

Mother Tongue Interference and Its Effects: A Case Study of a Selected Secondary School in Matabeleland South in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

The study was conducted in a selected secondary school in Matabeleland South Province of Zimbabwe where the problem of mother tongue interference on the teaching and learning involving African indigenous languages was detected. The inquiry adopted a qualitative paradigm while interviews and observations were data gathering instruments. The population comprised the Head of Department (HOD), IsiNdebele teachers and learners. The sample consisted of an HOD, two IsiNdebele teachers and forty form one and form two learners altogether. Collected data were thematically presented, discussed and analysed. Revealed in the study was that mother tongue interference is inevitable and has negative and positive effects. Although mother tongue interference is perceived negatively, its importance in education is that it provides the basis for acquiring of the target language. Hence, this spontaneous featuring should not be perceived as interference. Instead, it should be used to consolidate the acquisition of concepts in the target language.

Keywords: *Mother Tongue, Second Language, Interference and Bilingualism*

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the colonial era, African languages and culture were denigrated (Nziramasanga 1999). This was evidenced by that the language of the coloniser which was not only imposed as the official one but was also the medium of instruction in the colonised country's education system. Currently, the linguistic situation in many African countries is that of bilingualism or multilingualism as is the case in Zimbabwe which is a multilingual country with sixteen (16) spoken languages (Hachipola, 1998). The Zimbabwean Constitutions of 2013, English was the official languages while African languages Shona and Ndebele were relegated to an inferior status especially regarded as national languages taught in the education system. Those that included Shangaan, Venda, Kalanga, Nambya, Tonga, Chichewa, Sotho, Chikunda, Sena, Barwe, Hwesa, and Tshwawo were regarded as indigenous minority languages (Chimhundu 1997). Furthermore, Muchenje et al. (2013) assert that other indigenous languages such as Tonga, Kalanga, Venda, Shangaan and others suffered calculated neglect.

An attempt to redress linguistic diversity problems in the country was later made through the 1987 Education Act which enhanced the status of some of the local languages while recognizing English as the language of business, administration and international relations (Nziramasanga 1999). For instance, in Zimbabwe, after independence the government realised the role played by the mother tongue in learning, thus an educational policy raised the status of indigenous languages (Ndamba, 2008). According to Muchenje system was acknowledged et al. (2013: 501) "For the first time the place of indigenous minority languages in the education". It is the same with the South African Constitution of 1996 where nine African languages were elevated to the official status to join English and Afrikaans. Furthermore, Zimbabwe's national language policy on education contained in the Education Act of 1987 (as amended in 1990 and 2006), categorically states that, in areas where minority languages exist, the Minister may authorise the teaching of such languages in primary schools in addition to English, Shona and Ndebele. In this regard, the Education Act enhances a conducive environment for teaching of indigenous minority languages for the benefit of all learners in the country. In concurrence, grossarchive.com/project (2020) stresses that the importance of mother tongue in education of a child cannot be over emphasised. The importance of mother tongue is further endorsed by Goduka (1998) who argues that

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language is inextricably linked to culture as it is a primary means by which people express their cultural values and the lenses through which they view the world.

From as far back as 1953 the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommended the use of the mother tongue in education to be extended to as late a stage as possible. According to the Secretary's Minute Number 3 of 2002, Tonga, Kalanga, Sotho, Nambya and Shangaan were to be taught up to Grade Seven levels by 2005. This was certainly a positive development meant to improve the status of indigenous minority languages as they had been marginalized since the colonial era. While the teaching of the minority languages up to Grade Seven level was progressive and noble in terms of language development, it inevitably resulted in mother tongue interference in bilingual communities. In other words, mother tongue interference of Kalanga on the teaching and learning of IsiNdebele, learners' second language, was unavoidable since the two co-exist in Bulilima which is a bi-lingual district of Matabeleland South province in Zimbabwe. The study was therefore, conducted in order to explore mother tongue interference and its effects on the learning of the second language in a bilingual environment.

