL in Grade 1. In a research study conducted in Gauteng province on the importance of introducing learners to FAL as early as Grade 1, Pretorius (2014) states that the findings validated that once learners are in Grades 2 and 3, the focus should be on teaching them to read and write in the chosen FAL in preparation for transition from the

FAL as LoLT in Grade 4. It is explicable that in South Africa, it is not all learners from all language backgrounds who undergo such a transition. Nevertheless, this usually occurs when learners are taught through a LoLT that is different from the one they will be exposed to in Grade 4 and onwards. Wissing (2016:15) advises that 'teachers need to design learning experiences where learners engage with appropriate language exercises that exacerbate [*sic*] immersion in the language'. Undoubtedly, without such creation of learning experiences, the probability for learners to understand their FAL as a LoLT in Grade 4 will remain a challenge, as articulated by Pretorius (2014).

It is concerning that teachers and learners experience a curriculum and its contents that are not differentiated according to schools' settings and contextual backgrounds. Instead, a comprehensive curriculum policy for all public schools in South Africa is in existence. According to Spaull (2012), differentiated experiences are perpetuated by the fact that South African public schools have differentiated facilities, resources and provisioning based on the contexts they are in. Spaull (2012, 2013) reveals that given the geographical dimensions of population and demarcations in South Africa, those who are marginalised are more likely to suffer the blow. It is generally evident that dimensions like socioeconomic status, availability of resources in schools or the level of experience and relative excellence of teaching staff in different schools serve as the primary indicators to attract the provisioning of different necessities. Affirming Spaull's (2012) conclusion, Surty (2011) articulates that a learner's home background in terms of socioeconomic status is one of the most important determinants of educational outcomes. This idea is emphatically reiterated by Spaull (2013), who holds the belief that on average, schools in marginalised contexts deliver an inferior quality of education compared to their affluent counterparts. Because of this marginalisation, Hammett and Staeheli (2011) state that some schools have suffered setbacks in personnel management, curriculum reform, construction and maintenance of buildings, as well as provision of learning materials.

Typically, Grade R is the first grade that introduces learners to a formal academic journey (DBE 2011), and Grade 1 is the second grade that forms part of the FP schooling. The curriculum policy suggests that learners in this grade be introduced to a second language, which is formalised as a FAL because it is the first language that is added to the language that they have already acquired and are using as the LoLT (DBE 2011). Mweli (2018) asserts that according to the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study 2016 Report, there is a severe problem with language and with teachers' pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) in the South African education system. The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study is an international body that studies reading literacy, and its report is issued every 5 years. A shocking revelation in its 2016 report is that learners across the globe are not coping with FAL proficiency, particularly with English, in schools where it is taught as the FAL, because

their teachers have minimal proficiency in the language themselves. The worst-case scenario in limited English FAL proficiency is that it limits learners' ability to transition when English becomes the LoLT in Grade 4. Pretorius (2014:54) argues that in schools where children are taught in an African language in FP, 'Grade 4 is particularly challenging because this is when English becomes the LoLT'. Most of these challenges are exacerbated by learners' lack of oral communication skills and reading for comprehension skills, as revealed by Sibanda and Baxen (2016).

The paper proposes that there are predictable influences that impact the teaching of a FAL in Grade 1 classrooms. These influences are, in most instances, linked to the geographical setting in which the schools are located. Likewise, the researcher ought to not overlook that social differences are reproduced through pedagogical practices that are context related (Ajayi 2013; Hugo & Wedekind 2013). However, for the efficacy of FAL teaching, one has to consider the different elements that are attached to it. Taylor and Von Fintel (2016) uphold that these elements are related to historical disadvantage, socioeconomic status, geography, quality of school management and quality of teachers. Hence, these elements play a massive role in influencing how each school operates. Smith (2011:147) further elaborates that 'in South Africa, schools' quality is a function of school inputs determined by local resource availability through school fees and government subsidy'. Grounding consideration around these articulations, the researcher concluded that social space is the cornerstone of all teaching and learning experiences that occur at any school in any given context.

