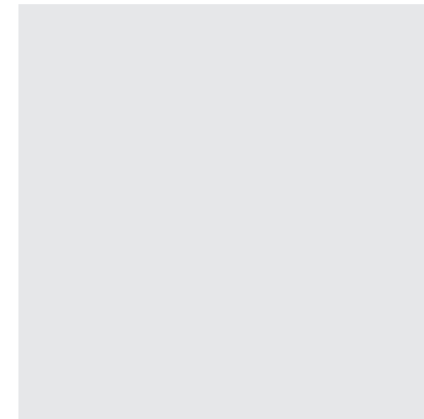# Enhancing English-medium Education in Namibia

Ongwediva College of Education, Namibia
University of Jyväskylä, Finland

David Marsh, Anne Ontero & Tautiko Shikongo (Eds.)

Content and Language Integrated Learning in Namibia

Workshop Report

'Using Language to Learn and Learning to use Language'

Authorship:

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© Towards Successful English-medium Education in Southern Africa - John Clegg
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© Language-sensitive Methodologies in Namibian Teacher Education - Tautiko Shikongo
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Foreword

Hafeni Hatutale
Rector, Ongwediva College of Education, Namibia

This report is the product of a joint co-operation project between the University of Jyvaskyla in Finland, the Association of Teachers of English in Finland, the Namibian National Teachers Union (NANTU) and Ongwediva College of Education. The project examined the relevance of a set of methodologies, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), to teacher education needs in Namibia and our college diversification programme.

The workshops brought together thirty English language and subject teachers from Ondangwa (east and west). Overall focus was on identifying teaching and learning problems specific to the use of English as a medium of instruction. Specific attention was given to what are termed 'language sensitive methodologies' in respect to enhancing teaching and learning through English.

This series of workshops has examined the challenges facing Namibian teachers in their attempt to teach through the medium of English, alongside the potential for improved outcomes. The teachers report experiencing many problems. A key issue relates to the level of English exposure which is considered very low, particularly in the remote rural areas where English may be viewed as a foreign language for many learners and some teachers.

The co-operation between the groups involved in these workshops has clearly resulted in encouraging outcomes. Some of these appear likely to be effective and essential in enhancing the quality of English medium education in Namibia. The workshops have provided a platform for extensive dialogue on experiences from different environments leading to focus on possible solutions.

Based on the results of this project, the pilot phase has offered scope and clear direction on how to implement CLIL in Namibia and identified possible indicators to be considered in the process of implementation. We therefore wish to take our co-operation further and work together in designing and testing a module for subject and language teachers on language sensitive methodologies.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge with appreciation the efforts of all those who contributed to the development and production of this valuable document.

Introduction

David Marsh, Anne Ontero, Tautiko Shikongo

This report is the result of a series of workshops and field studies carried out under the auspices of the Ongwediva College of Education (2000-2002) in conjunction with the University of Jyväskylä (Finland), the Namibian National Teachers Union (Namibia) and the Association of Teachers of English in Finland. The NGO partnership received support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Finland).

In addition to contributions from a range of experts involved in the workshops and studies undertaken in Namibia, some external specialists were invited to contribute comment on the broader implications of the main outcomes as found in *Approaching Language-sensitive Expertise*. John Clegg (UK) and Dieter Wolff (Germany) focus on methodological success factors in second language-medium education. Carole Bloch (South Africa) considers the role of African languages in relation to English-medium education as the basis of a successful teaching and learning strategy. Patti Swarts considers relevance to the Namibian context, and Bruce Marsland comments on the relationship between language teaching and 'language-sensitive' methods.

The Working Group consisted of thirty-five people, thirty of whom work as teachers in the Ondangwa (East-West) region of Namibia. The primary need identified by the working group at the outset was to identify means by which to upgrade teachers' language and methodological skills in order to teach through the medium of English. The conclusion was that whereas the language needs should be enhanced through long-term development, to successfully teach through the medium of English in this context requires greater understanding of what are termed 'language-sensitive methods'.

The report does not address broad issues about the implications of language policy in Namibia with respect to the role of English and local languages[1]. Nor does it wish to imply any opinion, directly or indirectly, on Namibian educational performance indicators recently reported and discussed.[2] It is merely an attempt to summarize the insight, views and opinions of practising teachers (grades 1-10, English language and non-language), and external experts, on means by which to enhance the quality of teaching and learning which could be implemented in local contexts.

It does reflect a view that language is at the centre of any educational enterprise, and that if it acts as a barrier to successful learning then strategies should be identified, tested and implemented to overcome any resulting deficiencies. Education through the medium of English in Namibian schools is viewed as placing an extra burden on teachers and learners because, in differing ways according to location and social context, the position of the language is not predominant in the lives of people involved. Broadly speaking, English can be considered a 'second language' in this context, although linguistic diversity within the country means that for some it will be the 'first' language, and for others it will be far-removed from daily realities and could thus be considered a 'foreign' language.

There is considerable evidence[3] that learning through a language which is not the first language of the child (second language medium education), requires adaptation of educational methods that may be successfully used when a child learns through his/her first language (first language medium education).

It should not be assumed that second language medium education is a disadvantage for learners or the societies in which they live. For example, forms of second language medium education are deliberately introduced in some heavily monolingual societies in order to reap the rewards that may be realized[4]. Recognition of such benefits[5] is resulting in introduction into mainstream education[6] becoming increasingly widespread and commonplace. Second language medium education can, if implemented appropriately, offer advantages for individuals and societies in relation to linguistic, communicative and cognitive development. However, if implemented inappropriately it can result in negative consequences.[7]
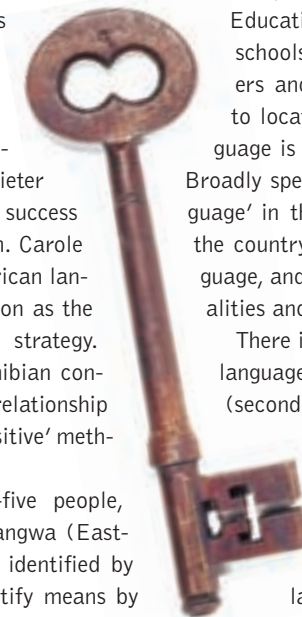
Finally, some comments on the English language and multilingualism. It is estimated that there are some 750 million people[8] who have English as a second language, and who can use it effectively enough for their own purposes. This figure exceeds those who could be considered as having English as their first language. There are also considered to be a billion people presently learning English as a foreign language. To learn English, and to learn through English, are both highly topical issues in the aspirations of individuals, and the socio-economic policies of societies.[9] Correspondingly, there is increasing recognition that plurilingualism (individuals able to communicate in different languages) and multilingualism (societies comprising individuals using different languages) offers the foundation for strength through fusion, not weakness through fission. In essence, focus on the role of languages, from regional policy through to individual learning preferences[10], is a critical issue worldwide, which acts as a catalyst for re-examining what we have considered to be problems in an effort to identify and implement solutions. Therefore much can be learned from examining how good practice is achieved in other contexts that share similarities to those of Namibia.

