

## PREFACE

Welcome to the first issue of 2024, and our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary! I would like to thank all our reviewers, language editors and, of course, the authors for their hard work, particularly in finalizing the articles for publication.

This issue centres around multilingual education and problems with the teaching and use of English. It includes submissions from Uganda and Ghana. As always, the problem is in using English as the language of learning and teaching, with predictable problems in meaning making. What is noticeable in all these articles is the importance of teacher education and training, particularly as far as the role of language in all aspects of schooling is concerned.

Looking at the language of learning and teaching from the learners' perspective, **Azagsiba and Manyike** investigate the perceptions of Grade 11 Setswana home language learners towards the use of English as a language of learning and teaching. This is an important group of learners because they are at the stage where they realise the importance of good Grade 12 results. The fact that they continue with school beyond Grade 9, indicates their intention to continue their schooling at higher education level. The rural environment in which this study was conducted has its own challenges, among them a lack of exposure to English outside the classroom. It is no wonder then that learners prefer the use of Setswana in the classroom. However, since English is important for further study, the authors recommend a bilingual approach to teaching and learning, with teachers being trained to manage more than one language in a way that supports language acquisition, particularly for academic purposes.

Moving to rural primary schools in Uganda, **Ssentanda** draws our attention to the use of English in the first three to four years of schooling in selected private and government schools. Using questionnaires, follow-up interviews and classroom observations, teachers' perceptions of their language use and their actual language use when teaching are contrasted. It would seem that teachers in government schools decide to use English as a language of learning and teaching (contrary to the official language policy) because they regard their schools as 'too multilingual'. Private schools market themselves as using English for instruction from the beginning. However, classroom observations show much translanguaging, with the majority of interactions in Luganda and regular translations to English, even in the supposedly English private schools. Ssentanda concludes that teacher practices are in direct conflict with national language-in-education policy, which necessitates a re-evaluation of the policy and more targeted teacher education and training.

English language teacher training also emerges as a problem in **Mgecha's** investigation into the use of games to improve English language proficiency at secondary school level in the

Meru District Council of Tanzania. Arguing that language games are effective in improving communication skills, Mgecha refers to the fun element that would engage learners in authentic communication activities, as required by the Communicative Approach to language learning and teaching. Unfortunately many of the participants in this study do not use language games and seem unaware of the range and effectiveness of these games.

In the context of the dominance of English as a language of learning and teaching, the training of all teachers in language-related, subject-specific activities cannot be denied. In their article **Swart, Reyneke, Romylos and Dudu** investigate the degree to which three Physical Science teachers approach reading comprehension in the Further Education and Training phase (Grade 10 – 12 in this case). Based on the simple view of reading in conjunction with the transactional theory of reading, the researchers find that teachers seldom use reading strategies to improve learners' comprehension, mainly because they are not trained to do so. The importance of training all teachers in the theory and practice of language-related competencies is emphasized.

The importance of academic language proficiency is the subject of **MacFarlane's** article on Grade 6 learners' core academic language skills in their home and first additional language. Using a tool that assesses core academic language skills, the CALS-I-ZA, MacFarlane demonstrates the aptness of Bourdieu's statement that academic language is nobody's home language, by including both home and first additional language users of English. The CALS-I-ZA is an instrument developed to measure CALS that has been validated in the South African context. The results show that the dominance of a particular language in daily life is not an indication of control over academic language and that the CALS instrument could serve as an indication of success, since it correlates well with other tests of academic performance, such as the provincial Mathematics Common Examination and the provincial Natural Sciences and Technology Examination. Once again the construct of this instrument could serve as guidance for pedagogy.

The last two articles return to the theme of multilingualism and translanguaging. Using a Solomon four quasi-experimental design with four groups of participants in four rural Grade 4 schools, **Mgijima** shows the positive results in reading comprehension when translanguaging is used as a teaching tool. The fact that experimental and control groups are used, provides solid evidence for generalisability and the use of translanguaging at a crucial stage in learners' academic development. At higher education level, **Hungwe** provides insight into the successful formal and informal language acquisition attempts by her participant. In the context of multilingualism in Africa, Hungwe showcases the seemingly effortless acquisition of multiple languages that bears testimony to the strength of motivation and persistence when learning languages.

We hope you enjoy this issue!

The editors