The focal point of this paper was to explore how the contextual variations influence how FALs are taught in Grade 1 classrooms of schools across the different geographical school and home contexts. There is a fundamental need for Grade 1 teachers, schools across geographical contexts and communities to understand that it is policy that the teaching of a FAL in this grade is compulsory. Furthermore, Grade 1 learners are exposed to bilingualism or multilingualism for language and literacy competence (Department of Education [DoE] 1997). However, the literature on FAL teaching undoubtedly attests that the acquisition of a FAL is a complex process and not uniform for all learners (Lenyai 2013). According to Nel and Swanepoel (2010), there are other two threats that impact the FAL teaching in Grade 1. The first threat is that learners are exposed to the language only when they are at school; when they are at home, they use their HLs with siblings and parents. The second threat is that the FAL used in classrooms is content-based only; there is no exposure whatsoever to literacy other than subject-related concepts. Without a doubt, these threats contribute adversely to the prompt and active learning of a FAL. It is essential to acknowledge that the complexity of the teaching of a FAL is multidimensional, where teachers on the one hand and learners on the other are faced with various challenges related to environmental and social factors. In a nutshell, it is much more likely that Grade 1 teachers and learners in

marginalised geographical contexts are facing the harshest blow as compared to their affluent counterparts.

This study, therefore, sought to explore the FAL pedagogies that Grade 1 teachers use in their respective classrooms in different geographical contexts. The argument in this paper was basically to identify and compare various teaching approaches and strategies that Grade 1 teachers employ when teaching FAL in their classrooms. In doing so, the researcher had to also compare the provisioning of facilities that these teachers had access to and determine whether they were the same across these geographically different schools. The researcher's interest lay in determining whether Grade 1 teachers' pedagogical practices were impacted by their experiences and challenges related to their schools' geographical locations.

Theoretical framing

Drawing from Cohen, Manion and Morrison's (2011:31) notion of the significance of framing a research study within a theoretical framework, the researcher had to initially understand that 'a theory assists in the framing of a research study as it presents a systematic view of the phenomena under study by specifying relations amongst variables to explain and predict the phenomena'. Based on this understanding, Vygotsky's social constructivism theory (SCT) (1978) influenced the study as radar and a lens through which the phenomena can be clearly articulated and be systematically understood. Vygotsky (1978) highlights that children are dependent on their culture and society for the acquisition of knowledge. Therefore, the teachers' role is also to acknowledge learners' previous knowledge and cultural backgrounds continuously. It is significant to point out that SCT has dual perspectives, namely sociocultural and socio-cognitive perspectives. These perspectives accentuate the significance of social engagement in a child's cognitive development. Allahyar and Nazari (2012) declare that from a sociocultural perspective, classroom activities are tied to cognitive development through the premise that learning occurs through social interactions. The researcher thereby realised that it is imperative to understand the premise that literacy is a social practice that is constructed through the processes of interaction, communication and collaboration between the teacher and learners, as also suggested by CAPS (DBE 2011). These are not merely technical and neutral practices. They are generally embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles, as also confirmed by Hall (2013). Nonetheless, they are similarly significant for consideration of various teaching approaches and strategies implemented by teachers teaching FAL to Grade 1 learners across geographical contexts, irrespective of geographical context.

Social constructivism theory further brings to light that learners' backgrounds and stages of development are to serve as a teacher's starting point when a foreign language is taught. In the same breath, Vygotsky (1978) emphasises that teachers should know learners' zones of proximal development as this is the domain where learning can most productively take place (Hugo 2013).

In this study, three different schools located in different social contexts were under the lens; those were urban, peri-urban and rural. Thereby, the researcher understood that it was significant to contemplate the knowledge that Grade 1 teachers across these geographical locations have for teaching FAL in their respective classrooms. Accordingly, the researcher's realisations were also grounded by Shulman's (1986) proclamations that teachers should have educational context knowledge as well as subject content knowledge in order to learn how to teach in a particular context.

