

EDITORIAL

Reading comprehension and language proficiency, particularly in the context where a non-home language is used at school level, is the theme of most of the articles in this number of *Per Linguam*. The article by **Moopelwa and Condy** deals with one of the most problematic issues in reading comprehension, which is to get learners to go beyond lifting answers from the reading text and to require deeper comprehension by asking inference questions. In this particular article the problem of poor reading comprehension is exacerbated by a lack of motivation to read. The authors show how explicit teaching of guiding questions and self-monitoring strategies can improve reading comprehension, thereby also increasing motivation to read. It is clear that developing such strategies in learners require additional training of teachers. Continuing this topic, **Zano and Phatudi** show how depth of vocabulary knowledge seems to be a good predictor comprehension ability in English First Additional Language learners at high school level. Their research has implications for the design of learning materials that need to explicitly aim at growing learners' vocabulary breadth and depth with a view to sharpening their reading comprehension abilities.

In their contribution **Steinke and Wildsmith** look at reading from the perspective of pedagogy: what do teachers need to do and know to improve reading comprehension at the phase where this is crucial: at foundation phase level? As the authors point out, intermittent professional development courses out of the classroom are not as efficient as continuous coaching and mentoring at classroom level. What is needed to change and improve pedagogy is continuous exposure to new ideas and methods of teaching. Remaining in the primary school, the next article, by **Mophosho, Khoza-Shangase and Sebole**, look at reading comprehension and the role played by the home language of Grade 5 Setswana-speaking children in a rural province in South Africa, where the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) is English. By contrasting reading comprehension in English to that in Setswana, the authors find low reading comprehension in both languages, but better performance in Setswana when reading difficult texts. Their conclusions echo those of Steinke and Wildsmith when they point to the necessity of raising the level of education and training of teachers who teach reading, as such training is crucial for learners' success in reading comprehension.

Remaining at discussions of home language versus additional languages for the purpose of learning and teaching, **Ssentanda and Andema** focus on Uganda and the role of storytelling in the curriculum. Arguing for the importance of drawing on traditions of storytelling at home, they find that teachers tend to disregard the curriculum where including storytelling during class time is explicitly mandated. Since teachers focus more on coaching learners for examinations, storytelling as an important cognitive and linguistic resource is not only neglected, but ignored by many teachers.

Teane looks at teachers and their problems with a language of learning and teaching that is not their home language. Their research participants, Grade 10 Life Sciences teachers, indicate that their own lack of language proficiency impacts negatively on their teaching. The

author concludes that, contrary to popular belief, a lack of resources is not the major contributing factor in poor learner performance; instead the results of the study seem to indicate that the effect of teachers' poor language proficiency in the LoLT is more damaging in terms of learner success. A similar problem is described by **Tshuma and Le Cordeur**, but from the perspective of Mathematics teaching. Using a standardised language proficiency assessment tool, their results show that teachers' language ability in English is very low. The Intermediate Phase teachers who are not proficient in the language of instruction are likely to compromise the quality of Mathematics instruction.

Finally, **Olivier and Wittmann** look at one solution for improving teachers' professional abilities, which is by fostering self-directed learning in German second additional language teachers. Since it is very difficult for provincial education departments to coach and mentor teachers in their classrooms, the possibility of using online professional learning communities seems more feasible and sustainable. The place of second additional language teachers (German in this case) in the South African schooling context is also highlighted in this article. The authors point out that since the group of German SAL teachers in South Africa is quite small and teachers tend to know each other, online professional learning communities would enable a sharing of ideas and experiences, a factor that plays a big role in collaborative learning.

At the end of 2019 it is a pleasure for us as editors to announce that *Per Linguam* was asked to submit information to the **Scopus** Content Selection & Advisory Board (CSAB). We would like to share the result of their evaluation, which is that *Per Linguam* has now been accepted for inclusion in Scopus. *Per Linguam* has also been approached by the MLA International Bibliography with a view to listing the electronic journal in the Directory of Periodicals. This process has not been concluded, but we thought you would like to know that our international audience is growing. Both these entities have also called for a continued, rigorous screening of the quality of submissions to the journal, and as editors we intend to continue with our practice of doing exactly that.

We would like to wish all our contributors and reviewers a peaceful holiday season.

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