

Preface to 30(1)

This number of Per Linguam starts with an investigation into issues of validity in the South African Grade 12 English Home Language examinations. **Du Plessis** finds that not only is there a lack of clarity on whether English Home Language as a subject is being offered at an adequately high level to meet the declared objectives of the curriculum, but that the reliability of the results obtained by Grade 12 learners in the exit-level examination has been placed under suspicion. This study takes a close look at the language component of the school-leaving examination covering the period 2008-2012, and finds that the selection of English Home Language papers evaluated in this study cannot be concluded to be a valid or reliable assessment of high language ability, and that the credibility of the examination results remains questionable.

Still on the school front, but moving to the Foundation Phase, the contributions by Van der Merwe and Mbatha address two different literacy issues: **Van der Merwe**, in an Afrikaans contribution, addresses the issue of Foundation Phase learners' dictionary skills against the backdrop of the publication of the new *Grondslagfasewoordeboek Afrikaans/English*. She argues for the importance of the use of effective dictionaries, and their contribution to learners' linguistic, intellectual, cultural and encyclopedic knowledge. In her study, learners' dictionary and language skills were assessed through an Action Research intervention lasting six weeks, after which learners showed a considerable increase in both their dictionary and language skills.

In **Mbatha's** contribution, the focus shifts to Foundation Phase *teachers*, and their experiences in implementing mother tongue instruction. Mbatha adds to the ongoing debate about the effectiveness of mother tongue education versus English, particularly in the Foundation Phase. The study traces the practices of teachers who had undergone training to teach literacy acquisition in the learners' mother tongue (in this case, IsiZulu) in a dual medium programme for Foundation Phase teachers. Her findings show that although the newly qualified teachers were keen to implement mother tongue teaching in their Foundation Phase classes, some worried this would 'delay' the teaching of English as first additional language. In addition, her findings show that some schools do not support mother tongue instruction at all and prefer English as the language of learning and teaching.

In the final two contributions the focus shifts once more, this time to Higher Education. In his article, **Olivier** reports on the use of Wiktionary, an open source online dictionary, as well as generic wiki pages in a university e-learning environment as a means of developing teaching and learning material for an Afrikaans undergraduate sociolinguistics module. The study's results show that the use of a wiki as an e-learning resource proved to be very effective in creating a learning community through which content knowledge could be constructed. However, students' computer literacy levels, access to the Internet and some students' continued preference for hard-copy assignments, presented some problems.

In the final article of this issue, **Oostendorp and Anthonissen** investigate the bilingual learning experiences of a group of Afrikaans/English bilingual students at Stellenbosch University, while also shedding light on the university's language policy, which includes instruction in more than one language. The study data show that bilingual students make specific language choices for a multiplicity of reasons, and that they draw on a number of different 'voices', some contradictory, to articulate their learning experiences. The authors conclude that language planners need to acknowledge the complex ways in which bilinguals use language, and rather than forcing bilingual educational practices to fit a particular point of view, the complexity of multilingual knowledge construction in formal education needs to be recognised and accommodated.

The final contribution to this issue is a book review by **Fiona Jackson**, who provides an insightful review of Karl Maton's *Knowledge and Knowers: Towards a realist sociology of education*. Maton's book charts the evolution of aspects of Legitimation Code Theory, from its roots in Bourdieu's field theory and Bernstein's code theory, to the multifaceted toolkit for the understanding of social practices that it currently offers. The book was published in 2014 by Routledge.

In closing, the Editorial Team would like to wish all Per Linguam's readers, authors and reviewers a restful Festive Season, and a happy and successful 2015.

Christa van der Walt
Nanda Klapwijk

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