Research methods and design

The study involved an in-depth exploration of three geographically different schools situated in urban, rural and peri-urban contexts. Each school sampled was a public primary school with Grade 1 classrooms where isiZulu, Afrikaans and English FALs were taught. Petty, Thomson and Stew (2012:1) uphold that 'research methodology refers to the theoretical, political and philosophical backgrounds to social research and their implications for research practice and the use of particular research methods'.

In this study, a multicase study (MCS) methodological design was adopted with an aim to explore the replication of FAL teaching in different Grade 1 classrooms that are located in geographically different contexts. Using the MCS methodological design assisted the researcher 'in generating an understanding of and insight into a particular instance by providing a thick, rich description of the case and illuminating its relations to its broader context' (Rule & John 2011:7). The methodological design aimed to compare and contrast conclusions to be reached in terms of one case with the results from the other. A qualitative research approach was embedded in an interpretivism paradigm where in-depth and detailed data were generated verbally and textually. The chosen paradigm allowed the researcher to understand how Grade 1 teachers set out to understand and interpret the FAL curriculum and its teaching (Cohen et al. 2011, 2018).

The researcher utilised semistructured interviews, structured observations and post-observation interviews as multiple data generation methods to elicit data that were deemed credible and trustworthy. Purposive sampling was adopted to select three Grade 1 teachers teaching FAL in three geographically and socioeconomically diverse contexts.

The research sites' spatial variations

Pseudonyms were used to refer to schools for confidentiality purposes. The researcher named the first research site Ndoniyamanzi Primary School. The school is located in the rural context of the Ilembe District. In this school, learners from Grade 1 are introduced to English first additional language (EFAL) because isiZulu is the learners' HL and also

LoLT. The researcher named the second research site Ziphelele Primary School. The school is located in a peri-urban (township) context of the Pinetown District. Learners and teachers were native isiZulu speakers, although there was a handful of other learners who were not native speakers of the language, as their parents had settled in the area to ensure proximity to work environments in Durban and surrounding areas. The school's LoLT is isiZulu. Surprisingly, in this school, learners are introduced to EFAL as early as Grade R. The third research site is Just Wannabe Primary School. The school is located in an urban context in the Umlazi District. The research site was a former Model C school; when doors opened for the admission of all learners post 1994, its language policy transformed. Learners in this school had different HLs that included isiZulu, isiXhosa, Sesotho, English, Afrikaans, Portuguese and French. The school conducted a survey in 2013 in which they requested parents to select the FAL in which they wanted their children to be taught, as it was practically impossible to offer more than one FAL at the school. The survey was limited to 10 South African official languages excluding English, which was already used as the LoLT from pre-Grade R to Grade 7. The number of parents who wanted their children to be taught isiZulu as a FAL outnumbered all the other languages. Hence, isiZulu was taught as the FAL.

Reviewing the schools' spatial variation in South Africa

Schools in South Africa are highly categorised. Spaull (2012) found in his study that schools in South Africa are categorised according to infrastructure (quintile rankings), financial support (fee-paying or non-fee paying), geography (rural, township and urban schools), poverty (feeding scheme) and performance. According to Van der Berg (2008:44), 'this high degree of inequality between schools is largely a legacy of historical, educational inequality'. The literature indicates that South Africa has by far the highest recorded values of categorisation, with Namibia its closest rival in terms of measures of the degree to which inequality applies between schools (Olivier 2015; Pienaar & McKay 2014).

According to Hall and Gieses (2008), geographical school zoning as a criterion to categorise schools for admission purposes in the South African system is currently used alongside the categorisation of schools into quintiles. Furthermore, it attempts to address the uneven distribution of poverty across provinces and geographical contexts (Ntshoe 2009). Because of this, schools are geographically categorised as urban, rural and peri-urban.