In summary, teaching and learning through the medium of a second language requires adaptation of methodologies that may be found effective in first language medium education. These have been referred to as 'language-sensitive methods'.[11] If language-sensitive methods were more widely employed in Namibian schools then that what is described as a 'language problem' might well be re-considered as 'language potential'.[12] Second language medium education should not be considered in terms of 'second-best education'.[13] On the contrary, it can be viewed as one feature of an educational system that attempts to achieve the best possible outcomes for the broadest range of learners. But for this to happen, obstacles need to be converted into opportunities, and policies into good practice.

[1] See, for example, Language and Development in Southern Africa - Making the Right Choices. Trewby, R. & Fitchat, S. 2001, Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan. In addition, there is much evidence in North American studies that second language instruction is not productive for young children if their second language skill is still at a crucial formative stage.

[2] See, for example, Government of The Republic of Namibia: Ministry of Basic Education and Culture. 2000. English language Proficiency of Teachers: Report on the research into English language proficiency of teachers/student teachers and Basic Education principals' and teachers' perceptions of the use of English in Namibian schools. Okahandja: NIED. In addition, Canadian studies have found that although speaking and listening skills may develop quickly, reading, and writing in particular, can be very slow to develop unless suitable methods are used in all teaching. Thus, there is often a very serious question of when a second language is developed enough to be used as a major teaching and learning medium.

[3] See, for example, Baker, C. & Prys Jones, S. 1998. The Encyclopedia of Bilingualism and Bilingual Education. Multilingual Matters: Clevedon (UK)

[4] See, for example, Beatons Beardsmore, H. 1993. European Models of Bilingual Education. Multilingual Matters: Clevedon. (UK) or Fruhauf, G., Coyle, D., Christ, I. 1996. Teaching Content in a Foreign Language. European Platform for Dutch Education: The Hague (The Netherlands).

[5] The term CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) is increasingly used to describe a broad range of situations in which the learning of languages and other subjects has a joint curricular role in education. Put simply, CLIL often refers to a student learning some non-language subject or theme through a language which is not his/her first language. Under the term CLIL there are different methodologies and approaches including LAC (Learning Across the Curriculum), immersion, language-enhanced content teaching, bilingual education, plurilingual education, dual-medium education, content-based language learning, language-enriched education, learning through a foreign language, amongst others. See, for example, www.clilcompendium.com

[6] See, for example, Marsh, D. & Marsland, B. 1999. CLIL Initiatives for the Millennium. UNICOM: University of Jyväskylä (Finland) or Marsh, D., Marsland, B. & Maljers, A. 1998. Future Scenarios in Content and Language Integrated Learning. European Platform for Dutch Education: The Hague (The Netherlands).

[7] See, for example, Alexander, N. 2001. Key Issues in Language Policy for Southern Africa. In Trewby, R. & Fitchat, S. as above, and Alexander, N. 1995. 'Models of multilingual schooling for a democratic South Africa' in Heugh, K., Siegruehn, P., and Plueddemann, P. (eds.) Multilingual Education for South Africa. Johannesburg: Heinemann. Also of interest is Legère, K. (ed.) 1996. African languages in Basic education. NIED & Gamsberg Macmillan. Windhoek

[8] These figures are widely quoted, please refer www.britcoun.org/engfaqs.

[9] See, for example, Breton, A. (ed.) 1998. Economic Approaches to Language and Bilingualism. Department of Public Works and Government Services: Government of Canada.

[10] See, for example, Marsh, D & Maljers, A. 2001. Profiling European CLIL Classrooms. UNICOM: University of Jyväskylä (Finland) or Baker, C. & Prys Jones, S. 1998. The Encyclopedia of Bilingualism and Bilingual Education. Multilingual Matters: Clevedon (UK)

[11] See, for example, Clegg, J. 2001. 'Does English-medium education work?' in Trewby, R. & Fitchat, S. as above. He notes that ' There is a distinct, describable pedagogy of learning and teaching through a second language. It allows teachers to teach their subject in a way which is sensitive to language. It also allows them to teach with an imperfect command of English. If it is used across the curriculum, language-sensitive pedagogy can improve considerably the performance of students'. (p.210-211)

[12] See, for example, Harlech-Jones, B. 2001. Some prevalent assumptions in language policy, with contextualisations from Namibia. In Trewby, R. & Fitchat, S. as above.

[13] In 1995 1,800 British nine-year olds were given English language tests. The British results fell below the top 10 countries, led by Finland, which had an average score which was considerably higher reported in The Straits Times, Singapore, 2.8.96. Chew (in Chew, P. 1999. Linguistic Imperialism, Globalism and the English Language, The AILA Review 13: AILA points out that '...while the widespread use of English gave English-speakers a head start advantage in the world arena, this was relevant only during the period of transition. As more and more non-native speakers begin to learn English from an early age – indeed there are more non-native than native speakers in the world – they will begin to compete with traditional native speakers for the top literary and journalistic prizes'.

Recommendation

The Working Group

It is recommended that one or more of the four national teacher education institutes develop initial and in-service teacher development programmes that combine subject-specific and language-sensitive methodologies. These programmes should target teachers of all subjects that are taught through the medium of English, including teachers of English. Parts of such training could usefully involve subject and language teachers working alongside each other. An initial teacher education programme would not need to be realized as a large-scale module, but could be embedded into the teacher training curriculum.

The links between subject-specific linguistic skills and conceptual demands, and a focus on subject-specific reading and writing in English, alongside spoken language, need to be embedded in these training programmes. In addition, input on language awareness and second language acquisition would be relevant in order to provide greater understanding of the potential and pitfalls of second language medium education in the Namibian context.

Programmes of this type would better equip teachers of languages and other subjects to face the challenges of education in the modern Namibian context. A focus on how 'we use language to learn and learn to use language' would help a wide range of learners develop greater self-confidence and 'thirst for learning' through English-medium education in Namibian schools.

Applicability of Language-sensitive Methodologies to the Namibian Context

Patti Swarts
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Learning through a language other than one's own, is an extremely complex issue. Many authors on language in education (e.g. Brock – Utne, 2000; Heugh, et al, 1995; Ramirez et al, 1991) argue that language policy and practice in most post-colonial southern African countries has constituted one of the most wide-spread and devastating of contextual disadvantages to learning. This argument is based on the fact that the majority of children in these countries have to learn through a language in which they are neither competent nor feel comfortable with. This kind of learning is called subtractive bilingualism[1] (Donald, et al, 1997), and can arise from a situation where neither teachers nor learners feel proficient and comfortable in the language used as medium of instruction. This, naturally, can have a negative influence on the quality of the teaching and learning process. To a certain extent, this is what we experience in some Namibian schools, as is demonstrated by learner achievement (or the lack thereof).

A policy of bilingualism in education is not necessarily undesirable. (Donald, et al, 1997). There is evidence (Heugh, et al, 1995) that bilingualism can have positive learning as

1 (Donald, et al, 1997) It is 'bilingualism' as it involves learning in another language than one's own and 'subtractive' in that it denies, or takes away the place and the value of the first language in the context of formal learning.

well as social benefits through the process of 'additive' bilingualism. A second (or more) language (s) is/are added to the first language through a process of gradual transition. In this process linguistic diversity is not viewed as an obstacle to communication, but is regarded as a source of enrichment. Language skills are first developed in the mother tongue (or home language), and then transferred to English.