Theoretical Framework

Some of theories informing language interference include Socio-cultural theory, cognitive theory and Krushen's theory of second learning acquisition among several others. However, the theory that underpinned the study was the Socio-cultural Theory (STC), whose emphasis embraces a wide range of research including linguistic relativity, distributed cognition, and cognitive linguistics (Lantolf and Thorne 2006). According to Ratner (2002), STC argues that human mental functioning is fundamentally a mediated process that is organised by cultural artifacts, activities and concepts. In relation to the above citations, interference is a phenomenon characterised by the cognitive process that is inherent in bilingualism which also prevails in the teaching and learning of IsiNdebele in a pre-dominantly Kalanga speaking area of Bulilima. Thus, the SCT is a relevant theory that informs this research on the cognitive processes and linguistic relativity involved in the understanding of language interference in the teaching and learning in bilingual classrooms like Bulilima where Kalanga and IsiNdebele exist as languages in contact.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to explore mother tongue interference on the teaching and learning of the second language in bilingual Bulilima District where Kalanga and IsiNdebele co-exist as languages in contact. Intended by the study is to identify effects of mother tongue interference and their implications in the teaching and learning of the second language. Furthermore, the study wishes to examine the extent to which Kalanga mother tongue interference can be used to enhance the teaching and learning of IsiNdebele as a subject rather than perceive its interference as a negative phenomenon in the teaching and learning of the target language. In this research, mother tongue was Kalanga which interferes with IsiNdebele which is taught as a subject in Bulilima a pre-dominantly Kalanga- speaking district.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The article attempted to review literature written by scholars on mother tongue interference and its effects in multilingual and bi-lingual societies. Research has been conducted in the sphere of mother tongue influence or interference on the teaching and learning of the target language in multilingual situations. The concept 'interference' is one of the critical terms in this study. Lott (1983: 256) defines it as "errors in the learner's use of the foreign language that can be traced back to the mother tongue". Of significance in this definition is that errors in the target language occur due to the existence of mother tongue. In articulating the importance of a language, Goduka (1998) argues that language is inextricably linked to culture as it is a primary means by which people express their cultural values and the lenses through which they view the world. In concurrence Ndlovu (2013: 13), asserts that, "Language is one of the most important aspects of an educational system. It is a unique human attribute that enables people to learn, think creatively and change socially." Implicit from these citations is that language is a critical and indispensable tool as it is a means of expressing cultural values, initiating thinking and as well as influencing change in life. In this regard, the importance of mother tongue in the education of a child cannot be overstated.

Mother Tongue Interference on The Learning of The Second Language

In several researches on second language classroom, the role and influence of mother tongue or first language (L₁) on second language (L₂) learning has always been a hotly debated issue (UK Essays 2014). Precisely, the thrust of the debate is on whether mother tongue or first language interferes or not with the learning of the second language. Recent research has however, confirmed strongly what language teachers have always known that the mother tongue has a strong influence on the way a second language is learnt and used as highlighted by Bilingualism authorities like Beardsmore (1966), Wenreich (1974) Crosjean (1982), Hamers and Blanc (2000), Wardhaugh (2006) and Bamgbose (2009) who concur in that mother tongue interference prevails when languages are in contact in multilingual societies. Ellis (1997: 51) refers to interference as 'transfer', which he says is 'the influence that the learner's L₁ exerts over the acquisition of an L₂'. Similarly, Bhebe (2013) confirms that, when two or more languages are in contact, they tend to exert pressure on one another. This usually obtains when a child shifts from the main use of one language to the main use of another. Thus, the exertion of pressure on one another, code-switching and mixing that occur in the process, yield both negative and positive effects of mother tongue interference in the learning of second language.

Research has also revealed and confirmed that mother tongue interference is inevitable in the teaching and learning of the second language. Liu (2008) expressed the fact that L₁ is present in L₂ learners' mind. Therefore, whether the teacher uses L₁ or not, the L₂ knowledge that is being formed in their mind is linked in all sorts of ways with their L₁ knowledge. Implicit, is that mother tongue interference is a pre-requisite in the teaching and learning of the second language. This is further enhanced by the presence of mother tongue in the minds of second language learners. Hence, the second language cannot be learnt in isolation of the mother tongue. "When writing or speaking the target language (L₂), second language learners tend to rely on their native language (L₁) structures to produce a response" (Bhela 1999 ; 23). In this respect, mother tongue has a great impact on the learning of the second language. In other words, mother tongue serves as a basis of learning a target language. This inevitability of mother tongue interference is also reflected in that the formulation of the second language is somehow linked to mother tongue knowledge. In expressing the close and indispensable linkage of mother tongue and second language, Lantolf and Thorne (2006) in their Sociocultural Theory (SCT) argue that L₁ meanings continue to have a persistent effect on L₂ learning. Furthermore, "The emphasis within the SCT embraces a wide range of research including linguistic relativity, distributed cognition, and cognitive linguistics." (Lantolf and Thorne 2007). Thus, interference is a phenomenon characterised by the cognitive process that is inherent in bilingualism which also prevails in the teaching and learning of IsiNdebele in Bulilima District a pre-dominantly Kalanga speaking area.

