

## PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' INTERACTION WITH LEARNERS USING THEIR MOTHER TONGUE IN LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE CLASSES IN NAMIBIAN SCHOOLS

<sup>1</sup>Mmamoyahabo Constance Makgabo, <sup>2</sup>Alina Kakunde Niipare

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa

<sup>2</sup>National Institute for Educational Development (NIED), Namibia

Corresponding Author Email: [connie.makgabo@up.ac.za](mailto:connie.makgabo@up.ac.za)

Article Info	Abstract
<b>Article History</b> Received: September 2022 Revised: October 2022 Published: October 2022	<i>This article reports on a study conducted in five primary schools in Namibia during teaching and learning in the mother tongue classroom. The aim of this study was to investigate how 30 pre-service teachers used the learners' home language during their curriculum delivery. The study took place during lessons that included work-integrated learning (WIL) during which the pre-service teachers were assessed by the two lecturers as researchers. The study followed a qualitative approach where data were gathered from classroom observations and semi-structured interviews of pre-service teachers. The data were analysed thematically. This study was guided by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of development which identifies language, society, and culture as the primary aspects of the development of a child. The social interactions that a child has with people living in a particular environment with particular languages strongly shapes the development of cognitive abilities in the child. The findings showed that pre-service teachers lacked sufficient competencies in the teaching of mother tongue literacy. Additionally, the classroom arrangement and teaching approaches that were used by the pre-service teachers were ineffective for learning. Furthermore, the learning materials and pedagogical practices were likely to inhibit successful learning. The implication of this is that the quality of education and learning was compromised. This paper recommends that pre-service teachers should be equipped with skills to teach the mother tongue programme while using relevant and appropriate teaching strategies and learning resources to enhance mother tongue learning of the Oshindonga and Oshikwanyama dialects.</i>
<b>Keywords</b> Diverse classes; Mother tongue instruction; Teaching strategies;	
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### INTRODUCTION

There are several indigenous languages and various dialects that are spoken in Namibia. Thirteen of these languages have a standard orthography and are currently used in schools as the medium of instruction. These languages include *Oshiwambo*, *Khoekhoegowab*, *Otjiherero*, *Silози*, *Afrikaans*, *Rukwangali*, *Rumanyo*, *Thimbukushu*, *German*, and *Setswana*. According to the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture Policy (MBESC, 2003) in Namibia, children are to be taught in the mother tongue as the medium of instruction during the first three years of schooling (Grades 1 to 3). The policy argues that education in the mother tongue, especially in the lower grades, is crucial for concept formation as well as literacy and numeracy attainment. Despite the attempts by the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture Policy, mother tongue teaching was not fully implemented in schools due to a variety of reasons. Some of those reasons will be explored in this paper.

This paper chose to explore only two languages out of the ones mentioned above. Of the above-mentioned languages, two dialects of the *Oshiwambo* language, namely *Oshindonga*

and *Oshikwanyama*, were purposefully selected for this study. What influenced the selection of those languages was the fact that they are the dialects of the *Oshiwambo* which is the language that is represented in the seven regions of Namibia and is officially used in schools as a medium of instruction. The focus of this study was on the literacy skills of pre-service teachers. The pre-service teachers are students who are not yet teaching professionally and bring with them to their courses. They begin as an observer and finish the pre-service teaching experience as competent professionals (Kukari, 2004). Both the pre-service teachers and the learners, whose home languages had been excluded from the above list, were required to learn in languages other than their mother tongue. This could serve as a barrier as noted by the Department of Higher Education and Training in their revised Language Policy Framework for Higher Education which stated, "Language continues to be a barrier to access and success for many pre-services at South African education institutions." (1997). This Language Policy Framework highlights the value of mother tongue instruction to learners, especially during their formative years.

Although Clyne (2017) believes that multilingualism ought to be promoted and pursued side by side with mother tongues, he attests that alienating one's mother tongue often leads to loss of identity, cultural disconnection, disorientation, and embarrassment. The use of mother tongue instruction in the junior primary schooling phase has been strongly encouraged in the report by the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture (2003) in Namibia.