Schools located in urban geographical contexts are those that are currently known as former Model C schools because of their geopolitical boundaries and their above-average socioeconomic status, whereas schools located in rural contexts are generally known as marginalised, impoverished and lacking facilities to assist them in providing quality education (Ntshoe 2009). Peri-urban schools, on the other hand, are those that operate in townships and informal

contexts (Spaull 2012). Shepherd (2011) maintains that despite concerted efforts to equalise the distribution of school resources in the South African education system, a large portion of the system still fails to provide the quality of education needed for sustained economic growth.

A conceptualisation of first additional language teaching in Grade 1 in different geographical contexts

The DBE maintains that when the FAL is introduced in Grade 1, the process should not be implemented at learners' HLs' expense (DoE 1997). The process is then termed additive bilingualism. The justification for the introduction of a FAL in Grade 1 is that learners come to school, especially in Grade R, already having acquired speaking and listening skills in their HL; nonetheless, these skills need to be further nurtured at school, alongside reading and writing skills (Hugo 2016). The Language in Education Policy (LiEP) (DoE 1997) legislates that at the entry level into the FP (Grade R at most), there should be an emphasis on using learners' HL as the LoLT as it is the language that learners have already acquired and in which they can cognitively comprehend their world. The policy further recommends that the school governing body and the parents have the comprehensive choice of the school's FAL in consultation with the school management team. This recommendation is often the reason behind different schools having different FALs, as the language of choice can be any one of South Africa's 11 official languages.

As noted earlier in the paper, the literature on FAL teaching reveals that acquisition of a FAL is considered as a complicated process and is not uniform for each learner (Lenyai 2013). The complexity of FAL teaching and learning is exacerbated by the varying conditions under which it is taught. Christie (2012) declares that various factors contribute to a school's functionality and teaching, in this case, FAL. Factors such as infrastructure, the availability of teaching and learning resources, the availability of dedicated teachers who are suitably qualified and who possess appropriate levels of content knowledge, learners' socioeconomic status and the support that the school receives from the DBE are factors that impact any school. Collectively, these factors contribute profoundly to the effective functioning of a school. For instance, the researcher observed that Just Wannabe Primary School (urban context) proved to have a well-maintained culture of learning and teaching. Parents were to be applauded for being instrumental in caring for their children's academic and social development compared to Ndoniyamanzi and Ziphelele Primary Schools, situated in marginalised contexts where most of the learners' parents were unemployed and sometimes illiterate.

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSS/1324/015D. 22/01/2016).

Results

The results from engagements with the sampled Grade 1 teachers are presented below.

The difficulty in implementing appropriate teaching methods and strategies

After an observed lesson on writing skills, Yolanda (research site in an urban context) was observed teaching a lesson that was aimed at promoting phonemic awareness skills. The researcher was keen to understand whether the extensive parental involvement in assisting their children to do the homework tasks assisted her in the application of transformative pedagogy when teaching phonics. She expressed her feelings by stating that:

> 'I usually explore different teaching methods when I am teaching the content area for the first time. I often realise that my learners encounter challenges with sounds, and they often confuse isiZulu sounds with English…For example they sound "u" as "a."' (urban context, ZFAL teacher, September 2017)

Yolanda continued to state that:

> 'After giving my learners homework, they come back more knowledgeable and interested in learning different sounds encompassed in the given words as homework. This helps me a lot because I apply other teaching methodologies, for example, where learners work in groups to make word attacks while I attend to the other group, which might be grappling with spelling.' (urban context, ZFAL teacher, September 2017)

Considering Yolanda's comments, the findings suggest that for the teachers where parental involvement in assisting their children with homework is evident, exploring other transformative teaching methodologies is feasible. In relation, Hugo (2016) advises that teachers need to explore teaching methodologies for teaching different concepts other than those suggested by CAPS. This advice affirms that when teachers engage learners in more learner-centred and enthusiastic methods of teaching, they contribute immensely to learners' cognitive abilities and rapid language development.

