



## Teaching strategies adopted by teachers in rural areas to support language learning in the learners' first additional language

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### Abstract

South African teachers are confronted with having to teach in a multilingual context which raises multiple challenges, for both teachers and learners. Hence second language learners are challenged by attempting to catch up with others, who are being taught in their home language. The aim of this study was to explore what teaching strategies teachers in the rural areas of South Africa adopt in their teaching to bridge the language divide across the curriculum when the LOLT (Language of Learning and Teaching) is not the learners' home language. The study adopted a qualitative research approach and a phenomenological design. The sample comprised grade 4-6 teachers who were required to teach in a LOLT which was not the learners' home language. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews via WhatsApp messenger voice recordings, with five teachers from a rural school in the Eastern Cape. The interviews were transcribed, and the data were analysed thematically according to themes and subthemes. Teachers used a variety of strategies such as code switching and translanguaging to support learners, but indicated that despite the approaches they used, learners still tended to struggle to cope in the Intermediate Phase (grades 4-6) when they had to switch to a LOLT which was English, but not their mother tongue, isiXhosa. Based on the findings of the study it is imperative that teachers be exposed to more practical, focused approaches such as kinaesthetic learning, amongst others, so that learners could advance academically.

**Keywords:** Language learning, Language of learning and teaching (LoLT), second language learners, rural schools, teaching strategies.

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## Introduction and background to the study

South Africa had a very unequal language policy during the Apartheid era, which stipulated that learning and teaching had to be conducted in either Afrikaans or English. Prior to 1994 there was a strict bilingual policy in South Africa leading to the marginalisation of African languages. This unjust language policy ensured that Afrikaans and English received a higher status compared to other African languages (Tshotsho, 2013). In other words, the learners, who benefited from this policy, were those learners whose mother tongues were either Afrikaans or English (Tshotsho, 2013). As a result, most South African learners received their teaching and learning in a second or third language (Pan South African Language Board) (PANSALB, 2000). Although both Ball (2014) and Tshotsho (2013) emphasise the impact of language learning and teaching (LoLT) on a child's academic proficiency, most learners in South African schools are taught in a LoLT which is different from their mother tongue (Sibanda, 2017). A consequence of this is that many learners either perform poorly academically or drop out of school (Kotzé, Van der Westhuizen & Barnard, 2017; Sibanda, 2017). In support of this, Street and Hornberger (2008) indicate that second language learners are challenged by attempting to catch up with other learners, who are being taught in their home language.

According to Ball (2014, p. 1), "while some children continue to develop proficiency in their first language while succeeding in school in a second language, this does not happen automatically." As highlighted by Ball (2014), language forms a major part of a learner's academic proficiency, but learners in South Africa often receive their learning and teaching in a language which is different from their mother tongue.

Post-1994, after South Africa's democratic election, the government implemented a new National Language in Education Policy (NLEP) to redress the language inequalities of the past by declaring eleven official languages as languages to be considered as mediums of instruction at schools. However, as South Africa celebrates the 30<sup>th</sup> year of its democratic dispensation, most learners still receive their learning and teaching in a language which is different from their mother tongue. What seems to be clear is that the South African Government's intention to promote eleven official languages remains a symbolic gesture and a mere pipedream. Within the context of rural areas, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) has not provided the necessary human- and physical resources required to realise the vision of African languages as LoLT, hence it is with this in mind that we intended to explore teaching strategies adopted by teachers in rural areas to enhance learners' language learning in a LoLT which is not their mother tongue, across the curriculum.

According to Cole (2008) good teaching can be categorised as engaging, appropriate and diverse and that appeals to all learners despite different linguistic and learning styles in South Africa. Teachers who intend meeting some of these characteristics will need to embrace new ways of teaching and learning. Tshotsho (2013) and Sibanda (2017) point out that although the Bill of Human Rights (section 29) in the South African Constitution (1996) states that learners have the right to be taught in the language of their choice, this is not a

reality in South Africa, due to the unavailability of resources, the lack of support from the DoBE (Department of Basic Education) and the government. The challenges experienced by schools include unqualified teachers, a shortage of textbooks, learning and teaching support material as well as the lack of support from the DBE (Sibanda, 2017).