This study emanates from the increasing number of learners who are unable to read for comprehension in the Junior Primary classes. The increasing number of learners who cannot read for comprehension was reported by the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) (Mullis, 2016) which states that 78 per cent of South African Grade 4 learners cannot read for meaning in any language. The latest research suggests that learners entering school can learn best through their mother tongue and that a second language is more easily acquired if the learner already has a firm grasp of their home language (Thuketana & Makgabo, 2022). Full acquisition of a mother tongue language enables the learner to learn a second and even third language without difficulty (Mullis et al., 2016; Desai, 2012).

As alluded to by Tonio and Ella (2019), the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction is good in principle. They believe that teachers whose mother tongue is the same as their medium of instruction, are able to express themselves more clearly and can therefore make the lessons more interesting for learners. This was confirmed by Khejeri, (2014), who said that teachers in Kenya recognised the many advantages that mother tongue education brought in connection with the appreciation of culture. Furthermore, they were able to build a better relationship between themselves and the learners, enable learner participation, and contribute to the smooth transition of learners from home to school, among others.

Although mother tongue instruction is good in principles and implemented at lower grades in Namibia; as far as literacy levels are concerned the literacy standard has continued to fall. At the time of this study, there was an ongoing debate in Namibia on the failure of learners to read. Teachers complained that when learners reach grade 10, "the majority of them have difficulties comprehending and processing reading materials, decoding the meaning and identifying important points" (Murray, 2007 p: 25). It was not clear if the persistent reading problems emanated from the pre-service teachers in the classrooms or from the in-service teachers. Therefore, the question that this study attempted to answer was how did the pre-service teachers in Namibia teach mother tongue literacy during their Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) in schools?

In view of the above, WIL is viewed as one of the crucial components of the pre-service teachers' education programme, whereby the pre-service teachers have an "opportunity to practice, take risks and explore their learning environment, which should be rich in feedback and support" (Bharuthram, 2012, p. 207) by their mentors. Also, it is imperative that teacher

education is rooted in the reality of everyday school life (Bunyi et al., 2013). Thus, teacher education programmes should provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to practice teaching and learning by integrating theory and practice and by ensuring that pre-service teachers have sufficient time to apply what they have learnt Darling-Hammond (2002). This will ensure that real classroom challenges related to learning inform the way they understand teaching and how they promote effective learning (Bunyi et al., 2013). In this case, teacher education programmes should be committed to training teachers to teach literacy in the first or local language of learners in classrooms.

Karan and Morren (2013) suggest that it is essential that pre-service teachers involved in mother tongue programmes be familiar with the relevant national language policy, which, in this case, is the medium of instruction in schools. The Language in Education Policy (1997) states that Junior Primary learners should be taught in their mother tongue. Karan and Morren (2013) further postulate that pre-service teachers should relate to the various learning theories and recognise how critical the first language is to successful learning. Furthermore, pre-service teachers should be exposed to the first language's structure and to what it means for children's language acquisition and literacy skills in education (Mata, 2014).

Hence, the objective of this study is to examine the role of the mother tongue in the teaching of literacy and how the pre-service teachers teach literacy using Oshindonga and Oshikwanyama in the primary classrooms during their teaching practice or WIL, to establish whether the teacher preparation program contributed to improving the pre-service teachers' mother tongue literacy teaching in accordance with the official language policy that has been enacted for schools.

## Literature Review

This section, of the literature review, will be divided into the following subheadings which are aimed at highlighting issues of mother tongue, mother tongue instruction as well as mother tongue literacy teaching.

Mother tongue is the language that is acquired from birth, and it enables one to communicate throughout one's life. It is through this language that one is identified as a native speaker by oneself and others. Since one's mother tongue is the language that one is familiar with, it enables an individual to formulate ideas and give meaning to emotions. Wardhaugh (2021) defines language as the knowledge of rules and principles and the ways of saying and doing things with sounds, words, and sentences, rather than just knowledge thereof without understanding. Based on the above, the mother tongue is the language that grounds the child firmly to his birth roots.