Xoliswa (research site in a rural context) understood that she needed to put extra effort when teaching her learners. There was verification that the shortage of teaching and learning resources in her classroom hampered her pedagogical practices. It was also clear that her learners had very limited, if any, exposure to EFAL beyond the classroom. Despite her attempts to repeat concepts by constantly codeswitching and ensuring that she used a comprehensible input as advised by Krashen (1987), her endeavours were in vain. She said the following to express her frustrations:

> 'They are failing to name parts of the body in English, and this is really frustrating. I have to point at the parts of the body and repeat myself and ask them to say after me. It is really time-consuming. Anyways, what can I do? Unfortunately, the curriculum is the same all over and the scope of work is the same and those tasks we have to finish per term are the same as for those children in urban areas.' (rural context, EFAL teacher, September 2017)

The researcher also observed Zanele (research site in a peri-urban context) teaching pre-reading skills. She started by using self-made phonics cards that displayed the sound 'c'. She asked learners to give her all the words that start with a letter 'c', namely cat, car, cake, cook, cold and others similar. Almost all learners in her classroom did not struggle with giving her the words. However, a few learners were noticed to be struggling with phonics and words. Zanele wrote words on the chalkboard and asked the struggling learners to read the words. After reading them, she asked which letter was at the beginning of the written words. The learners responded correctly.

Whilst geographic and teaching contexts are diverse, the researcher noticed that Zanele realised the need to 'modify' teaching methodologies that would be beneficial to her learners' comprehension of the EFAL, as compared to Xoliswa, who demonstrated frustration as she chose rather to drill her learners to allow comprehension.

Zanele stated that 'I now understand these learners well. I always change how I introduce the lesson as some learners face challenges' (peri-urban context, EFAL teacher, September 2017).

From the data generated, the researcher found that there were various challenges that the teaching and learning contexts placed on teachers who were then required to adapt their teaching pedagogies to resonate with the challenges that the contexts brought into the classroom. However, it was evident that although they encountered various challenges, the rate of difficulty for sampled Grade 1 teachers in the urban context is not tantamount to that of their counterparts in marginalised contexts. In support of this realisation, Topping and Wolfendale (eds. 2017) assert that parents need to play their role in assisting teachers to teach their children in order to prevent FAL learning challenges that are beyond teachers' understanding. Clearly, there are no 'blanket pedagogical practices' that have to be used across different contexts, as each context has its own unique needs. However, it is significant to note that despite what and how the FAL is to be taught, Grade 1 teachers default to what they can possibly do to teach the language. The researcher, therefore, concurs with Singh (2010) that FAL teachers have to provide multiple opportunities for learners to hear the spoken words and take part in informal conversations using the FAL in their own social spaces.

Inequitable allocation of resources

The suggestion that teachers in marginalised schools are 'swimming against the tide' (Singh 2010) exemplifies the range of challenges they face when teaching a FAL. Because of numerous factors, practical teaching of the language is hampered. The findings revealed that the two sampled teachers from the schools located in township and rural contexts had to harness greater resilience to combat the challenges related to the teaching of the FAL in their classrooms compared to their urban counterparts. Their challenges were exacerbated by the obligation to develop strategies that assisted them to teach

effectively, in spite of a lack of support in their disadvantaged contexts for the teaching of a FAL. The participants acknowledged that FAL teaching should be enhanced by learners' exposure to print and other resources and maintenance of print-rich and stimulating conditions that are conducive to the teaching of a FAL. However, it was patent that learners from less privileged backgrounds were not exposed to print materials. Their lack of exposure to such stimuli disadvantaged them as they were prevented from learning outside the classroom. All learning was confined to the classroom setting and only occurred during FAL lesson periods. Conclusions were that the sampled teachers in the disadvantaged schools opted for substandard teaching of FAL to cater for learners who experienced difficulties in understanding and using the language, mainly because they were not exposed to second sites where they could imbibe and learn the language. Pretorius (2014:55) confirms that 'in reality, many children from poor homes attend poorly resourced schools where classrooms are by no means print-rich environments and where reading plays a peripheral role.' Experiences in bare, deprived classrooms are unsupportive to the learning of a FAL and also put a strain on the teachers' attempts to teach a FAL to their learners, as their direct encounter with the language is only when they are at school. As explained by Zanele:

> 'Usually, they come to school with their homework not done, and then it is obvious that most of them do not have resources to assist them with their English work.' (peri-urban context, EFAL teacher, August 2019)

Xoliswa's experiences of teaching EFAL in her class were deemed to be overly challenging as she explained that her learners were not exposed to any form of the second site of learning:

> 'Most of them are born by teenagers who are still school-going. So most of them are battling to understand English themselves at their respective schools.' (rural context, EFAL teacher, August 2017)

Other challenges that these teachers experienced were related to overcrowded classrooms and tensions in securing and protecting the schools' resources. Vygotsky (1978) purports that classrooms are social contexts where interactions between the teacher and the learners and amongst learners themselves have to occur through different levels of engagement that promote teaching and learning. Unfortunately, this was not evidenced in underprivileged schools where the teachers in certain instances opted for outdoor activities in order to allow for interaction to take place (Observation, September 2017). In these engagements, learners' inability to engage in informal and natural conversations away from the teacher's influence was observed. The researcher observed that they merely reverted to conversing in their MT, which minimised their opportunity to learn EFAL.

Learners' exposure to first additional language learning outside their classrooms

It was clear from the data generated that learners, more especially those from socioeconomically or materially deprived contexts, were minimally exposed to their FAL in forms such as print materials in their immediate surroundings written in the target language. These print materials included billboards, advertisements, cartoons, food packaging and clothing labels (DoE 2008). Limited exposure to such stimuli accumulates the problems that are often encountered by learners in extending their FAL knowledge beyond the classroom. Xoliswa asserted this point as follows:

> 'These learners are coming from low-income family backgrounds. Most of them are born by teenagers who are not working, and some of them are school-going. So they do not have money to buy resources to help their children to learn English at home … just simple things like magazines … they cannot afford it.' (rural context, EFAL teacher, August 2017)

In Zanele's classroom, some learners were exposed to English at home. This was the case because some of them had televisions at home, and they watched different programmes that were broadcast in English. In a probing question related to her learners' exposure to English outside the classroom, Zanele said the following:

> 'Yes, some of them have televisions at home, more especially those who live in the township. You often hear them using some extracts from the cartoons and movies they watch. They use them even when they are outside the classroom with their friends.' (peri-urban context, EFAL teacher, August 2017)

The researcher realised that extended learning of the additional language by watching television at home and communication between the parents and teachers about the targeted language work programmes is significant in developing the learners' language proficiency. Hugo (2016) also contemplated the fact that:

> English is not an easy language to master as a result of its numerous historical influences, it is considered an irregular language which needs input from all parties involved in its learning. (p. 6)

Therefore, the notion that teaching FAL relies on the support of the external environment to reinforce learning that happens in class can never be overemphasised.

In Yolanda's classroom, there was quite a large number of learners who were beginning to grasp basic isiZulu concepts. Yolanda extended her gratitude to the parents, who were ensuring that their children learnt the language even when they were at home:

> 'Some parents ensure that their children receive extended learning of isiZulu by requesting the work programmes that we use for teaching isiZulu FAL. They ensure that they reinforce whatever that we have learnt on that particular day.' (urban context, ZFAL teacher, August 2017)

The findings revealed that Grade 1 learners from less privileged sampled research sites usually lacked second sites of learning. In essence, the process of learning and teaching only occurred at school with the teacher as the source of information and knowledge construction. When learners

were at home, there was no one to bridge the gap between what had been learnt at school and what had to be learnt at home. In such instances, the teachers were compelled to repeat what they had taught previously to make links with the current lessons. This finding revealed that these learners often failed to recall what had been learnt previously, which then compelled the teachers to repeat what they had already taught. The researcher found this to be a fundamental contributory factor to repetitive teaching, resulting in time consumption and failure to meet deadlines. Despite all these challenges, these teachers as mediators of all learning (Vygotsky 1978) ensured that the teaching of FAL occurred by becoming resilient to challenges.