According to Avenstrup (2001) this process makes the following demands:

- oral and written development in the mother tongue has to be very rich and intense both in its own right and as a solid basis for skills transfer to English.
- the actual process of transfer of language skills from mother tongue to English must be optimal, and
- particular attention must be paid to widening and deepening the English language proficiency of teachers and learners alike to meet the demands of the curriculum.

Namibia adopted the policy for children to learn through their mother tongues (home languages) during the first three years of schooling when basic skills of reading, writing and concept formation are developed. From Grade 4 onwards English becomes the medium of instruction and the mother tongue can be taken as a subject. It is intended that the primary education cycle should enable learners to acquire reasonable competence in English and be prepared for English medium instruction throughout the secondary cycle. Namibia, in its language policy, thus combined the study of English (a widely used and international language) with the study of local languages, in an attempt to meet the demands of globalisation, but also to take advantage of its richness of local languages for their pedagogical and cultural benefits. If this is the intention, what can be done to ensure that both teachers and learners become proficient, competent and comfortable in English?

I believe that the demands could, to a large extent be met through Language Sensitive Methodologies as described in other chapters in this publication. The main reasons are that the Nambian language policy provides for the mother tongue as the basis to facilitate the development of a second language, and the philosophy of learner-centred education requires holistic development, interrelatedness, integration, active participation, collaboration and reflection.

The question that arises now is how to prepare teachers

to utilise Language Sensitive Methodologies. In this regard I will suggest strategies for teacher education programmes. These include the development of:

- reflective teachers who continuously examine their own practice in order to improve and enhance learning
- teachers who are willing to experiment with new ideas and methodologies
- teachers who are confident and proficient themselves in the medium of instruction (for Grades 1-3 mother tongue, from Grade 4 onwards English)
- teachers who can employ a variety of methodologies relevant to the needs of the learners and the particular situation
- teachers who have both subject and language competence
- teachers who can facilitate active participation and collaborative learning by learners
- teachers who can plan and work together in a team to integrate aspects across subjects, and to demonstrate the interrelatedness of what is to be taught and learned
- teachers who are familiar with and can make use of the new technologies to enhance learning, including language learning
- teachers who respects cultural diversity and who are tolerant of difference.

Many of the above aspects are already intended by the Basic Education Teacher's' Diploma (BETD), but need to be strengthened and emphasised through research (including action research), professional development of teacher educators, and enrichment of the syllabuses. These, I believe, are the issues to be considered in developing proposals for further collaboration on language sensitive methodologies.

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Ramirez, J., Yuen, S., Ramey, D. & Pasta, D .(1991). Final Report. Longitudinal Study of Structured English Immersion Strategy, Early – exit and Late – exit Transitional Bilingual Education Programs for Language Minority Children. San Mateo, California: Aguirre International.

Towards Successful English-medium Education in Southern Africa

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Educational achievement in sub-Saharan Africa should be better. Literacy levels and school attendance and matriculation rates are too low (Bamgbose 2000). There are good reasons for this. They have to do, for example, with low levels of literacy and education in childrens' home backgrounds; they have also to do with a lack of school resources and high class sizes. Crucially, however, the effectiveness of learning and teaching is limited by the fact that teachers and students are working in a second language (L2) in areas in which exposure to the language in the community is low. It is difficult in the best-resourced contexts for teachers and students to teach and learn in a language in which all may feel unconfident. In countries where parental literacy and school resources are low it becomes particularly difficult. To teach successfully in these circumstances requires special skills. In my experience, teachers and learners in Namibia are as dedicated as in any country I know; and their command of English is often good. But like their peers in other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, they have a big task. The linguistic and cognitive barriers to learning, which education in a second language places in their way, are too high for them to overcome without a significant change in their practice.

What is the solution to the problem of under-achievement in L2-medium schools? There are two routes to a solution. One is gradually to introduce high-quality education through the home/community African language. This is not my subject here, but it is without doubt a vital ingredient in raising school achievement (Alexander 2000) and I return to it below. The other route is to improve L2-medium education.

One should stress (as others do in this report) that it is

not L2-medium education itself which is difficult (though it does, arguably, make heavier demands than learning in a first language). The problem is that it requires special skills to teach a subject in a second language and conventional teacher-education rarely provides them. Teachers need to teach in a specific way – which I will refer to as 'language-sensitive' teaching. This is especially important for subject teachers. Although language specialists play a key role in L2-medium schools, language-sensitive developments in school are largely unsuccessful if they are left to language teachers. Most subject teachers in sub-Saharan Africa do not get good training in language-sensitive practice at their teacher-education colleges. In Namibia, the role of language in education is a familiar topic. It is discussed in educational circles (Trewby & Fichat 2001); language-related improvements to teacher-education have taken place over the years (e.g. the English Language Teacher Development project, the Molteno project etc), and in early years education, the role of good first language (L1) competence is well understood (Hovelmann 2001). Yet, even in Namibia, most teachers are not skilled in teaching subjects through a L2 (Government of the Republic of Namibia 2000).

What are the key features of the form of language-sensitive teaching which is appropriate to countries such as Namibia? They are documented in this report. At their core are the related concepts of language and learning demands and language and learning support. Let me outline these two concepts.

The language and learning demands of schoolwork

Lessons make cognitive demands on learners: that is, they assume that learners have certain cognitive skills. For ex-

ample, when a science teacher asks students to conduct an experiment, s/he may assume that they can think in certain ways (such as, hypothesising, predicting, showing cause and effect, drawing conclusions etc). These cognitive processes make language demands on the students. In other words the students must be able to express these cognitive processes in English in speech and writing. The question the teacher must ask herself is: can the students do these things?

Similarly, if s/he asks the students to write about the experiment and its results, s/he makes other cognitive demands on them. She may assume, for example, that they understand key concepts and have the planning and composing ability to organise their ideas and write them in a logical order. These cognitive processes also make language demands on the students: do they have the English vocabulary to express the science concepts? Can they show the sequence of ideas required by a good written record of an experiment (e.g. showing time sequence by using connectors such as first, then, next etc and drawing conclusions by phrases such as so, thus, therefore)? Teachers need to ask themselves questions like these about their students' cognitive and linguistic ability to take part in lessons. If they think the students need support, then they need to provide it.

Providing language support

Students who are learning in a L2 face heavy linguistic and cognitive demands. They are working harder than students learning in their first language. This means that teachers need to give them a lot of support. They can do this in many ways. Language-sensitive practice turns essentially around aspects of teacher-talk, the design of classroom tasks, the teaching of learning strategies for the L2-medium classroom, encouraging and refining the use of learners' first languages in the classroom, and developing school language policy. This report lists the techniques available to teachers who teach their subject in a second language and I will not discuss them further. It is, however, important to emphasise the steps which should be taken within any education service which intends to raise school achievement by taking account of the fact that most teaching and learning is done in a second language

Taking account of language in L2-medium education:

Shorter-term steps

1. Ensure that all the main stakeholders and especially the decision-makers within the education service understand on the one hand the concept of language-related disadvantage in education, and on the other the very specific approach to education which is required within a context in which a L2 is the main medium of teaching and learning. This is difficult and can be a long, uphill struggle.