Mother tongue instruction is at the center of all teaching and learning activities because it is the main source of information and knowledge transmission (Ahmed, 2011). Furthermore, language is used to teach and impart instructions in any discipline, subject, and at any level of learning; it is the medium of instruction. Yet the medium of instruction is a controversial issue at all levels of the education system, especially in the junior primary. Since the medium of instruction is the language that is used for curriculum delivery at school, it should be the language that the learner knows and understands to be able to participate meaningfully in classroom activities. Therefore, when deciding on the medium of instruction, schools should take into consideration that it should enhance the understanding of the learners and enable them to formulate ideas because it is through language that learners express their understanding of what they have learnt from the classroom input (Cummins, 2001; Gibbons, 2002; Probyn, 2008).

The selected medium of instruction should help in raising and developing the cognitive abilities of learners and the development of their individuality (Thuketana & Makgabo, 2022) As expressed by Cummins (2001), the promotion of mother tongue instruction in schools not only helps to develop the home language but also assists in the development of the learners'

cognitive abilities. Cognitive development, as well as intellectual improvement, is relatively faster in those who are fluent in their mother tongue. If a learner is educated in their mother tongue, the proportion of their educational achievement is greater than someone who is taught in a medium other than their mother tongue (Nishanthi, 2020).

When children develop proficiency in their mother tongue, they simultaneously foster a whole host of other essential skills, such as critical thinking and literacy skills. It is these skills and concepts that they take with them into formal education, and the concepts gained in the learner's home language do not have to be re-taught when they transfer to a second language (Thukethana & Makgabo, 2022). Also, the pre-service teacher who is skilled in mother tongue instruction and is familiar with the application of theories and good practices while teaching will be able to use mother tongue instruction as a vehicle to assist the learners to learn and understand the subject matter in the second language. The above argument reveals the positive relationship between mother tongue instruction and cognitive development.

Literacy refers to listening, speaking, reading, and writing while bearing in mind the holistic and meaning-making aspects of learning the language (Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000). Numerous studies have revealed that teaching literacy using the mother tongue or first language enables learners to build a strong educational foundation, and they can use the knowledge and skills acquired successfully as a bridge to the acquisition of additional languages at school (Ball, 2010; Ouane & Glanz, 2010; Patel, 2012). Therefore, if learning does not allow learners to make connections with their mother tongue, that kind of teaching might encourage rote learning and memorisation, and knowledge or content is likely to be forgotten. According to Cummins, 2001 & Marope, 2005, learners bring their cultural experiences, and knowledge of letters, words, and text to the interpretation of the written language to school. All the above literacy-related incidences and occasions could be incorporated into school literacy in order to link the learners' previous knowledge to what they learn at school.

Baker (2001) argued that the whole language approach recommends a holistic way of learning that involves the teaching and integration of all the language skills, namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing in the teaching of literacy. The learners' listening skills, vocabulary, and speech abilities develop through their listening to stories and conversations; following and carrying out instructions; presenting formal and informal talks; conducting conversations; dramatising stories and reading dialogues (Landberg & Swarts, 2011).

Reading activities, such as short and easy reading materials that include big books, regular books, posters and pamphlets which may be read individually or in pairs, should be encouraged (UNESCO, 2007). It is in the same vein that the Namibian Ministry of Education, Sport, and Culture (MBESC, 2003) argues that literacy development may be promoted by creating a print-rich environment in the classroom which may include a reading corner with published readers, charts, posters, newspaper cuttings and the learners' own creative writings.

The Namibia Ministry of Education (2015) suggests that learners should write purposefully and meaningfully every day in their mother tongue to establish good handwriting skills, writing habits, spelling skills and strategies and creativity, and to prepare them for the demands of the following years. Therefore, the pre-service teachers require both subject content and pedagogical content knowledge- in order to be able to teach literacy in the mother tongue.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This article is positioned within Vygotsky's (1989) sociocultural theory, which is built on the importance of social and cultural interaction. According to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of development, three aspects are fundamental to the development of a child. Hang (2010) identifies these factors as language, society, and culture. For Vygotsky, language is the

