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The teaching and learning of isiXhosa for communicative purposes in teacher education for the Foundation Phase

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Abstract: Policies that promote multilingualism in education call for innovative ways to equip preservice teachers to function effectively in linguistically diverse classrooms in South Africa. Much of the existing literature focuses on theorising how teachers should function in linguistically diverse schools, without much reference to empirical evidence. Drawing on theoretical frameworks by Canale and Swain on communicative competency and Bagaric and Djigunovic on grammatical, sociolinguistic, strategic and discourse competencies, we report on work done with Foundation Phase preservice teachers in the Western Cape, South Africa, on how to function in multilingual classrooms. Using design-based research, we present data from 20 English- and Afrikaans-speaking preservice teachers who were part of an isiXhosa module aimed at equipping them with communicative competence in the classroom. Data from a questionnaire, observations and focus group discussions were coded and thematically analysed. The results of the study show that with intentional training of preservice teachers for multilingual classrooms, more teachers can start comprehending and capitalising on the linguistic repertoires of learners in the classrooms.

Introduction

In our work as teacher educators at a university in the Western Cape province in South Africa, we have found that teachers are not well prepared to teach in linguistically diverse schools. This is mostly applicable to English and Afrikaans speakers who are teaching in schools where isiXhosa is one of the languages present in the school, but not one of the languages of learning and teaching.

The issue is particularly acute in the Foundation Phase of schooling (Grade R to 3), as this is where emphasis is placed on the use of home language for teaching and learning purposes. However, a significant issue with regard to the implementation of the language policy is the shortage of Foundation Phase isiXhosa mother-tongue teachers in the country (Green et al. 2012; Mayaba 2016; 2017).

In an attempt to address this problem, we set out to explore, through design-based research (DBR) (Herrington et al. 2007), how we could prepare English- and Afrikaans-speaking Foundation Phase preservice teachers to function in multilingual contexts by equipping them with communicative competence in isiXhosa.

Multilingualism has become a norm in many societies across the world (de Jong et al. 2016). This has implications for teaching and learning, where teachers may struggle to tap into the linguistic resources that diverse learners bring to the classroom. This trend is also found in South Africa, where there are increasing numbers of schools that have linguistically diverse classrooms (Mbatha 2014; Sibanda 2019).

This study is situated in the South African policy context, where a range of policies and documents have been promulgated since the advent of democracy to promote multilingualism, both in society at large and in education. These have included the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), the Language in Education Policy (1997), the Western Cape Department of Education's Language in Education Transformation Plan (2007), the National Curriculum Statement (2011) and the Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement (2012).

Furthermore, the policy on teacher education qualifications, the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (Department of Higher Education and Training 2015) similarly endorses

multilingualism by stating that students who are not speakers of African languages should at least learn to converse in any of the African languages as part of their Bachelor of Education. Recently, the Incremental Introduction of African Languages Policy (IIAL) (Department of Education 2014) has also been announced as a policy to promote multilingualism in basic education. This IIAL policy document emphasises that the previously disadvantaged African languages must be introduced as languages of learning and teaching in all grades and as a subject in all South African schools.

The question thus arises as to how teacher education is preparing student teachers to function in linguistically diverse classrooms. Research has shown that there are large gaps between the ideals expressed in the language policies and the reality of what is going on in school classrooms (Makoe and McKinney 2014; Sibanda 2019). This is particularly the case where previously disadvantaged African languages have continued to be marginalised in teaching and learning (Molate and Tyler 2020). It has therefore become imperative to ensure that teacher education programmes can produce teachers who possess communicative competence to work in schools that accommodate learners who have different home languages.

Against this background, I (the first author) developed a module aimed at promoting communicative competence in isiXhosa in my Bachelor of Education students. The module was intended as an intervention to improve the isiXhosa confidence and competence of these preservice teachers, thereby addressing the gap between a policy that promotes multilingualism and the limitations in practice of implementing such a policy. This article reports on these preservice teachers' experiences on how they use isiXhosa to promote learning and teaching in schools, and their perceptions of the value of the module. The research questions guiding this study were:

• How do preservice teachers in a Bachelor of Education programme perceive the effectiveness and value of a module designed to enhance their communicative competence in isiXhosa?; and
• How do preservice teachers apply their improved isiXhosa skills in promoting learning and teaching in multilingual school settings?