Bilingualism

The importance of bilingualism cannot be over emphasised as people converse in languages other than their mother tongue. Some authorities on bilingualism like Brazzaville (1962), Wenreich (1974) and Beardsmore (1986) concur that language contact is when two several or more languages co-exist, thus they tend to exert influence on one another. According to Harmsers and Blanc (2000), somebody is bilingual if they are able to communicate in two linguistic codes. This definition also applies to Bulilima where learners grow up in a bilingual situation using Kalanga and IsiNdebele interchangeably as separate linguistic codes. Therefore, in this article IsiNdebele and Kalanga were considered as languages spoken in Bulilima, especially by learners whose mother tongue is Kalanga but happen to learn IsiNdebele as a subject at school.

Models of bilingualism are also crucial in the understanding of the significant role performed by language in accessing the curriculum by bilingual learners. Heugh and LeMotte (2008) in Ndamba (2013) say bilingual education models include the transition, additive and subtractive models. Ndamba (2013: 9) states that, "The aim of the transitional bilingual education is to shift the child from the home language to the dominant second language with the view of assimilating the subjects socially and culturally". Furthermore, "the idea behind transitional bilingual education model is to increase the use of Second Language while proportionately decreasing the use of the mother tongue in the classroom" (Ndamba 2013: 9). In this respect, the transition model concurs with what is happening in Bulilima as the use of IsiNdebele is increased while the use of Kalanga

which is the mother tongue of learners decreases. Consequently, learners become bilinguals as the use of IsiNdebele increases in a pre-dominantly Kalanga-speaking community of Bulilima.

Subtractive bilingualism is another important model of bilingualism. In this model, learners are moved away from the mother tongue as soon as possible. "A subtractive form of bilingualism may occur when the second language and culture are acquired with the intention to replace or demote the first language." (Ndamba 2013: 13). However, this is not true with Kalanga and IsiNdebele in Bulilima where bilingualism involving these two languages prevails. On the contrary, IsiNdebele which is the second language is taught as a subject and not as a language. Therefore, its teaching as a subject is not intended to either replace or demote Kalanga as the first language. Baker (2006) cited in Ndamba (2013), states that Subtractive bilingualism refers to the negative cognitive and affective effects of bilingualism, for example where both languages are not fully developed. Apparent from this citation is that due to this model of bilingualism, both mother tongue and second language are not developed to capacity.

Addictive model is the third bilingual situation experienced in bilingualism. According to Landry et al. (1991) cited in Baker (2006:74), in additive bilingualism, members become proficient in both languages and have positive attitudes towards the first and second language. This is the case with a bilingual scenario in Bulilima where speakers of Kalanga and IsiNdebele have positive attitudes towards both of them. The mother tongue is not removed as the language of instruction while the official or foreign language is taught as a subject (Ndamba 2013). Of significance to note is that the mother tongue enjoys the status of the language of instruction, yet the foreign language which is IsiNdebele in Bulilima is taught as a subject. In this regard, both Kalanga and IsiNdebele can be used as two media of instruction, something that confirms the existence of bilingualism in Bulilima where these two languages co-exist.

Effects of Mother Tongue Interference on the learning of the Second Language

After reviewing literature on mother tongue interference and bilingualism, the study focused on the effects of mother tongue interference which also happen to be a critical component of the topic under investigation. Language interference is the effect of language learners' on their production of the language they are learning (Dwinastiti 2013). In the same vein, a person's first language often exercises a tremendous influence on the learning and use of another second foreign alternate language (Scharticles.com 2016). Implied by these citations is that directly or indirectly, learner's mother tongue interferes with the learning of the second language. The effects, however, can be realised through grammar, vocabulary, spelling, accent and pronunciation. According to Trask (1997) and Heine and Kuteva (2005), every language which is spoken as a mother tongue changes constantly in pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary due to elements taken from another language that is spoken in the same area. Saheed (2018), further discloses that many students from different tribes cannot pronounce many words correctly as an English native speaker. This effect is also experienced in Bulilima District where Kalanga native speakers have difficulties in pronouncing IsiNdebele words with click sounds as they are not closely related to Kalanga phonologically. The use of mother tongue also disrupts the smoothness of communication as students with no confidence tend to use mother tongue instead of English (Saheed 2018). Although this citation refers to English as a Second Language, disruption also does occur in different environments where languages co-exist as the case is in Bulilima where Kalanga and IsiNdebele are languages in contact.