According to Foley (2010, p. 2), “research suggests that learners entering school are able to learn best through their mother tongue and that a second language is more easily acquired if the learner already has a firm grasp of his or her home language”. Kotzé et al., (2017) furthermore indicate that learners who do not receive their schooling in their mother tongue, will always be at a disadvantage and will not be able to perform to the best of their academic ability, as they are disadvantaged by a LoLT which is not their mother tongue. Although South Africa has a language policy that promotes multilingualism through the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), South African learners do not receive their schooling in their mother tongue. In this regard Foley (2010) posits that teachers are faced with having to meet the needs of learners whose home language may be an African language, which is not the LoLT at school. Hence, they will be disadvantaged. This will have an influence on teachers and may lead them to explore other teaching strategies to meet the needs of learners whose home language may be different from the LoLT.

While some teachers have used code-switching and translanguaging to address learners’ challenges, others have continued to use the traditional approach to teaching, whereby they only use the LoLT, which is English, and expect the learners to comprehend what is being taught. Songxaba, Coetzer and Molepo (2017, p. 2) define code switching as: “the alternating use of two or more linguistic varieties (languages, dialects of the same language or registers of the same language) at the word, phrase or clause, or sentence level in the course of a discourse”. In a qualitative case study conducted by Evans and Nthulana (2018) with six grade four teachers and two curriculum advisors underpinned by Krashen’s theory of second-language acquisition and by collecting data through individual interviews and classroom observations, the researchers found that teachers struggled to convey content through English as LoLT, since the participants were all mother tongue speakers of Tshivenda. Hence, they tended to use code-switching and translanguaging. Kotzé et al. (2017) and Rassool et al. (2006) opine, however, that for code switching to be successful, teachers need to be knowledgeable and skilled to administer this strategy. This view is supported by Evans et al. (2018) as well. Villanueva (2010, p. 25) points out, however, that code switching can be a useful strategy, but it does not allow learners “to build a firm academic or cognitive foundation in their mother tongue or additional language”.

Mweli (2017) also conducted a study aimed at challenging Anglo-normative language ideas and the coloniality of dominant discourses about LoLT in South Africa, by conducting a study with 400 grade four teachers in Pinetown (Kwa Zulu Natal) and the UMgungundlovu districts, who teach African learners through the medium of English as a LoLT, to ascertain what approaches they use to support learners. The findings emerging from this study indicate that most of the teachers teach learners through the medium of isiZulu, which is their mother tongue, since they experience challenges when they have to teach the learners through the

medium of English. Drawing from teachers' responses Mweli (2017) concluded that the use of African languages in education connects learners' worldviews and ways of knowing to the curriculum and provides access to knowledge, in ways which the first additional language is unable to do.

In a qualitative study conducted by Mwindi et al. (2015), where they investigated English language proficiency development in a rural primary school in Namibia, the researchers argue that a contextual analysis of learners' proficiency in their home language and in English is crucial when deciding on translanguaging strategies. Translanguaging teaching strategies can also be used as resources for enhancing English language proficiency. For instance, strategies may include reading in one language and discussing in another or listening to one language and writing in another, translation, or co-language strategies. The researchers' data collection process was guided by observations and interviews, which they conducted in a combined school. Nevertheless, Mwindi et al. (2015) conclude by indicating that translanguaging is beneficial in various ways. Firstly, language can become a resource to encourage insight. Secondly, translanguaging encourages learners to use their first language to develop the proficiency of the second language. The researchers emphasise that although there are no specific translanguaging strategies, translanguaging skills need to be promoted in a strategic and focused way (Mwindi et al., 2015). Furthermore, teachers also need to analyse the context before introducing any strategy, because if used in the wrong context, confusion may occur.

In another study conducted by Carsten (2016), who aimed to explore the use of translanguaging as a support strategy to support bi-/multilingual students, the study affirms the view that translanguaging strategies present cognitive advantages. Secondly, this process scaffolded the learners' understanding, simplified complex concepts, helped them to distinguish the differences between related concepts and to express conceptual content. Thirdly, students found the safe environment created by the teacher in which they could experiment and use language freely, as beneficial to their personal and academic development.