2. Ensure that the education service can call on expertise in teaching and learning the primary and secondary curriculum through a second language, both in INSET and initial teacher-training (ITT). It is often difficult to find.

3. Train all teacher-educators, in INSET and initial ITT to apply language-sensitive practice to the training of teachers within their subject, and ensure that teacher-education in INSET and ITT requires of trainees high standards in language-sensitive practice.

Longer-term steps

4. Improve adult literacy in L1 and English: literate parents can help their children achieve in school.

5. Improve early years L1 literacy: children with good foundations in L1 literacy and cognitive skills are better prepared for schooling and especially for schooling in a second language.

6. Gradually introduce high-quality education through the medium of home/ community languages, offering schools which exemplify a range of roles for these languages, as vehicles for the whole or parts of the curriculum. At an early stage, introduce African languages in some schools as a medium for the whole of primary education.

7. Provide evidence, over time, for the benefits which high-quality education through a home/community language has both for learning generally and for learning English in particular (Baker) and conduct a campaign to convince more parents to support it.

Methodological Success Factors

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There is a great amount of information available now all over the world on the teaching and learning of content subjects through a language which is either a second or a foreign language for the learner. Although the political and linguistic contexts into which such pedagogical approaches are embedded are, in general, not comparable in the different countries, a number of methodological issues are more or less common to all of them which seem to contribute to achieving successful outcomes.

To begin with, educational specialists have understood by now that learning through another language makes it necessary to adapt the methodological approaches which are normally used when a child learns content through his/her first language to the new conditions. These methods have been referred to as language-sensitive methods: somehow they can be traced back to the language-across-the-curriculum idea developed in the British school system in which the importance of language for all learning processes is emphasised (but in which the main focus is laid in all subjects on the child's first language); they can also be related to the German "encounter programmes" in which children are made aware (in non-language lessons) of language, its structure and functions through the different languages spoken in the multilingual and multicultural classroom.

But there can be no doubt that the language-sensitive methods found nowadays in content and language integrated classes, although they share with these ideas an interest in language, are chiefly content-oriented: their main concern is to promote content, geographical, historical, mathematical or any other content which is part of the curriculum in a specific educational system. In a number of countries, for example in Germany, it is stipulated in the curriculum that children learning a content subject through a foreign language must have the same knowledge of this subject as children who learn it through their mother tongue. Although in Namibia such a choice of the language of instruction is not possible, the German example shows the educationalists' fear that the results of such teaching are not comparable to mother-tongue teaching. This is also the reason why they insist on methodological adaptations when the classroom language is not the first language of the learner. It is clear that such adaptations will have to include a focus on language in order to reduce and in the end dissolve the discrepancy between the learner's cognitive ability and his linguistic competence.

Although the methodological discussion is in full swing in many countries there still does not exist a fully developed methodology for teaching content in another language. There exists, however, a number of proposals which have been tried out in the classroom and seem to be working well although they cannot be regarded as a consistent methodological approach. In the following I will look at some of these methodological success factors and explain in very general terms why they are so important. I will leave it to the reader to transfer them to the Namibian context which I do not know well enough.

It has become very clear in practical teaching that although language should always be second with respect to

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content, this does not mean that it should be neglected. Total immersion does not work in a classroom in which learners learn content through a second language. The Canadian experience is a negative example as Canadian researchers now openly admit. On the other hand the results obtained in a number of European models of bilingual education clearly show that both content and language can be learned very efficiently even in a limited number of contact hours in school. Methodologically speaking, in these approaches content is central, but the processing of content is made possible by making at the same time accessible the necessary linguistic means (both lexical and structural). In general, it is easier to make available the linguistic means for specific purposes than for everyday language use: it is much more limited both lexically and structurally and, apart from specific technical vocabulary, it is very similar in many content subjects especially in the humanities. This is due to similar methodological approaches to content. For instance, describing, explaining, concluding and evaluating are ways of learning and teaching not only in Geography and History, but also in Biology or in the Social Sciences. The linguistic means necessary to carry out these activities in a second language must be at the students' disposal, otherwise content learning will not take place. This does not mean, however, that specific language lessons should be offered. Once children have some basic knowledge of the language of instruction the linguistic means necessary for the content subject can be provided in the content subject lessons. If the different content subject teachers co-operate it will be possible to develop fairly high ESP (English for Specific Purposes) abilities in such an integrated approach.

Another methodological factor which is being discussed quite extensively in the context of teaching content through another language is related to reading and writing. It should be kept in mind that both skills are of great importance in a content classroom. In content subjects like History, Geography or the Social Sciences, students mainly work with texts: they make use of historical sources, they read geographical descriptions, they go through newspaper texts. In all their reading they focus on information and knowledge, processing the knowledge contained in texts or other documents and making note of it for further reference. Reading and (to a lesser extent) writing in a content classroom are, therefore, important skills which differ from ordinary reading

and writing skills because the reader's main aim is to obtain information (reading for gist). For this reason these specific skills have to be promoted in the content classroom, especially in a content classroom in which learners learn in a second language.

When looking at classrooms in which content is taught through another language it can be seen that they are different with respect to the organisation of the learning environment. Quite a number of these classrooms are still very traditional: the teacher provides the content with the help of a textbook, the student has to learn it. But there are also a number of very successful classrooms in which learning is organised in a different way. Students work in small groups dealing with specific questions or working on a more general project. In History this can be a series of documents, in Geography a video film on a specific country. Students may prepare text summaries or project reports, do research on a question which came up in a project. Students deal with language problems, look for terminology or discuss the meaning of difficult texts, paragraphs or words. This kind of learning environment has proved to be much more productive both for the learning of content and of the foreign language. On the whole, methodologists believe that transforming the classroom into a kind of research laboratory in which students work independently and co-operatively on important real-life topics will lead to more learner autonomy, which is regarded as a key educational aim.

Whereas the methodological aspects discussed above are related mainly to secondary schools where instruction is focused on specific subjects, a number of methodologists have also reflected on primary schools and the specific educational challenges found here in the context of teaching content in a second or a foreign language. In general, primary schools can be characterised by a holistic approach to content. Content is not sub-divided according to different subjects but is rather dealt with according to specific themes from different angles. A theme like "darkness" can be discussed from a geographical angle (it is dark here while it is light in other parts of the world), from a historical angle (lighting in earlier times), or from a biological angle (animals who can see in the dark) etc. Working 'theme-oriented' means working 'project-oriented' at the same time: learners deal in small groups with the different themes. A number of primary schools have introduced foreign languages in recent

years. It has become clear already that it is much more efficient to use the foreign language within this theme-oriented holistic approach rather than to teach the foreign language in isolation. Such an approach implies language work, of course. Children can only understand geographical or historical content if they are provided with the necessary linguistic means. But it has also become clear that at such an early age (children are usually between 6 and 8 years old) it is not possible simply to provide lexical and grammatical means as at a later age. That is why teachers make use of the so-called narrative approach: they introduce a certain theme by dealing with a narrative or a poetic text in the foreign language, in my example the poem of the owl which can see in the dark. Such a text provides key words and animates children to activate their knowledge of the topics related to the poem. What is important in this approach as well is that teaching and learning is content-oriented but that language is focused upon whenever it is necessary. The approach is language-sensitive because it neither excludes the foreign language (as in immersion) nor does it present the foreign language systematically (as in a tradi-

tional foreign language classroom). Language is thus focused upon when it is needed.