only way through which adults are able to transmit knowledge and culture to children (Vygotsky, 1978). He views language as the medium through which information is passed from the skilled or knowledgeable individual to the child through their social interaction. Therefore, the interactions through language play a vital role in the development of cognition or higher-order mental abilities in learners since they use those communications as a point of departure before learning new content and concepts (Mata, 2014). With regard to culture, Vygotsky says it is the environment in which a child lives and all the social interactions they have with people living in that environment have an influence on their complete development. This study focuses on literacy as a social practice while examining the way in which pre-service teachers teach literacy in the learner's mother tongue in the classrooms.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative approach using a single case study methodology. Hammersley defines qualitative research as a form of social inquiry that tends to adopt flexible data-driven research design, to emphasise the essential role in the research process. (Hammersley, 2013.p12). A case study is a research approach that is used to generate an in-depth, multi-faceted understanding of a single phenomenon in its real-life context (Heale & Twycross, 2018). The data collection methods used were interviews with the pre-service teachers and classroom observations of the pre-service teachers while teaching Oshindonga or Oshikwanyama languages. Data were analysed thematically, and those themes will be discussed below.

### **Research Design**

The data used in this study were collected from five identified schools in one district in Namibia. Purposeful sampling was used to identify those five primary schools and the criterion was that all the schools should use the dialects Oshindonga or Oshikwanyama as the medium of instruction. All the participating schools were in the Windhoek area within the vicinity of the university. In addition, 30 pre-service teachers who used Oshindonga or Oshikwanyama as the medium of instruction were selected to teach at the five primary schools for their pre-service teaching practice. According to Patton (2014), purposive sampling was used when selecting information-rich cases to study in-depth. Therefore, information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of importance central to the purpose of the inquiry to which they provide insight and in-depth understanding.

Written permission to conduct the research was obtained from the University of Pretoria and the University of Namibia. Also, informed consent was granted by the Ministry of Education in Namibia, the school principals of the participating schools, the parents of the participating learners, and the pre-service teachers. The participants consisted of both genders. They were assured of the confidentiality of their participation and that their identities would not be revealed in any part of the study. Hence, pseudonyms were used. The participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time during the study.

Data were collected through interviews to elicit pre-service teachers' views and experiences on teaching literacy using Oshindonga or Oshikwanyama. In addition, classroom observations were employed to gather information on the literacy content taught, the teaching methods and/or strategies, and the assessment approaches used. To measure the pre-service teachers' mastery of the literacy content, how mother tongue literacy was taught and managed, and classroom interaction, observations were used to determine how the pre-service teachers used mother tongue literacy practices in class during their teaching practice. These tools focused on the literacy content, teaching methods and strategies, and assessment approaches employed to measure the learners' mastery of the literacy content. It also

examined how teaching and learning of mother tongue literacy were delivered in class, taking Vygotsky's social and cultural interaction in the classroom situation into consideration. Furthermore, as identified by Hang (2010), during the classroom observations, the pre-service teacher's interactions with the learners on factors such as language, society, and culture were the focus of the process. The data collected through interviews and observations were interpreted, analysed with the aim of understanding the pre-service teacher's position in the classroom and will be explained in the next section.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were transcribed and analysed into themes as explained by Catalano and Creswell (2013), and meaning was attached to the pieces of data (Lofland et al., 2006). Those pieces of data were used to summarise, identify patterns, and pull together themes that will be discussed in the findings and discussion sections.

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Research Findings**

This section presents the findings that emanated from both the interviews and classroom observations. The pre-service teachers were referred to as PST1, PST2, up to PST30, and they will be discussed below. The findings are categorised into six themes, i.e., Pre-service teachers' positive experiences during teaching practice, Pre-service teacher's uncertainty about teaching mother tongue literacy; Inadequate competencies in mother tongue literacy teaching by pre-service teachers, Ineffective classroom arrangement and teaching approaches, Inadequate learner engagement, and Insufficient and outdated teaching and learning materials.

#### *Pre-service teachers' positive experiences during teaching practice*

The pre-service teachers expressed positive feelings about their teaching practice experiences in general and mother tongue literacy teaching in particular. They reported that their teaching practice experiences of being in classrooms were broader than ever before. The experiences ranged from gaining confidence to stand in front of the class, to acquiring more skills and knowledge about teaching while using their learners' mother tongue as the medium of instruction. Below are quotes from two of the pre-service teachers. PST4 said:

“For me, I gained the confidence to stand in front of the class. I learnt a lot about how to be with kids. I have also learnt strategies on getting learners' attention and keeping them busy; just by doing different activities”.