In response to the poor literacy achievements of South African learners, Stoffelsma (2019) identified two reasons for the poor literacy performance, firstly, vocabulary development and teacher knowledge and secondly, the necessary skills essential for quality vocabulary teaching. Therefore, Stoffelsma (2019) conducted an exploratory study to report on English vocabulary teaching strategies of eight grade three teachers in South African township schools. The researcher used teachers from two provinces namely, the Western and Eastern Cape. Data were collected through interviews and classroom observations. It was stressed through this study that vocabulary strategies implemented did not advance the level of active learning in which students were challenged and could take ownership of their own vocabulary learning. Furthermore, second language learners mostly relied on their home language vocabulary instruction (Stoffelsma, 2019). The researcher argued that for the enhancement of learners' language proficiency, teachers need to adopt interactive and in-depth instruction. Secondly, they need to include good vocabulary instruction. For example,

they could “provide rich and varied language experiences, teach individual words, teach word-learning strategies, foster word consciousness” (Stoffelsma, 2019, p. 3).

Since learners are taught through the LoLT of English, although their mother tongue is either isiXhosa or Afrikaans the aim of this study was to explore strategies adopted by teachers in rural schools in the Eastern Cape to enhance learners’ language learning in a LoLT which is not the learners’ mother tongue, across the curriculum. The research question that sought to guide this study was: *What teaching strategies do teachers in rural schools, in the Eastern Cape of South Africa adopt to enhance learners’ language learning in a LoLT which is not their mother tongue, across the curriculum?*

### Materials and Methods

This study was guided by a qualitative research approach and a phenomenological design. According to Flick (2018), qualitative researchers seek to understand the realities of their participants in context and how they make sense of the phenomena under investigation. Furthermore, Creswell and Creswell (2017) explain that this approach follows a naturalistic approach to the world. In other words, these researchers study the reality of their participants in trying to understand the human problem and the meaning they bring to understanding the problem. Thus, as researchers, we sought to gain multiple realities and different perceptions without influencing the experience participants had with the phenomenon.

According to Tuohy, Cooney, Dowling, Murphy, and Sixsmith (2013), phenomenology is both a philosophy and a research methodology. Phenomenology is described as the study of lived experiences and exploring the reality of life (Dowling, 2007 cited in Tuohy et al., 2013). Furthermore, according to Tuohy et al. (2013), phenomenology can be characterised as descriptive or interpretive. For this study, the most suitable design was interpretive phenomenology. According to Dowling (2004 cited in Tuohy et al., 2013), an interpretive phenomenological design refers to the understanding and interpretation of the lived experiences of the participants. The focus of this study was on how these teachers make meaning of their teaching in their rural context and which strategies they implement to construct or frame their teaching.

The population of this study were primary school teachers who were teaching in the intermediate phase (grades 4-6) in various subjects across the curriculum through the medium of English as LoLT, which was different from the learners’ mother tongue (Afrikaans and IsiXhosa). All teachers were from the same rural school in the Kouga Coastal district of the Eastern Cape. According to Trotter II (2012), purposive sampling requires that participants be selected through pre-determined criteria. From the above population the participants were selected from criteria that were relevant to the phenomenon which, in this case, were teachers teaching in a rural context, teaching through a LoLT which was different from the learners’ mother tongue. The sample included five teachers (male and female), ranging between the ages of 24 – 54, from the population of primary school teachers teaching subjects across the curriculum in the Intermediate Phase (grades 4-6), in a LoLT which was different from the

learners' mother tongue. All came from the same rural primary school in the Kouga Coastal district in the Eastern Cape. All the teachers were sampled for participation in individual semi-structured interviews and were selected because they all had the characteristics and experiences relevant for the purpose of this study, which aimed at exploring teaching strategies adopted by teachers to enhance learning in a LoLT which was different from their mother tongue.

According to Kothari (2004) data analysis is a progressive process that involves the analysis of data (in this case written transcripts) according to themes. For the purposes of this study the data were collected through semi-structured interviews that were conducted via WhatsApp messenger voice recordings and transcribed thereafter. Subsequently the collected data were interpreted and categorised into themes based on patterns and trends emerging from the interview transcripts. The process involved reading and re-reading interview transcripts to establish common codes and patterns emerging from them.

Ethical clearance to conduct the research was sought from the research Ethics Committee of the University concerned and *nom du plumet* (colours) were used to refer to the teachers who participated in this study for the purposes of anonymity. An overview of the participants involved in this study is indicated in the table below. Direct quotations from the transcripts are presented as evidence to support the major themes, challenges identified, personal opinions, teaching strategies and how teachers perceive their roles in multilingual classes.

### Overview of participants

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 5 participants from a single rural school. These 5 participants consisted of two female and three male teachers from the same school. The participants' teaching experience varied from 2- 31 years.