There are a number of other methodological questions which are being discussed in the overall context of teaching content through a foreign language. Quite a number of methodologists have made interesting proposals for materials development but also for simplifying foreign language materials in order to use them in the content classroom. There also exist some exciting proposals for the use of the new technologies, especially the Internet in a content and language integrated classroom. All these ideas have led to very successful classroom work.

Here are again, in a nutshell, my methodological recommendations for the content and language integrated classroom:

- Teach content but pay specific attention to language
- Focus on the promotion of specific reading and writing skills
- Organise the classroom in such a way that it becomes a research laboratory
- Develop learner autonomy
- Focus on themes and make use of a narrative approach, particularly at primary level
- If possible, integrate the new technologies into the classroom

Language-sensitive Methodologies in Namibian Teacher Education

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At the conference on Language and Development at NIED, Okahandja in April 2000, John Clegg made a call for teacher education institutions to start using 'Language Sensitive Methodologies' in order to enhance English medium education. The paper was well-written and timely because much of what was said proves to be true and overdue in Namibia (see Clegg, J. 2000). Numerous comments on his article are included below.

I would like to start by acknowledging that there is a great need for teacher education institutions in Namibia to introduce Language Sensitive Methodologies for various reasons, but I would like to concentrate on three.

1. Many teachers and learners in rural areas especially in Ondangwa (east and west) have experienced cosiderable problems in teaching and learning through the medium of English.

2. There is a need to introduce Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) at teacher training institutions in Namibia so that both language and subjects teachers nurture the linguistic development of the learners.

3. Trainees should be made aware of the importance of first language (L1) and how to use it to enhance the learning and teaching of a second language (L2).

Teaching and Learning through the Medium of L2

Many teachers and learners face problems in using English as a medium of instructions in rural upper primary schools in Namibia. This is because many teachers have limited English and lack knowledge for using a second language for teaching and learning. Many teachers are afraid of using the L1 in the classroom because they have no training on how bilingualism goes hand in hand with L2 medium teaching.

Teacher education institutions in Namibia need to introduce prospective teachers to ways of teaching that are sensitive to language, and at the same time help teachers with limited English language proficiency to function effectively in a bilingual education context. They need to use the types of language-sensitive pedagogy which Clegg (ibid) describes, in practice.

Teacher education institutions also need to train prospective teachers how to formulate school language policies that are relevant to their own context. This is because most schools especially in Ondangwa (east and west) have no school language policies. They try to implement the national language policy without detailed examination and interpretation to see how the policy can be used effectively in their context.

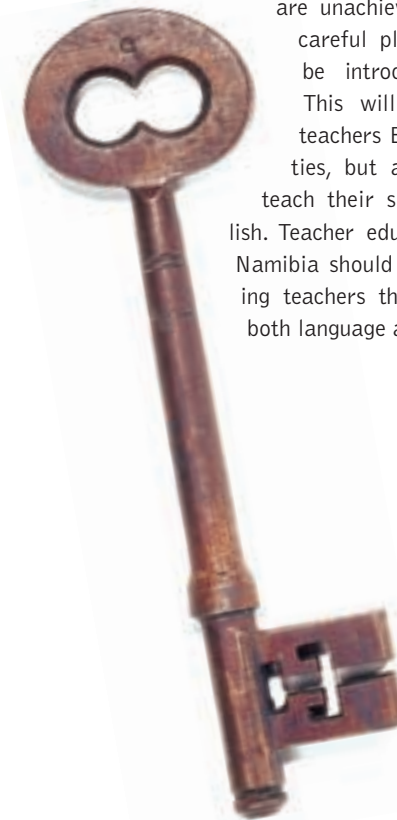## Introduce CLIL at Teacher Training Institutions in Namibia

CLIL refers to any learning context in which content and language are integrated (see, Marsh, D. and Marsland, B. 1999:21). The main advantage of CLIL is the fact that it simultaneously concentrates on the subject matter and the L2 through adapting language sensitive methodologies that takes into account the demands brought by learning in the L2 which leads to language and content becoming easier for the learner.

We need CLIL to improve English medium education as well as to nurture the language development of a learner. In his article Clegg points out that subject teachers have more contact time with learners than any specific teacher of English. Thus, the subject teachers have the potential for developing the learner's language especially if content and language are methodologically integrated.

It can also be argued that a language teacher should use content from other subjects to teach language. Within a CLIL context, you can read a history text and focus both on the linguistic, content and cognitive skills required by the subject. What I mean by nurturing the learner's language is through re-enforcing the language over and over. For example, the geography teacher could emphasise the use of language connectors like although, but etc. The language, history and the science teachers may do the same. In this way, the learner has more chances of learning about language connectors in different contexts.

It could be argued that the above-mentioned skills demand too much of any teacher and are unachievable. However, with careful planning the skills can be introduced and acquired. This will not only improve teachers English language abilities, but also their abilities to teach their subjects through English. Teacher education institutions in Namibia should therefore start training teachers that are able to teach both language and content in an integrated way, and give them the skills to teach using language sensitive methodologies.

Using the L1 in Enhancing the Learning of the L2

Trainees need to be made aware of the importance of L1 in teaching and learning the L2 and understand how to use the L1 in enhancing the learning of the L2. The report by Swarts (2000) shows that in Namibia some people believe that using the L1 in the classroom is a barrier to learning the L2. It is for this same reason that some schools opt for early immersion into the L2.

Teacher education institutions need to challenge this myth and demonstrate how the L1 can be naturally used in L2 medium. Clegg describes how the L1 can be used in the classroom to perform certain functions in the classroom. Such methodologies are language-sensitive and need to be emphasised at all teacher training institutions in Namibia.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the call for language sensitive methodologies is long overdue in Namibia. Whereas we can all see the need, for some reasons we have been reluctant to acknowledge it. The skills seem difficult to acquire from the onset, because some of this issues are unfamiliar in teacher education curricula. With careful planning their implementation could greatly enhance the use of English medium education in Namibia.

Clegg, J. 2000. Can English-medium education work? Why we should be honest about its failures and courageous about change. In Language and Development in Southern Africa. 2000. (Eds) Trewby, R.and Fitchat, S. Gamsberg Macmillan: Windhoek

Marsh, D. & Marsland, B. 1999. (Eds.) CLIL Initiatives for the Millennium. University of Jyväskylä, Finland

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English in it's Place: Meaningful Learning through Bilingual Education

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While it is clear that for the foreseeable future, it will be desirable for children growing up in most African countries in the British or US sphere of influence to know English well (Alexander 2000), it is equally clear that in most cases, this is not happening. The general situation is one where African languages are neglected as languages of learning and teaching (Lolts), and the seemingly logical, but simplistic and incorrect view that competence in English is necessarily achieved through early and maximum exposure is accepted. This seriously compromises meaningful learning for African language speaking children, who in practice learn neither their own language nor English well enough to succeed in education.