Discussion of findings

It is generally evident that Grade 1 teachers' adoption of pedagogical practices in this quest was significantly influenced by learners' culture and society. These dynamics directed their acquisition of knowledge within the space (context) in which they functioned. In the same vein, it was also imperative to apprehend that actors, that is, Grade 1 teachers who teach FAL in geographically diverse schools, knew the social space that they found themselves occupying. It is patent that the social space has to be taken seriously as a situated position, suggesting that people learn through making meaning in activity and practice. Thus, the teachers' role is to acknowledge learners' previous knowledge and cultural backgrounds continuously. Vygotsky (1978) highly recommends that learners' backgrounds and stages of development are to serve as a teacher's starting point when a foreign language is taught.

Further, Vygotsky's emphasis that 'it is imperative to accept society's influence and culture in any person's life' (1978:32) was proven relevant. Hence, the philosophy that these are constructed through the processes of interaction, communication and collaboration between the teacher and learners is necessary is critical. Thus, understanding every learner's background knowledge to develop the additional language was deemed to be every Grade 1 teacher's primary duty. Grade 1 teachers across contexts were witnessed to be engaging learners in a variety of activities and also varying their pedagogies in order to scaffold the learning of a FAL despite the difficulties they experienced. Such a move was also advanced by Allahyar and Nazari (2012), who affirm that teachers should give learners abundant opportunities to speak in class by putting more emphasis on the stimulation of learners' communication skills in the second language in order to gain an understanding of learners' level of linguistic knowledge.

Moreover, Grade 1 teachers' acknowledgment that learners come from different environments is vital. Generally, learners from urban contexts have several forms of attributes that contribute immensely to how they learn the FAL, whereas those from marginalised contexts have minimal resources to support their extended learning.

Data revealed that learners' FAL learning is strengthened by their socioeconomic status, level of parents' FAL literacy, availability of print materials, media and television access.

Reviewed literature revealed undeniable evidence that schools in South Africa receive a differentiated allocation of resources and other teaching facilities. It also revealed that educational provisioning in South African public primary schools is not standardised. Clearly, the allocation of resources (human, financial, teaching and learning) is determined by the context in which a school is located.

It is similarly vital to reiterate that the teaching of a FAL is driven by Grade 1 teachers' attitudes towards FAL, the PCK they possess to teach the language and the actual knowledge of the language itself (Lenyai 2013). The absence of these ingredients poses a threat to the effective teaching of the language in different geographical contexts. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that some elements of geographical contexts were not conducive to the teaching of a FAL. Take, for instance, a school that does not have relevant or sufficient FAL resources. In such a school, teachers become demotivated and fail to teach the FAL effectively. Hugo (2008:72) reveals that 'motivation is part of any language teaching and learning [process] because it involves what we feel comfortable with'. In this context, Lenyai (2013) highlights the need for teachers to possess appropriate PCK in order to be able to teach a FAL effectively and implement appropriate teaching strategies. Thus, teachers' fair knowledge of the target language is imperative, as their ability to transmit knowledge of the language to learners using multiple and appropriate strategies that provoke learners' cognitive abilities plays a vital role in spurring both motivation and knowledge construction.

Conclusion

This research study envisaged contextual variation as a pointer for FAL teaching in Grade 1. It embraces the notion that social space is the cornerstone of all teaching and learning experiences that occur at any school in any given context. This study revealed that it is reasonable to argue that the contextual variations in which schools are located, namely urban, peri-urban and rural, have an enormous influence on Grade 1 FAL teachers' pedagogical practices. As a result, these teachers are required to adopt pedagogical practices that are respectful of learners' cultural and social backgrounds within the context they operate. It is acknowledgeable that numerous national policies have been advocated to address issues related to inequality in education; however, the fact remains that policy implementers (usually teachers) are flooded with policies that are not context sensitive. In such trying contexts, the researcher calls for teachers to be courageous in developing innovative FAL teaching approaches, thereby influencing curriculum policy on how FAL may be taught in Grade 1 classrooms in different geographical contexts.

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