*The demographic details of the participants are as follows:*

PARTICIPANTS	PSUEDONYMS	GENDER	RACE	AGE	GRADE
Teacher 1	Yellow	Female	Coloured	30+ years	Grade 4
Teacher 2	Purple	Female	Coloured	20+ years	Grade 5
Teacher 3	Blue	Male	Coloured	50+ years	Grade 5
Teacher 4	Orange	Male	Coloured	50+ years	Grade 6
Teacher 5	Red	Male	Coloured	50+ years	Grade 6

### Coding of each quote

In order to highlight the themes that emerged from the interviews, teachers' verbatim words will be quoted. The teachers will be identified by referring to their selected pseudonyms as indicated below:

Teacher 1 (Yellow): Teaches Afrikaans HL, English FAL, Life Skills and Social Sciences

Teacher 2 (Purple): Teaches Mathematics, English FAL, Natural Sciences and Technology.

Teacher 3 (Blue): Teaches Social Sciences and Life skills.

Teacher 4 (Orange): Teaches Natural Sciences and Technology, Life Skills and Afrikaans HL.

Teacher 5 (Red): Teaches Mathematics, Life Skills and Afrikaans HL.

*\*Coloured – It should be noted that the term Coloured is not regarded as derogatory in South Africa, but is the term used to refer to people of mixed descent.*

## Results

### Teachers' views on the challenges of teaching learners in a second language

All the participants interviewed indicated that they experienced various challenges when required to teach in a LoLT which was different from the learners' mother tongue.

Yellow voiced her view as follows:

*'The most difficult aspect for me is for the learners to understand me. The terminology, they have done a lot of the topics already, but it was explained to them in their mother tongue the previous year and now in the new grade (grade 4) this holds them back. They struggle to speak the language as well and therefore struggle when it comes to orals. Their writing skills are poor, and they don't know how to express themselves properly in the language as well.'*

Orange further indicated that learners taught through a LoLT which is different from their mother tongue, struggle to progress in the intermediate phase. Thus, he argued that:

*'Learners are not so confident to speak in front of others. Lastly, Learners still struggle to read fluently.'*

As highlighted by Yellow, Red also re-iterated that learners struggle to understand what is being taught, because they lack sufficient knowledge of the LoLT. According to Red:

*'The difficulties is that the learners have a lack when it comes to knowledge, when trying to receive knowledge in that language (the LoLT). So, most of them do not understand one hundred percent what you teach them in that language.'*

Yellow further contended that learners' lack of knowledge of the terminology in the different LoLT (which in most cases is their first additional language) contributes to their limited academic progress across the curriculum. Thus, Yellow shared the following insight:

*'All the terminology in the different subjects is totally different from their home language. So, this is definitely, across the board where it is going to be difficult for them.'*

Moreover, Orange emphasised that teachers need to invest far more effort and resources when teaching learners in a different LoLT. He stated the following:

***'I must make use of a lot of resources to teach because learners do not grasp so quickly'.***

It was interesting to note that Yellow emphasised that this issue presented problems across the curriculum; thereby highlighting the enormity of the language challenges presented when the LoLT is different from the learners' mother tongue. In reflecting on the challenges, both Purple and Orange expressed the view that they found teaching learners through the medium of their second language challenging, as it is very time consuming.

Hence, Purple expressed her view as follows:

***'One of the difficulties that I'm experiencing is that I have to constantly code switch which means if I explain something in Afrikaans and a learner's mother tongue is English, I have to explain the term in their mother tongue as well which takes up a lot of time in the classroom and it also affects the learners in a negative way. Which means the learner gets a negative attitude towards learning and teaching and it just takes up a lot of time if I have to constantly code switch in the classroom, so that's a difficulty that I'm still dealing with'.***

In addition, range expressed the following view:

***'It takes up time to explain in two different languages.'***

Lastly, most of the teachers felt that a major challenge is the inability of parents to support learners with the different LoLT. Hence, Red, Yellow and Blue emphasised that parents struggle to support or assist learners with the different LoLT as it is not spoken at home.

Red stated the following:

***'But mostly in the rural areas there are a lack of parents that can speak the language and they do not use it often. So, it will really take a very long time to solve this problem'.***

Furthermore, Yellow shared the same opinion expressed as follows:

***'When it comes to the parents, they are less optimistic because there are a lot of the parents themselves who struggle with the language'.***

Finally, Blue indicated that learners' challenges in the LoLT could be attributed to:

***'The fact that learners only use the language at school and parents are in most cases unable to help'.***

In brief, it was evident from the teachers' feedback that they all experience challenges, when having to teach in a LoLT which is different from the learners' mother tongue. Moreover, the main challenge would be the difficulty experienced by the learners to comprehend what they are being taught.