Another problem which is a result of mother tongue interference in the learning of second language is the use of the linguistic terms in mother tongue to replace difficult words in the target language. In articulating the functions of code-switching which is a result of mother tongue interference, Eldridge (1996) asserts that Floor-holding is the mechanism that is used to avoid gaps in communication, which may result from lack of fluency in the target language. In this context, mother tongue interference has a positive effect on language learning and communication in the teaching and learning processes.

The Research Design

In any study, a research design is inevitable as it provides guidelines that are a pre-requisite prior to conducting research work. The design of the prevailing study was a case study which is a type of qualitative research and is

prevalent in social sciences (Starman, 2013). Yin (2009:12) in Mhundu (2016) perceives a case study as, "...an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context." Thus, in this study the researcher obtained and scrutinised data on mother tongue interference and effects on a selected secondary school in Bulilima district. The study employed a qualitative paradigm which is mainly characterized by descriptions and explanations of phenomena using words. Marshal and Rossman (2006) refer to qualitative research as pragmatic and interpretive which is grounded in the lived experiences of people. The study therefore, employed interviews and observation instruments which operate well with qualitative approach. Through interviews, the researcher collected Kalanga words and expressions which interfered with IsiNdebele the target language in bi-lingual classrooms in Bulilima. Interviews were also used to collect effects of mother tongue in Bulilima where Kalanga persistently interferes with the learning of IsiNdebele which is a second language but also taught as a subject. The research also employed the observation tool so as to gain insights about language interference from learners' participation during the lesson. The focus was however, specifically on Kalanga interference on the learning of IsiNdebele which is taught in schools as a subject in Bulilima.

Population

In defining population, Salkind (2010:69) states that, "A population is known as a well-defined collection of objects to have similar characteristics. All individuals of a certain population usually have a common binding characteristic" Apparent from the given definition is that population comprises a well-defined category of members having similar features. In this study, the population consisted of a Head of Department, IsiNdebele specialist teachers, Form One and Form Two learners. The reason why Form One and Form Two learners were the only forms included in the population was because these classes would be coming from primary school where Kalanga is taught as the mother tongue. The assumption is that the effect of their Kalanga influence as lower forms of secondary education is higher and more pronounced than those in upper forms who would have been in the system and already initiated into IsiNdebele which is learnt as one of the subjects.

The Sample

A sample consists of a small portion derived from the whole population since it is not feasible to incorporate the entire population in the study. According to Haralambos and Holborn (2004), it is a part of a larger population usually selected to be the representative of the population as it is certainly impossible to collect information from every individual in the large population. In a more specific definition of the sample, Tichapondwa (2013), explains a sample as a group of people selected in research to give ideas on a research topic. Apparent from the reflected definitions is that a sample is the selected group specifically for the reason of conducting research since it is impossible to involve the entire population. In the study, it was taken into cognisance that the sample represent the whole population of the study. Hence, purposive sampling was employed to select a relevant and suitable research participants from a Rural Day Secondary School in a predominantly bilingual Kalanga-speaking district of Bulilima. In keeping with the characteristic of qualitative research, the study had to purposively sample two IsiNdebele teachers, one HOD, twenty Form One learners and twenty Form Two learners respectively. This cross section of participants was meant to obtain divergent data from different individuals. Purposive sampling was, therefore, used as a sampling procedure because the researcher had an intention in mind of selecting a suitable and relevant sample rich cases for in-depth study. "Thus, the researcher deliberately chose who to include in the research based on their potential to supply necessary data" (Bhebe 2022: 45). From their mastery of Kalanga and IsiNdebele languages, respondents were expected to provide informed and meaningful responses meant to benefit the study with regards to mother tongue interference and its effects in a bilingual environment like Bulilima District in Matabeleland South Region.