In addition, PST7 alluded to the knowledge that he gained from the WIL experience saying, “I would say heartily that, what was good for me out of the teaching practice was the knowledge that I got on how to work with lower primary learners.”. Furthermore, PST8 expressed gratitude for the support he got from his mentor teacher by saying:

When I started teaching, my mentor teacher was always there in class to observe me and after class, she always looks upon me to tell me what went well and what I need to change. During planning when I am preparing my tomorrow's lesson, we always do it together. So, yes, supporting teachers really helped me.

The responses of the pre-service teachers above show that WIL assisted them in a variety of ways. Their teaching skills improved because of the reality of being in the classroom and interacting with the learners during the teaching and learning process. Some pre-service teachers admitted that they had not fully understood the philosophy of teaching until they were faced with the learners in class. They learnt the dynamics of being the facilitator in class, being in control of the teaching and learning process, and being influenced by the mentor teacher while, at the same time, exploring different teaching strategies. Furthermore, the support they received from their mentor teachers assisted them in acquiring enhanced ways of getting the learners' attention and keeping them busy by giving them diverse and appropriate learning without compromising teaching and learning while using

their mother tongue as the medium of instruction. This is in line with Vygotsky's social and cultural interaction in the classroom in which the language used conformed with the mother tongue instruction.

*Pre-service teacher's uncertainty about teaching mother tongue literacy*

The pre-service teachers taught various language skills by reading stories from the readers, while others wrote stories or texts on the chalkboard and, thereafter, read to the learners. The learners were expected to listen attentively since they had to answer questions afterwards to demonstrate their understanding of what had been read to them. The learners remained passive, except when they were asked to answer the questions that, in most cases, required factual or one-word answers. As far as the teaching of writing was concerned, the general pattern observed involved copying from the chalkboard, tracing, and dictation. Thus, the copying and tracing of patterns, letters, and words from the chalkboard was a dominant pattern that occurred in most of the observed classes. Some of the pre-service teachers felt that they had not been properly prepared to teach literacy in Oshindonga and Oshikwanyama. PST2 maintained:

We are not well prepared to teach in Oshiwambo ... we are only given theory at university only and, when we go out, we try by ourselves to do it practically ... they only teach us verbally but not giving us opportunities like preparing a lesson plan and presenting it as you will present it to the learners in class ... I am in the fourth year and I am still struggling to draw up a lesson plan for Oshiwambo ... even though I am about to complete my degree.

PST10, whose concern was similar to that of PST2, said:

I haven't mastered my native language so far because I was never taught in my mother tongue, I was taught in Afrikaans. Coming to the university I realised I want to teach in my mother tongue ... I have captured quite a few but I am not ready ... I think. As time goes on and with practice, I will be more ready, but I am not ready at this moment.

The study revealed that the pre-service teachers were not confident to teach mother tongue literacy. There was no coherence or linking of the literacy sections, as some of them were taught as stand-alone units. The teaching of phonics, for instance, was done in isolation, by simply following the letters of the alphabet. The pre-service teachers lacked creativity and innovation and they displayed limited knowledge and skills in teaching reading. As a result, they could not use a variety of teaching methods or engage learners with learning difficulties. Furthermore, they lacked the skills to consolidate the aspects of a language as a unit.

*Inadequate competencies in mother tongue literacy teaching by pre service teachers*

Some of the pre-service teachers revealed that they were not well equipped to teach literacy in Oshindonga and or Oshikwanyama. They struggled to write lesson plans and to teach as they have never been given opportunities to do so practically. Their first exposure to that reality was when they arrived at the school. PST2, as quoted above, mentioned that the pre-service teachers did not receive enough relevant training for them to confidently apply those skills practically while teaching. She alluded to the fact that the practical aspect of teaching was lacking as they were only confronted with it when they got to the schools. The other pre-service teachers raised the concern that they struggled to teach in their mother tongue. Even though they spoke the Oshiwambo language, they had been taught in Afrikaans during their school years. This limited their vocabulary, and they felt that they were inadequately prepared to teach with confidence. To confirm this, PST15 said:

This experience has given me some confidence and I feel better equipped to teach in my mother tongue. I have captured quite a few vocabulary words, and I will be ready and proficient in due course.