Countries in Africa are increasingly recognising this and are initiating attempts to revive the use of African languages in education (ibid 2000). There is thus, movement towards finding solutions to a fundamental educational question in multilingual countries like Namibia, where ex-colonial languages still dominate in the economy: how best do we enable our children to achieve academic success in both in their own languages and in the language(s) of wider communication, in this case, English?

Considerations involving both language medium and pedagogical approach are fundamental to the answer to this question, although there can be no blanket solution for all contexts. However, research findings (Cummins 1986, Baker 1996, Krashen 1996), language attitude surveys and experience (Alexander 2000) point unequivocally to the desirability of bilingual educational based on additive bilingualism approaches [1] (Cummins 1986), where both mother tongue and 'other tongue' are used.

In this context, questions arise as to which language or languages and what approaches to use for initial literacy learning. Effective literacy learning is the cornerstone of school education as it is presently constructed. Yet innumerable classrooms across Africa still reflect misguided practice both in respect of language medium, and teaching methods that concentrate on the teaching of senseless isolated skills in a particular order so that essentially decontextualised aspects of reading and writing are hammered into the skulls of young children. Such narrowly defined skills-based methods passed down and adapted from the 'literate' North, drastically underestimate the conceptual, cognitive and linguistic capacities of children. These have been challenged and methods have changed, in the light of debates around the nature of literacy [2] and insights into young children's literacy learning in the far better resourced countries of the North.

However in print-scarce rural environments where people's cultural and social practices rarely involve written language, and stories do not exist in print in African languages, children's first encounters with written language continue often to be these meaningless ones at school, which fail to help them work out the complexities of written language.

This alienation of home and community (life) from school (education) that is an all too present feature of so many post-colonial situations needs to be challenged by educational approaches that put meaning making at the heart of learning and teaching, so that educators gain both insights into how children learn and dignity and power over their teaching. In the USA, referring to teaching immigrant bilingual children, Louis Moll has called for curriculum development that draws on the 'funds of knowledge' from the lives of the children and the communities they live in (Moll 1992).

Reading for enjoyment (described as Free Voluntary Reading (FVR) by Krashen, 1993) is a well - researched and vital but little respected component of reading development in both L1 and L2. Krashen describes FVR as the 'missing ingredient' in reading programmes in the USA. Stories, whether alive or lying dormant, are in the funds of knowledge from communities in Southern African countries, but the bridge from oral literature to print must be constructed to put this wealth of stories back at the heart of education.

Meaningful education comes about also through recognising that the various aspects of language in multilingual contexts (talking, listening, reading and writing, as well as interpreting and translating) are not learned in separate and mutually exclusive ways. Kreeft Payton reminds us that

> the same dynamics that promote oral language development promote writing development, for they are the dynamics that promote learning. That is, oral and written language development, as does all learning, grows out of personal knowledge and interests, occurs in interaction with others, grows out of diverse experiences and takes diverse forms, and takes a great deal of time.
> (Kreeft Peyton 1993:3)

Conceptual knowledge and skill in any of these aspects are thus used by children to reinforce, extend and integrate learning in the other aspects. This is critical for both language medium and pedagogical issues - for instance, the still prevalent view that learning a second or third language should always begin orally is challenged because we use available linguistic knowledge, be this in oral or written form, in one or more languages to progress. There is further support for this notion in Hornberger's 'continua of biliteracy' model where the development of biliteracy is depicted along intersecting first language - second language, receptive - productive, and oral - written language skills continua, through the medium of two (or more) languages and literacies. Full development and expression in two or more languages has the greatest chance of success the more their learning contexts and contexts of use allow children to draw from across the whole of each continuum (Hornberger 1990). In South Africa, research indicates that simultaneous Xhosa - English biliteracy learning is desirable in particular bilingual contexts where interaction with written language is purposeful and where writing develops as an interactive dialogue (Bloch & Nkence 1998, Alexander & Bloch 2001: forthcoming).

A well-loved principle of early childhood education is to begin with what children know, and to build on this (Bruce 1987). Its implications for meaningful primary education in multilingual settings are that the starting point is the vast oral linguistic capacity of each child and that we develop, from this point, approaches that are sensitive to children's concerns and those of their families, their communities and their teachers.

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[1] By this it is meant that the first language (L1) of the child is used as a medium from the beginning of education, and is supported and maintained for as long as possible throughout schooling. Other languages (additional languages) are added at various points depending on the peculiarities of the situation.

[2] Brian Street 's 'ideological' model views literacy as being intertwined with the social and cultural practices of individuals and communities and challenges the 'autonomous' model, (still prevalent in Africa) of seeing literacy as a set of tools, which can be given to people (Street 1995).

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Towards Integrated Methodologies

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In language use, context is everything. Language teaching methodology has for a long time now recognised that the most benefit for learners comes from using the target language in a context that they can relate to and find relevant. In simple terms, the whole movement of a language, often English, being learned "for special purposes" is based on this precept. The teacher uses texts and simulations that reflect content-based contexts and purposes, and exploits these for language development. Without the content, the language work could be viewed as an empty exercise.

Let us look at the same idea from the content side. Language exercises might seem pointless without content-based context, but how could content exercises work without language? Is it possible to teach content without also developing language and communication skills? This might involve a foreign or second language, or a learner's home language or mother tongue. In any case, vocabulary and terminology development, content-specific language style issues, and the general linguistic elements involved in classroom management are among those content classroom features that actually, and naturally, draw on and develop the learners' language abilities.

Therefore, much in the same way that practitioners have often seen the need for content-sensitive language teaching methods, in the context of the school curriculum we can also see a need for language-sensitive content teaching methods. In a truly integrated curriculum, this leads to an examination of the crossover and integration of the respective pedagogical skills and methodologies.

A number of challenges are involved in this, whatever educational context. Teachers, learners, and planners may experience unforeseen changes, both in and outside the classroom. This report on the Namibian context outlines ways of approaching these new issues in a constructive manner. Furthermore, the content-teaching professionals in a CLIL situation will also need to consider aspects such as material development to complement the language-sensitive methodologies.

The materials aspect perhaps also needs considering in a new light. For after all, the change in, and variety of, language in the classroom presents opportunities that can be independent of high technology or mass-produced printed materials. Having a range of languages available can in itself add extra dimensions to known or existing themes and materials, shedding a new light or presenting a fresh angle, and adding to the depth of content learning and understanding.

It is perhaps from this that one of the potentially most dynamic changes could come. The relationship between teachers and learners can evolve to encompass communication in different languages, so the vast possibilities of studying content from different cultural perspectives can be released. The teacher can also, in some cases, develop the learning environment from a book or material-centred focus to content-centred, language-sensitive, human communication. Then the capacity of CLIL in terms of providing fresh approaches to content, language, culture, and educational theory becomes apparent.

Further reading:

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Marsh, D. and Marsland, B. (eds.) 1999 CLIL Initiatives for the Millennium. Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä.