Discussion and Data Analysis

The presented, discussed and analysed data were obtained through interviews and observations. Interviewed participants comprised two IsiNdebele teachers, one IsiNdebele HOD, four Form One and three Form Two learners selected from the sample of twenty in the observed classes. However, they were ten participants who participated in conducted interviews during the study. Data regarding whether research participants were either

bilingual or not indicated that all the respondents were bilingual. Consequently, they were appropriate for this study because they had the capacity to detect or notice the interference of Kalanga on the teaching and learning of IsiNdebele which is their second language in a bilingual environment of Bulilima District. In this context, their inclusion in the study was not only appropriate but justified as well.

On whether Kalanga interference can be noticed in IsiNdebele speech as raised in the interview, all the ten respondents were positive since they agreed that Kalanga interference can be recognised in IsiNdebele speech conversation. Implicit from this unanimous response is that Kalanga interference is noticed and felt on the learning of IsiNdebele in Bulilima where these two languages co-exist. This was further evidenced by their responses which were characterised by code-switching and code-mixing during the interview sessions. But, Kalanga interference that occurred was inevitable as it obtained unconsciously in the process of conversations in IsiNdebele language. Thus, unconscious response of mother tongue interference affirmed that respondents were deeply grounded in Kalanga to the extent that it was practically impossible to block its spontaneous appearance even during the formal interview sessions.

Respondents provided several and varied reasons for mother tongue interference on the teaching and learning of the second language. Popular reasons furnished by the majority of the respondents were that mother tongue interference on the teaching and learning of IsiNdebele was inevitable because Kalanga was their first language from birth in a pre-dominantly Kalanga-speaking district and that up to Grade 3 learners are taught in their mother tongue as prescribed in the 1987 Education Act. The reasons given by the subject specialists and the HOD of IsiNdebele concurred in that interference occurs due to the fact that Kalanga is their native language whereas IsiNdebele is taught as a subject at school. Learners expressed that interference was a reality because Kalanga as their mother tongue is part of their characteristics and that it is associated with thinking processes. Deduced from these reasons is that mother tongue interference on the learning of IsiNdebele is intertwined with their thinking processes, hence its interference cannot be avoided in the teaching and learning of IsiNdebele.

The interviews also deliberated on the effects of mother tongue interference on the teaching and learning of IsiNdebele. Most of the given effects agreed with those expressed under literature review. IsiNdebele subject specialist teacher and the HOD pointed out that mother tongue interference disrupts the flow of the conversation, alters the pronunciation of certain words and results in wrongly spelt words due to the powerful interference of mother tongue. The effect of pronunciation is experienced with click sounds like /x/, /xh/, /nx/, /q/, /qh/, /ngq/, /c/, /ch/, /nc/, /ngc/, etc. which are a common feature in IsiNdebele but not part of the Kalanga language, emphasised both respondents. Consequently, poor pronunciation because of mother tongue interference yields in wrong spelling, some phenomenon that was observed by both teachers and learners during interviews. The replacement of difficult terms in the target language with those from mother tongue is also an effect of mother tongue interference on the learning of the second language. On the contrary, this has a positive impact in that this Floor-holding strategy avoids unnecessary gaps in language learning and communication. Another positive effect of mother tongue interference expressed by IsiNdebele subject specialists and most of the interviewed learners is that it promotes development of both mother tongue and the target language. This is also evidenced in an additive bilingual situation as highlighted under literature review where both languages gain and grow in terms of vocabulary since the language that does not adopt extinct. The interviewees also perceived the learning of IsiNdebele as enhancing the aspirations of learners because of its association with job opportunities such as teaching, translation, broadcasting, authorship and editing. In this context, interference should not be construed as negative but as enhancement of the concepts taught and learnt in the L2.