The fact that the training tended to focus on theory rather than practice resulted in the pre-service teachers experiencing problems when they went to school. The fact that they had not practiced certain aspects of teaching during their training made their WIL practice in the schools very difficult. Their responses showed that the pre-service teachers were not proficient in their own language and, as a result, they found it difficult to communicate adequately with the learners in class. According to Vygotsky's social and cultural theory, interaction in the classroom situation is successful if the language is familiar and is used in communication.

#### *The ineffective classroom arrangement and teaching approaches*

In most of the lessons observed, literacy teaching was based on teacher-directed instruction, where teaching was based only on question-and-answer methods. Also, the learners had permanent sitting arrangements in the classes where they were seated in groups, but they were not allowed to work together or talk to each other; they worked individually. As a result, classroom interactions were minimal and no activities were incorporated into the lessons. Furthermore, the learners were not offered feedback or opportunities to share ideas or explain their opinions to their peers. Again, most of the pre-service teachers were not able to initiate activities that involved all the learners and did not show sufficient skill to help the learners connect to the required knowledge. The fact that the pre-service teachers did not take lesson planning seriously negatively impacted their lesson delivery and was detrimental to the Oshindonga or Oshikwanyama languages. This classroom seating arrangement limited interaction among the learners and, as a result, language and cultural development, according to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory which is built on the importance of social and cultural interaction, were likely to be limited.

#### *Inadequate learner engagement*

There was limited learner engagement by the pre-service teachers during curriculum delivery. The pre-service teachers read stories from the small readers while others wrote text on the chalkboard and read to learners from the chalkboard. The learners were instructed to listen carefully during the storytelling and to demonstrate their understanding by answering questions at the end. Learner engagement was minimal and the few questions that were asked were of lower cognitive levels. In addition, the few learner engagements that were observed simply encouraged a few learners to be dominant over the others. Also, only a few lessons that the pre-service teachers had planned had activities that fostered speaking skills.

#### *Insufficient and outdated teaching and learning materials*

In some of the classrooms that were visited, there were not enough materials written in either Oshikwanyama or Oshindonga. In such cases, the pre-service teachers had to use outdated textbooks that were not in line with the current curriculum. Also, in cases where some teaching materials were found, there were not sufficient books for all the learners in the class. Accordingly, two or three learners often had to share one book. In some classrooms, there were no reading sources for the learners other than the English books that were found in some classrooms. Furthermore, there were no books in the Oshikwanyama or Oshindonga languages. Even the posters that were hanging on the walls were only in English. The absence or scarcity of resources in the Oshikwanyama or Oshindonga languages disadvantaged the advancement of the languages. The following section will be discussion of the findings of this study.

## Discussion

This section discusses the main findings of the study and the conclusions drawn from the findings in which pre-service teachers teach literacy using the mother tongue of the learners during the WIL in schools in Namibia.

Although some of the pre-service teachers felt that they had gained experience from teaching during WIL, they expressed the wish for their entire teacher training programme to be offered in their mother tongue. This would be in line with the implementation of the language policy which requires and encourages the implementation of mother tongue instruction as stated to by the Language in Education Policy (2003).

In most of the various lessons observed, it was noted that the pre-service teachers used whole-class teaching methods and did little to build on the knowledge that the learners had brought to school from their personal and cultural experiences. Many of the lessons overlooked this wealth of experiences and denied the learners the opportunity for knowledge construction. As previous studies suggest that teachers need to begin with what the learners already know about a topic and advance to what they need to learn about it (Villegas & Lucas, 2007). The inability of pre-service teachers to acknowledge the learner's knowledge and experiences contradicts the pedagogical approaches offered in the literature on mother tongue-based teaching (MTBT), that student teachers need to link their teaching and learning to the learner's previous experiences in order to compliment what the learners learn at home with what they learn in school (Villegas & Lucas, 2007).