### **Strategies implemented to enhance learners' language learning in the second language as LOLT**

All the teachers used similar strategies to enhance learners' language learning in a LoLT which is the learners' second language. The strategies embraced by teachers to support learners were the following: *learner-centred strategies, collaborative teaching, code switching, translators and peer support.*

#### ***Moving away from traditional teacher-centred strategies***

Orange encourages teachers to move away from traditional teaching methods and to change with the times, by making use of technology. He states that,

***'Instead of using the usual textbooks, you must get up to the level of the kids, by using technology'.***

Furthermore, Orange explained that:

***'The kids nowadays they are more technological advanced so we must use YouTube, allow them to use their cellphones and let them see what is in front of them so they can correlate easier what we are doing with them'.***

Moreover, Yellow highlighted that:

***'I think in a lot of the other subjects as well practical are important you know when they see things they grasp it easier instead of you just teaching them or telling them how as supposed to show them. Engage their senses throughout a lesson, this will improve their memory and ability to learn'.***

Red added:

***'Language learning are made more interesting by playing games or talking about things that they like in that specific language. For example, I asked the learners to toss in the small finger to only speak English for a certain amount of time'.***

These strategies are interesting and creative especially since many teachers, especially older ones, find it difficult to move away from conventional and traditional ways of teaching. The approaches adopted by these older teachers, however, indicate that there are teachers who are eager to embrace technology and engaging teaching strategies in a quest to re-invent their teaching.

Orange further stated that teachers should:

***'Make use of enough learning material to broaden their vocabulary. Making it compulsory for the learners to communicate to classmates and teachers in their second language. It will give them more confidence. For example, make use of the language for instance talking on a Monday or Tuesdays your Second language days. That is one of the ways I try to enhance learners' language learning'.***

In addition, Yellow agreed by saying:

***'I Think a vocabulary check, like identifying words that they don't understand even while you are teaching. whether it be Natural Sciences and Technology, whatever word that they don't understand they could ask the teacher to explain the meaning of the word and then as well as you have listening to pronunciation and then them repeating those words.'***

Furthermore, Yellow elaborated on how she enhances learners' pronunciation and aims to establish whether learners are able to follow instructions as follows:

***'I would usually read a few words and as I read, they need to repeat the word I just read. Just so they could hear how it is supposed to be pronounced'.***

She continued by saying:

***'Also, you could have role plays where they listen to what ever instruction you give whether it be in Life Skills they have to interact to see if they understand what they were asked to do. Then it comes to speaking the language. They must at all times try to speak, they can ask how to say something in the language if they do not understand'.***

Likewise, Blue explained how he uses reading as an activity to improve learners' understanding in Social Sciences as follows:

***'I use a variety of texts and sources. Therefore, learners are able to improve their vocabulary and understanding in the LoLT'.***

The strategies implemented demonstrate how simple strategies could be used to enhance learners' language learning of the LoLT, across the curriculum.

### ***Collaborative teaching***

This strategy was highlighted by Yellow where she explains that grade 3 and 4 teachers should be working side by side.

Yellow shared that:

***'We organised with the grade 3 teacher to take those learners for ten minutes out of the day just to explain certain things to them or to make sure that they understand certain topics that were handled in class.'***

Collaborative teaching has the potential to lead to shared experiences and insights that could contribute significantly to the implementation of team teaching and joint lesson planning for enhanced language development.

### ***Code-switching***

Code switching was the most employed strategy by the teachers.

Purple asserts that:

*‘Code switching is when I explained a term in a certain part of any subject in Afrikaans for example and then I switch over to English to explain to the learners whose mother tongue is English or IsiXhosa and that yourself seem to understand a term or a certain passage better’.*

She went on further by saying:

*‘I am able to use code switching in different subjects for example I am a Natural Science teacher and a mathematics teacher so code switching does help a lot for Natural Science because there are certain terms that just sounds like a total different language when I explained in Afrikaans and when I switch over to English it helps a lot because I am able to simplify the term to my non Afrikaans speaking learners and the same goes for mathematics.’*

Although Purple identifies that there is a place for Code switching in her classes, she argued that:

*‘Code switching is not that successful because it does also take a lot of time for me to explain a term into two different languages, so it takes up a lot of time in the classroom’.*

Similarly, Orange said:

*‘When it comes to code switching, code switching I would usually use it when it comes to language itself because then you can alternate between the two languages.’*

Teachers considered code switching to be beneficial to their teaching context, although they admit that it can be time consuming and that it is inclined to stunt the flow of the lessons at times.