Besides the interview instrument, data was also gathered through lesson observations of Form One and Form Two classes characterised by two teachers, twenty Form One learners and twenty Form Two learners. From these observations it emerged that there are Kalanga words that are unconsciously used by both teachers and learners in IsiNdebele lessons. Below is an excerpt of some Kalanga words that were unconsciously used in IsiNdebele observed lessons by teachers and learners.

a) Teacher: *'basekulu'* for *'umalume'* in IsiNdebele and maternal uncle in English

- : ‘*kwanisa*’ for ‘*yenelisa*’ in IsiNdebele and enable in English
- : ‘*lebeleka*’ for ‘*kehuluma*’ in IsiNdebele and speak in English
- : ‘*dbombo*’ for ‘*umkhongi*’ in IsiNdebele and marriage negotiator in English

b) Learners: ‘*kwanisa*’ for ‘*yenelisa*’ in IsiNdebele and to enable in English

- : ‘*basekulu*’ for ‘*umalume*’ in IsiNdebele and maternal uncle in English
- : ‘*dbombo*’ for ‘*umkhongi*’ in IsiNdebele and marriage negotiator in English
- : ‘*mayinini*’ for ‘*umamomncane*’ in IsiNdebele and maternal aunt in English
- : ‘*ndiko*’ for ‘*ngizwa*’ in IsiNdebele and I will in English

From the reflected lists learners slightly used more words than their teachers. However, words like ‘*basekulu*’, ‘*kwanisa*’ and ‘*dbombo*’ were common to both lists which implies that they have been adopted and incorporated into IsiNdebele vocabulary as if they are original IsiNdebele and yet they are not. In the observed lessons, teachers were heard encouraging both Kalanga and IsiNdebele learners to speak by spontaneously saying ‘*lebeleka*’ (speak) during IsiNdebele lesson. On the lesson that hinged on ‘*Imuli lezibhobo*’ (Family and relatives), Kalanga learners would unconsciously and persistently refer to ‘*umamomncane*’ (maternal aunt) as ‘*mayinini*’ which is not IsiNdebele but Kalanga. The expression ‘*ndiko*’ (I will) which is Kalanga but with its IsiNdebele equivalent as ‘*ngizwa*’, also featured repeatedly in the observed lessons from Kalanga learners. Its frequent featuring during the lessons was more of a habit, hence it was unavoidable in IsiNdebele lesson.

Also observed during the conducted lessons, was that the repeatedly use of phonologised words, have resulted in them being adopted and used as if they are part of the IsiNdebele vocabulary. Below is a list of phonologised and adopted Kalanga words used at the expense of the original and/or traditional IsiNdebele ones.

Kalanga	IsiNdebele (Common)	IsiNdebele Proper	English Translation
tulo	isitulo	isihlalo	stool
nhopi	inopi	isijeza	pumpkin porridge
hotji	ihotshi	ingulube	pig
bende	ibende	isikhewu	lost tooth
dombo	usodombo	umkhongi	marriage negotiator
kwanisa	kwanisa	yenelisa	able to do
swanja	umswanja	umthunduluka	particular wild fruit

Above are Kalanga words that have been phonologised into IsiNdebele at the expense of traditional IsiNdebele terms. Phonologised terms are structurally different in terms of morphology and spelling. Most of these common IsiNdebele words are pre-fixed with an initial vowel or prefix proper while Kalanga terms are independent suffixes. Apparently, those that are original IsiNdebele or IsiNdebele proper are completely different words altogether which make them appear strange to learners, argued the HOD. Implied from his observation is that, proper IsiNdebele words seem to have been forgotten about because they have been overshadowed by those phonologised from Kalanga because of mother tongue interference on the teaching and learning IsiNdebele in a dominant Kalanga-speaking district. Consequently, some of the Kalanga words have been adopted and accepted into IsiNdebele vocabulary due to that they are common and often used in and outside the classroom.

It was observed during lessons that teachers reacted positively to Kalanga interference most of the time as the lesson progressed. This was shown by that they accepted and tolerated use of Kalanga as long as it enhanced learnt concepts. For instance, learners would use Kalanga to clarify, illustrate and even to reinforce critical issues during the lesson. On the other hand, the teachers would not take kindly, the interference of Kalanga for its

own sake. Instead, they would constantly remind learners to try and maintain IsiNdebele and only apply Kalanga if they happen to be a dire need to do so. For example, Kalanga learners never knew '*umkhongi*' (marriage negotiator) as IsiNdebele equivalent for '*dbombo*' which is Kalanga. To most of them, the equivalent word was '*usodombo*' phonologised from Kalanga. As learners interrogated such linguistic issues, teachers allowed the use of Kalanga as this helped to consolidate their understanding of taught concepts.