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Achieving Solutions through International Partnerships

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The purpose of the workshops and field studies carried out by the Ongwediva College of Education, University of Jyväskylä, Namibia National Teachers Union and Association of Teachers of English in Finland, was to examine issues relating to the use of English as a medium of instruction in the Nambian context, and make recommendations for future action.

The partnership was designed on the basis that sometimes it is highly advantageous to combine differing professional interests, especially when a given problem is multi-faceted. For example, good results in school education are not only the consequence of language proficiency, but also implementation of appropriate methodologies. Improvements in the methods of education are considered the best guarantee for educational success across the majority of learners. The role of teacher unions in in-service education is important because teachers themselves are the most important implementing agency in any educational reform.

The CLIL Workshops were planned with the regional offices of the Namibia National Teachers Union, Ondangwa (East and West), and the Association of Teachers of English in Finland. Because cooperation is not always at its best on a macro level and very often the possibilities for learning by working together can only be carried out on a micro level, this kind of reciprocity was found to be very useful. The selection of schools, and participants, was made by Nantu, with the assistance of principals, across the two educational regions and the three phases of basic education. The institutional facilitators, Ongwediva College of Education and the University of Jyväskylä, handled issues pertaining to methodology.

After widespread recognition in the past few years that there is a problem as regards the English proficiency of Namibian teachers, there has been an attempt to investigate and quantify the problem in Namibia. Namibian teachers have improved their English by way of different projects but this does not yet appear to be sufficient. Intensive programmes that involve university staff, non-governmental organisations, teacher unions as well as individual teachers, can achieve a great deal through cooperation. Through collaboration teachers can produce their own definitions of the problems within their own situations. Without the willingness and conviction of teachers, educational reform generally flounders. These Workshops have comprised a process in which options have been generated and explored, in which teachers have spoken freely and openly about their experiences, and in which realistic goals have been set by the teachers themselves. The implications stretch beyond Namibia because although the core issues are relevant to very different contexts.

As well as trying to identify non-financial ways of rewarding teachers for improving their instruction in English and the English language, it is vital that teachers see that government bodies are supportive of initiatives undertaken. The purpose of these CLIL Workshops has been to further vocalise the opinions of teachers through identifying what could be termed 'good practice' alongside identification of the steps that need to be taken to establish 'best practice' in Namibia.
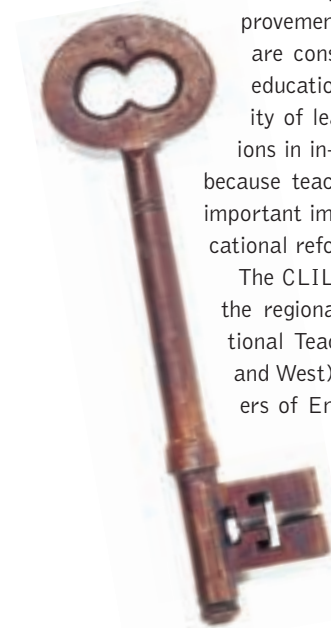
Approaching Language-sensitive Expertise

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in conjunction with The Working Group

To be a good English-medium teacher is not dependent on having a high level of fluency in the English language.[1] A teacher with an imperfect command of the language can still achieve a high level of excellence in the classroom. Fluency is always going to be advantageous, but fluency alone will not result in good teaching practice. This is due to the significance of what we have described above as language-sensitive methods.[2]

This section comprises of a list of key features that are linked to the use of these methods in the classroom. The list has been compiled on the basis of sustainable implementation in Namibia schools. It is not a comprehensive list of what should be done, but depending on grade and type of school, on what could be done with regards to interweaving language sensitivity into the fabric of education.

Key issues relating to enhancing learning and teaching through the medium of English have been identified and listed in alphabetical order as follows:

Acoustics
classroom sound quality

Poor acoustic conditions result in problematic learning environments regardless of language. When learning takes place through the medium of a second language, such problems become compounded. Although attention can be given to how speech, by both teachers and learners is projected in the classroom, lowering of any unnecessary noise thresholds should be given continuous attention.

Activating English in the Environment
using English outside the classroom

In some Namibian environments, use of English outside the school is clearly minimal. Although the role of the school will be quite limited in activating use of English outside in the surrounding community, and bearing in mind that there are many questions surrounding the use of English vis-à-vis first languages, some steps could be made to activate the English language in the surrounding social environments. For example, public announcements such as those made after collective prayers, could be made in English more often so as to activate use of the language. According to the outcomes of one of the field studies conducted by the Working Group, there is a direct relationship between use of English outside of the school, and superior school performance. However, more cannot be automatically assumed to be better.[3] Unresolved questions over competence in a first language continue to make this a highly significant issue with regard to language policies.

Articulation & Voice Projection
hearing and being heard

Inappropriate volume or articulation in English, by teachers and learners, will inevitably hinder good learning performance. Spoken language, particularly in large classes, must be pitched at an appropriate level in order that everyone can hear as clearly as possible what is said. This is of particular importance for learners working in a second language.

Assessment
judging performance

Testing of subject matter needs to be done so that language does not interfere with success in showing understanding of the topic at hand. The way in which questions are structured and tests administered are particularly sensitive to language barriers.

Classroom Organisation, Methodology & Interaction
learning through teamwork

Given appropriate techniques, forms of pair and group work can enhance learning through providing opportunities for learners to communicate with each other so as to reach a common goal. It allows for the threat of any language obstacle that might result from excessive teacher talk to be negotiated by the learners on their own terms. Different types of group formation allow use of forms of cooperative or collaborative learning. These have much to offer in large classes where there is heterogeneity of competence both in terms of subject learning and language.

Comprehension Checks
are you with me?

Extensive use of comprehension checks is necessary in second language-medium education due to the added language burden.

Extra-curricular Activities
learning by doing

Extra-curricular activities, organised by teachers possibly in conjunction with others in the community can provide alternative opportunities for language development that may be beneficial for a wide range of learners. Leisure-based (sports, games) and special interest language groups/clubs can provide alternative contexts for activating learners to use English in non-threatening contexts. Building linguistic self-confidence for better performance in the classroom is one key goal of this type of endeavour.

Feedback
balancing positive and negative feedback

Errors, due to language or cognition, should be commented upon in a manner that is encouraging as well as instructive. Constructive criticism, balancing positive and negative feedback, would allow for the emotional needs of the learner with regard to language obstacles to be balanced against content learning problems. Standard phrases for giving and explaining feedbacks need to be learnt and used so that the learners themselves can remain motivated towards learning the content, and not become withdrawn because of linguistic inabilities.

First Language Interference
pride in first language influences

Interference in English speech production resulting from characteristics of first languages requires special attention. For example, in Oshiwambo, the Kwambi speakers have a strong 'r' sound whereas the Oshindonga speakers have a problem producing 'r', and particularly in differentiating 'r' and 'l' as in mixing red and led. This type of interference is cited as a common reason for mockery in classroom contexts that may be highly intimidating for certain learners. Teachers should be particularly sensitive in ensuring that such mockery does not adversely impact on the self-confidence of any learners when using English. Mockery can also result from students learning incorrect usage from previous class teachers. In grades 4-6 care should be made to protect individual learners from any form of public ridicule resulting from mistakes made in the English language according to first language interference or exposure to incorrect models of usage. Any correct model of English language usage should not be perceived and projected as being those of first language environments such as the UK or USA. Although these may be considered good models of usage, Namibian variants of English should be viewed, and seen to be viewed, as carrying equal status as another variant of English, not as substandard.