The pre-service teachers' inability to implement new methodologies and strategies in mother tongue education revealed the common feeling that their training was not equipping them with enough skills to teach literacy in the learners' mother tongue. Although the teacher training offered the pre-service teacher's extensive theory, the study also found that most of the pre-service teachers lacked inadequate teaching methodologies and strategies to present the mother tongue literacy skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing lessons) to the learners. There was no contextualisation of the teaching to suit the different levels and needs of the learners, and this limited the process of learning with understanding. The learners' cultural experiences were not acknowledged by most of the pre-service teachers.

Listening is a language skill that children "develop first and it is the most dominant communication skill in the classroom and in everyday life" (Oduolowu and Oluwakemi 2014 p.100). The findings revealed that some of the pre-service teachers lacked in-depth understanding of the fact that children develop listening skills through active listening and participation and that speaking is the foundation of thinking.

However, not all the pre-service teachers neglected the recognition of the learners' prior knowledge and experiences. Some of the pre-service teachers involved most learners during the lesson, by telling them a story, and engaging them in the form of asking questions. The type of teaching style that is in alignment with the integration of the subjects with the teaching of language skills as advocated by the Ministry of Education, (2015). In accordance with the sociocultural perspective, the learners interpreted their relationships with others and the world around them (Hossain, 2013). That enables learners to become effective speakers, and it is incumbent on teachers to give the learners a variety of activities to carry out to help them to learn to speak in different situations.

The learners were not given a variety of activities to carry out and they were not exposed to speaking in different situations. Encouraging learners to relate the daily news, as advocated in the junior primary phase syllabus (MEAC, 2015), was clearly not taking place. In all the lessons observed it was evident that the teaching of the speaking skill was highly ineffective. One may safely conclude that teaching the speaking skill remains a challenge for many pre-service teachers.

Although some of the pre-service teachers used the phonics method, they did not demonstrate an in-depth understanding of its subject content or pedagogical content knowledge. As a result, phonics was taught in isolation without being linked to the learning content. This contradicts Bainbridge and Mary (2008), who affirmed that skills development in context rather than in isolation is an effective way of teaching mother tongue literacy. Limited knowledge and skills in teaching reading were displayed by the pre-service teachers, as they were unable to employ a variety of interesting activities to consolidate what the learners had learnt.

The learners were not given an opportunity to write different types of texts such as short and simple stories, and write about their own personal experiences, thus promoting creativity and enhancing good literacy learning behaviour (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture, 2003). This had an adverse impact on the learners' progress in learning how to write.

The inadequacy of teaching and learning resources in either Oshikwanyama or Oshindonga contributed hugely to the pre-service teachers' frustrations in making the lessons more practical. Also, they did not have the skills to be creative and innovative in developing their own teaching and learning resources.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study examined how the pre-service teachers taught literacy in Oshindonga and Oshikwanyama during their school-based WIL practice. The findings revealed that many of the pre-service teachers who presented their lessons in either Oshikwanyama or Oshindonga, had a variety of challenges that were discussed in the findings. The study revealed that the teaching of literacy was dominated by teacher-directed methods, limited mastery of content knowledge, inappropriate teaching strategies, and use of inadequate resources. Also, the pre-service teachers were not empowered with skills to build on what the learners already knew and connect it to new knowledge. They were unable to involve the learners in teaching and learning activities by using a variety of teaching methods nor could they engage the learners in classroom dialogues and interactions using a variety of teaching materials and resources.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The following recommendations are based on the findings of this study. The findings, in general, revealed that most of the pre-service teachers concentrated, for the most part, on teacher-talk methods and there was limited active learner participation while they were in class. It is, therefore, recommended that they should change their teaching strategies and engage the learners in their teaching. Also, the pre-service teachers were encouraged to apply cooperative and collaborative learning activities that would allow the learners to work effectively in groups or pairs. The pre-service teachers are encouraged to make room for interaction with the learners in order to inspire the successful teaching and learning of mother tongue literacy. Furthermore, learner participation in the form of encouraging learners to tell their own stories in their mother tongue and allowing them to write different types of short texts in class should be taken into consideration.

It is essential that the pre-service teachers encourage and develop a culture of active participation during their teaching time. They revealed that they lacked the understanding that children acquire language through active participation. In conclusion, teacher education programmes should aim at equipping the pre-service teachers with knowledge as to how to develop their own appropriate and relevant teaching and learning materials in the learners' mother tongue when they teach literacy.

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