### **Translators**

While some colleagues identified the value of peer support through translation in multilingual classes, others were more critical of its value.

Yellow expressed her view on the value of peer translation as follows:

*‘When another learner translates certain things to another, especially the learners that struggle a little bit more and explain to them what is expected, and you know you motivate them daily’.*

Additionally, Orange provided insights into his selection of translators as follows:

*‘When I am using a learner, as a translator. I usually look for a learner who is fluent in that specific language. Who understands the language itself and the words you use in that language?’*

However, he does acknowledge that:

***'One difficulty when using a translator, is you can have learners in your class that are disruptive, because now they are talking to their peers and not the teacher'.***

Interestingly, Orange indicates that he uses translation to a limited extent to avoid disciplinary challenges in his classes. Equally important, Purple elaborated on how she implements this strategy:

***'I have two to three translators in my class if I explain something in Afrikaans or English that learners again translated to the IsiXhosa learner and that just makes the learner understand the term better'.*** More importantly, she disagrees with Orange.

Purple explains that:

***'A translator is also very effective. The translator and peer support go hand in hand because I have learned that when a peer explains a topic to another learner, the learner understands better. So, if I must choose two strategies it is peer support and a translator, but code switching is not that successful'.***

Red also expresses how he implements translation in his class as follows:

***'For example, in my Mathematics class, when it comes to the IsiXhosa learners that are taught in English. I use translation, so that they have a better understanding because when I speak English throughout the lesson, they do not have an idea. So, I rather make use of translation in the classroom so that they could have a better understanding'.***

Furthermore, he explains:

***'There was some terminology that the English learners did not understand, so I made use of from my side to rather speak Afrikaans because the English-IsiXhosa learners most of them speak Afrikaans at home. So, when I translate it in my class, they understand it much better'.***

As noticed, translators play a significant role in the enhancement of learners' language learning in their second language, across the curriculum. Although this strategy is beneficial, it needs to be implemented with careful guidelines.

### ***Peer support***

Some teachers also indicated that they used peer support as a strategy in their classrooms.

Firstly, Blue explains that peer support is when ***'peers help each other'***.

In addition, Purple added:

***'Peer support is when I implement group work in class or pair work. I'll give a certain topic to the learners, and I assign a learner who is very strong in a certain language to explain to the peers or the other members in the groups.'***

Further, Blue elaborates that he pairs:

***‘Two stronger learners and a weaker learner’.***

Purple backed Blue up by saying:

***‘When you pair learners, you have to make sure that there's always one learner if you work in pairs, who is stronger than the other learner so that learner would basically take the lead in the pair. If you have groups, for example, a group of three or four you have to make sure that they are two learners that are strong in that group and then an average learner and then a learner that struggles a lot, because those learners would be able to assist each other and then for peer support’.***

As an example, Purple explained:

***‘I did a Natural Science activity in the classroom; it was about watching the life cycle of a plant. Where you must draw and explain what a food chain is, so those learners were able to assist each other on explaining the term and in that pair or group the learners had different mother tongues. So, they would be able to explain the term to each other in their mother tongue’.***

Purple also said:

***‘I have seen improvements with the peer support work like group work and pair work because I've noticed that learners actually understand a topic better when their peer explains the term to them so I must say that group work and pair work is very successful in the classroom’.***

Thus, Purple emphasized that:

***‘For a strategy like peer support to be successful, it is very important to have groups that are mixed and very diverse.’***

Moreover, Orange emphasised that with the use of peer support:

***‘Learners identify easily with their peers, making it easier to communicate’.***

Teachers consciously employ this strategy, because of its ability to assist in the learners’ understanding of the LoLT. Hence, it is important to ensure that learners with low, average, and higher language proficiency and ability are grouped. This strategy would be ineffective if learners with the same language proficiency, are paired up.