Interactional Discourse
learning to communicate

The impact of teacher talk as monologue is unlikely to be as effective in many instances than the use of cooperative techniques that lead to differing forms of interactive and communicative talk. Conceptual entrenchment of new topics can be supported through dialogic forms of communication. Methodologies suitable for this type of second language-medium education are generally highly communicative. Cooperative learning techniques that allow for learners to work collaboratively in differing forms of groups is one of a variety of successful means by which to elicit and develop forms of interactional talk and communication.
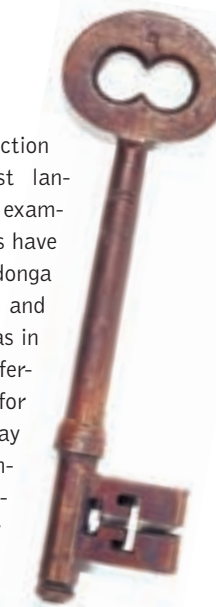
Language-support Activities

focussing on language and content simultaneously

To encourage teachers to use a wide variety of activities which allow the learning context to be as linguistically rich as possible so as to develop opportunities for meaningful language practice between the teacher and students, and the students themselves.

Language-medium Bridge

switching from one language of instruction to another

The transition from teaching through local languages and English at Grade 5 should be done so as to smoothen transition of language medium so as to 'nurture an asset and not weaken an inheritance'[4] A methodological bridge should be implemented by those teachers involved, spanning Grades 2 – 5, which reflects understanding of the stages of second language acquisition. In this respect the language of both instruction and materials should complement the reality of language development at any given stage of the educational process[5].

Learner Error Correction

learning from mistakes

The negative consequences of inappropriate student error correction can have a profound impact on certain types of learners. The result is found in reduced student motivation and reluctance to actively participate in classes. Mistakes in English language can be 'corrected' in different ways, either directly or indirectly, and strategies can be implemented which make the process of correction non-threatening and constructive. For example, the mistakes of one learner will almost certainly apply to others, and thus noting of errors over a period of time followed by block teaching correct usage can be highly beneficial.

Linguistic Evaluation

understanding language complexity

It is necessary for teachers to have sufficient interest and skill in evaluating and monitoring the cognitive and linguistic complexity of methods and materials on a continuous basis. This allows them to be as aware of the learners' needs and perspectives as possible.

Linguistic Simplification

being simple but not simplistic

The 'step-by-step' use of spoken English reportedly commonplace should not be considered 'poor speaking practice'. In second language-medium education it is normal that teachers find themselves simplifying their speech, and the manner by which they present ideas.

Repetition

reinforcing learning

Formulating the same thing in different ways through repetition, reformulation and paraphrasing is a common feature of good teacher talk in second language-medium education.

Routines

predictable traffic signals of teacher talk

Teachers need to develop, introduce and continuously use a range of phrases for language routines for classroom management in relation to instruction, organisation and personal communication with learners.

School Language Policy

working together towards agreed principles

Teachers within a school, and the learners and parents they serve, need clarification on how to handle language medium issues. In order that a coherent and predictable language policy is implemented it is necessary that one exists for any given school in any given context. This is particularly important in terms of trans-languaging (see below). Thus it would be optimal if each school establishes a language policy which not only confirms national requirements but also situational strategies employed by the school to best manage situational needs.

Thinking and Study Skills for Linguistic and Cognitive Demands

learner strategies in handling content and language

Identify and build a *core vocabulary* of key concepts that the teacher can use accurately, which are systematically learnt by students.

Teach the *language markers* (e.g. key phrases) and *linking words* (e.g. it, they, here), used in English that are used to signal textual and semantic relationships of specific types

(e.g. describing shapes and spatial relationships; logical sequences (such as cause and effect) finding causes, purposes, conditions and results; giving and following instructions; asking for and giving directions and information; handling similarities and differences and identifying contextual clues and seeing implications; making explanations; comparing and contrasting, defining and classifying, and making predictions.

Introduce different forms of *note-taking* practice, in particular types that are 'framed' with some text already given with gaps that are filled out during a lesson.

Re-examine English language *reading skills*, particularly with regard to handling difficult words, skimming and scanning text, identifying and matching key information through sense relationships, and text organisation (e.g. discourse structure and paragraphing).

Teach the principles for *interpreting non-linear texts* (e.g. diagrams, graphs, drawings)

Teach how to use differing forms of *dictionary*

Trans-languaging

switching from one language to another

Use of a home/community language during a lesson, for instance in group work, is a contentious issue in the Namibian context. A pragmatic approach that allows for flexibility on a case-by-case basis would be optimal. Enforcement of "English only" in certain types of class works against the interests of learners, teachers , schools and ultimately the surrounding society. Trans-languaging (often referred to as code-switching) can be considered as a strategic means by which to improve message comprehension.

Visuality

hearing and seeing

Gesture, demonstration and illustration should be used to make meaning as clear as possible. Although traditionally more common in the teaching of younger learners, it is part of a communicative style which could be more fully utilised in all levels of teaching. Linguistically complex descriptions can be more easily understood through use of non-verbal explication.

Conclusion

Some of these features could be considered the essence of good practice regardless of the language medium used. However most can be linked to good language teaching practice.[6] This is not to suggest that a non-language subject teacher should be viewed as taking on the role of a language teacher. What it does mean is that in the current Namibian context, all teachers, and indeed other stakeholders outside the school, need to take greater responsibility for nurturing language development at all times because language is the central platform upon which all learning takes place. The non-language subject teachers need to embrace language-sensitive methods just as the language teachers need to ensure that they build on the needs, strengths, weaknesses and experiences of the learners and teachers, in their own work.[7] Thus another key success factor lies in collaborative teamwork that supports the language policy that the school has established.

1 See, for example, Marsh, D., Marsland, B. & Stenberg, K. 2001. Integrating Competencies for Working Life. UNICOM: University of Jyväskylä (Finland).

2 Se, for example, Marsh, D. & Marsland, B. 1997. Aspects of Implementing Plurilingual Education. UNICOM: University of Jyväskylä (Finland) or Clegg, J. 2001 'Does English-medium education work?' in Trewby, R. & Fitchat, S. as above.

3 Research data from Canada overwhelmingly shows that the Maximum Exposure Hypothesis (the more you get the better you will be) is a myth. The amount of second language medium education and learner performance cannot be positively correlated.

4 Edwards, J. 1993. Implementing Bilingualism: Brunei in Perspective. Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development 14, pp.25-38.

5 See, for example, Baetens Beardsmore, H. 1996. reconciling Content Acquisition and language Acquisition in Bilingual Classrooms. Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural development 17, pp.114-127.

6 Clegg, J. (Ed.) 1996. Mainstreaming ESL. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters

7 Research over 20 years on the Canadian experience of 'immersion' shows that mastery of the second language cannot be achieved only through learning 'through' that language but that formal language instruction is vital.