FINDINGS

The findings of this study revealed that Kalanga interference on the teaching and learning of IsiNdebele has yielded both positive and negative effects. Although participants presented them in different expressions, they all concurred in that they highlighted common and/or related effects. Consequently, this confirmed the authenticity of the research findings. Some of the critical positive effects brought about by Kalanga interference on the learning of IsiNdebele in Bulilima emerged as follows:

- . Advancement of bilingualism as a result language co-existence.
- . Creation of cultural-linguistic association between IsiNdebele and Kalanga.
- . Expansion of language vocabulary through phonologising and borrowing of foreign terms
- . Formation of various carrier chances as authors, translators, interpreters, radio and Television Broadcasters.
- . Consolidation and grasping of taught and lent IsiNdebele concepts.

The study further revealed the negative effects brought about by Kalanga interference on the teaching and learning of IsiNdebele as follows:

- . Intrinsic code- switching in the course disturbs conversations.
- . Disintegration of Kalanga the dominated language since it is not taught beyond at secondary level.
- . Competence in both indigenous languages is affected.
- . Weakening of IsiNdebele the Target Language due Kalanga interference and influence.
- . Lack of vividness in expressions due to alternation of IsiNdebele and Kalanga in a discourse.
- . Bad results in national examinations due to negative attitude towards IsiNdebele the target language

.In light of highlighted positive and negative effects brought about by Kalanga interference on the learning of IsiNdebele, participants advised that these effects ought to be seriously considered since they have a bearing on the teaching and learning since they somehow affect both IsiNdebele and Kalanga as co-existing languages in Bulilima district. Thus, it emerged from the findings that despite these negative effects are unavoidable, learning of IsiNdebele should not be compromised as this affects the performance of learners in examinations. The findings further affirmed that the greater the structural differences between the two languages as is the case with IsiNdebele and Kalanga in Bulilima District, the more negative the effects of interference are likely to be.

Recommendations

In view of the highlighted research findings in relation to mother tongue interference and its effects on the learning of the second language, the researcher therefore, gives recommendations as follows:

The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should take stock of all minority languages spoken in different parts of the country in order to initiate training in colleges and deployment of bilingual teachers in respect of indigenous languages co-existing in those respective areas. If bilingual teachers are posted in Bulilima District where IsiNdebele and Kalanga co-exist, certainly they will be capable of handling Kalanga mother tongue interference on the teaching and learning of IsiNdebele.

Through District Education Officials in conjunction with IsiNdebele Subject Association and Language Research Assistants, The Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education Science and Technology Development should henceforth, embark on in- service training and staff-development programs in minority language communities meant to equip teachers with basic bilingual skills of handling Kalanga interference on the teaching and learning of IsiNdebele as a subject.

Language teachers should evaluate the impact of mother tongue interference on the teaching and learning of the L2 or foreign language so as to avoid its negative effects in their classes.

To address the challenge of negative attitude towards the teaching and learning of national languages in minority language communities, the Government should ensure that learners are taught by bilingual teachers who would easily code-switch in their teaching for the benefit of both majority and minority language learners.

There is need for linguists and educators to encourage teachers and learners to accommodate mother tongue interference in the teaching-learning processes as this concurs with the principle of teaching from the known to the unknown.

CONCLUSION

The basic concern of this study was to explore mother tongue interference and its effects on a bilingual environment of Bulilima District in Matabeleland South region. Findings from the conducted study and as well as from the previous researches reveal that mother tongue interference and its effects are inevitable where languages co-exist. Data obtained from reviewed literature and research participants endorsed that mother tongue interference has a tremendous impact on the learning of the second or target language. That is, the second language cannot be learnt in isolation of the mother tongue which is rooted and established in the child's mind and vocabulary from birth. Notably, in the findings is that the effect of mother tongue can be realised through vocabulary, spelling, accent and pronunciation which are inherent in the learning of the second language. The study further exposed that mother tongue interference has both positive and negative effects on language learning and communication. Some of the highlighted positive effects include development of both mother tongue and second language, the replacement of difficult terms in the target language with those from the mother language and code-switching in the course of a discourse. Also critical regarding the effects is that, the greater the differences between the two languages, the more negative the effects of interference are likely to be. While negative effects are inevitable as highlighted in the article, educators and linguists are advised to ensure that issues to do with poor accent or pronunciation, wrong spellings, code-switching and code-mixing are minimised as it is impossible to completely eradicate them in a bilingual environment like Bulilima where Kalanga is the mother tongue and IsiNdebele is the second language but taught as a subject in schools.

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