## Discussion

The findings emerging from the study indicate that all the teachers felt challenged when having to teach learners in a LoLT which was different from their mother tongue. Some of the challenges that their learners experienced with the LoLT (English) included comprehending what was being taught, lack of confidence in speaking the language to share thoughts and feelings, writing, and a lack of support at home to strengthen the LoLT. The teachers indicated, however, that despite these challenges they explored strategies that they

could implement in their classes to promote teaching and learning. The findings indicate that teachers engaged with sociocultural and multiple intelligences to support language learning for enhanced meaning-making among the learners (Mohammed & Kinyo, 2020).

Some of the strategies that teachers implemented included strategies such as translanguaging and code switching, translation, peer support, vocabulary building, roleplay, technology, and games to enhance learning, which indicates a balance between learner-centred and interactive teaching strategies (de Klerk et al, 2021). Strategies such as role-play, games and peer support are clearly aligned to social constructivist learning, since they involve collaborative meaning-making which leads to enhanced learning (Vygotsky, 1987). In the study conducted by Norro (2021) such a range of pedagogical strategies were discovered to influence learning positively. Furthermore, as pointed out by Nithiya, Palve, Palve and Tipandjan (2021) hands on or experiential learning facilitates engagement and the retention of concepts.

Although some teachers such as Orange and Purple embraced translanguaging and code-switching, they pointed out that it tended to be time consuming and exhausting, especially since they had to switch between languages, which inhibited the lesson flow (de Klerk et al, 2021). The use of translators and peer support also had a measure of success, but some learners tended to be disruptive during the process and there were misinterpretations at times during translations, since the translators sometimes struggled to find words in the home language for the English equivalents, as verbatim translations were not always possible. The challenge of not having adequate time to engage effectively in strategies such as translanguaging was one of the major challenges highlighted in Duarte Gunther-van der Meij's (2022) study as well, in teaching multilingual learners.

Nevertheless, teachers' exploration of alternative strategies for enhanced meaning-making among their learners indicates a sense of agency on the part of teachers to embrace diverse teaching strategies that would contribute to their learners' engagement with, and comprehension of their lessons. With this said, this active sense of agency from these teachers resonates with Cole (2008) who asserts that good teaching can be characterised as engaging, appropriate and diverse, in which teachers accommodate all learners. Hence, a significant finding emerging from this small-scale study is a sense of positivity and responsibility among the teachers, most of whom emphasised the importance of remaining motivated and creating a supportive and stimulating environment in which meaningful teaching and learning could be realised, despite having to teach through the learners' second language. However, the lack of support from the Department of Education in terms of the provision of technological resources including wi-fi connectivity and interactive white-boards, amongst others, and relevant workshops to develop multilingual skills, lack of parental involvement and learners' demotivated attitudes, tended to stifle their efforts.

Teachers highlighted the significance of collaborative planning and team teaching as imperative for addressing learners' language challenges within school contexts. Hence, it is important for teachers to share their insights and experiences in collaborative spaces so that they can contribute collectively to support learners for whom the LoLT is not their mother

tongue, academically. Ultimately to advance learning among first additional language learners across the curriculum the application of a holistic approach, that encompasses collaborative engagement among a variety of stakeholders including the parents, non-governmental organisations, departmental officials, business, community members, religious leaders and all stakeholders connected to the school in some way, is crucial (Duarate & Gunther-Van Der Meij, 2018). Such sharing of ideas from multiple perspectives and experiences, could make a meaningful contribution to enhancing learning among learners for whom the LoLT is different from the mother tongue.

There is a need, however, for teachers to explore the use of socially inclusive teaching strategies (SITS) to enhance learning when the LoLT is not the learners' home language. Malebese's (2017) study, for example, which involved a group of Grade 4 EFAL (English First Additional) learners, teachers, parents, and non-governmental organisations, demonstrates how the use of socially inclusive teaching strategies (SITS) and the integration of indigenous knowledge could be used as strategies to enhance learning in a LoLT, which is the learners' second language.

### Conclusion

This study explored teaching strategies adopted by teachers in rural areas to support language learning in the learners' second language. The findings emerging from this study indicated that teachers were challenged by this phenomenon. Furthermore, the study highlighted the teaching strategies adopted by grade 4-6, Intermediate Phase teachers and how they experienced it. Although teachers are embracing strategies to assist learners who have to study through the medium of a LoLT which is not their mother tongue, schools need to embark on more creative approaches to enhance language learning by forging greater collaborative links with parents and a range of other stakeholders who would be able to play a supportive role in enhancing language learning across the curriculum.

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