Literature review and theoretical framework
In South Africa, the use of indigenous South African languages in education has been a sensitive issue for many years, as the country has always given preference to only English and Afrikaans. Promoting multilingualism will mean that the previously disadvantaged indigenous languages will have to enjoy parity with English and Afrikaans. However, there has been a glaring gap in promoting previously disadvantaged African languages such as isiXhosa, Sesotho, Tshivenda and isiZulu, and these languages still lag behind in formal discourse, not to mention as languages of instruction in schools and higher education.

This issue can be considered from political, sociological and historical angles, but for the purposes of this article we focus on the pedagogy of additional language teaching, specifically where a particular language (in this case isiXhosa) is positioned as less important than the current dominant languages of instruction.

McKinney (2017: 80) argues that the so-called 'elite' schools have maintained the stance of Anglo-normative ideas, where there is an 'expectation that people will be and should be proficient in English, and are deficient, even deviant if they are not'. This occurs even though research has shown that the quality of teaching and communication in classrooms declines when there is a lack of understanding between learners and teachers when they do not share the same language; therefore, knowledge construction is also affected (Bourne 2001; Makoe and McKenny 2009; Nomlomo 2010; Mayaba 2017). Research has also indicated that teachers who have African language learners in multilingual classrooms have expressed concerns about the lack of training in dealing with the realities of linguistically diverse classrooms (Plüddemann et al. 2010). Therefore, we argue that if Afrikaans and English preservice teachers are taught isiXhosa in the four years of their Bachelor of Education programme, it will place them in a better position to improve learning processes in classrooms where there is a diversity of languages.

Moreover, it is important to acknowledge that multilingualism is already present in different South African schools, but still has to be legitimised (Guzula et al. 2016) and accepted as a norm, and more

effective pedagogical approaches have to be found. For example, the recent works of Dowling and Krause (2019), Krause and Prinsloo (2016) and Krause-Alzaidi (2022) shed light on the phenomenon of 'Khayelitshen' languaging, where learners and teachers have different ways of utilising language(s) in the learning processes and these languages are influenced by their environments.

The study reported in this article drew on research on communicative competence (Bagaric and Djigunovic 2007; Mart 2018), language integration (Harrop 2012) and pedagogical approaches to language acquisition and multilingualism. Drawing on the work of Canale and Swain (1980) and Xeketwana (2021), a model of communicative competence serves as a useful framework to equip those who are involved in language learning with communicative skills. In building on the work of Canale and Swain (1980) and Bagaric and Djigunovic (2007), these are positioned as grammatical, sociolinguistics, strategic and discourse competencies.

To realise this, an isiXhosa module was developed to evoke the model of communicative competence espoused by Bagaric and Djigunovic (2007). Grammatical competencies were realised in the module, where there was teaching of linguistic codes such as nouns, verbs and adverbs. Sociolinguistic competence was also embedded in the module, where preservice teachers were introduced to language use in different social contexts. Strategic competence was implemented where knowledge of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies was used in the module. Discourse competence looked at the mastery of rules that regulate the ways in which forms of meanings are combined. These competences were realised in the module on different levels and themes.

The module was developed to cover different topics that encompass communicative competences. These topics covered language used when introducing oneself, or during accidents at school, at meetings with parents, in having conversations with learners about their home and what they like or dislike at home and, most importantly, at school. At times, there was a use of dialogues and decoding short paragraphs written in isiXhosa and writing descriptive texts which describe what might be happening in the classroom or at school. The pedagogical approaches were further used to highlight the importance of language integration.

The content and language integrated learning approach was instrumental in understanding the role of language proficiency, motivation and intercultural awareness in language learning (Harrop 2012). In this regard, the preservice teachers were expected to integrate isiXhosa in their teaching as a language of learning and teaching to enhance the learners' comprehension. Effectively, the language was then not used as an obstacle, but as a resource, in line with de Jong et al.'s (2016) argument that language as a resource is a powerful way to enhance linguistic awareness among the teachers and the learners. It also resonates with Potts and Moran's (2013) focus on the importance of allowing learners to bring their languages into the classroom as resources, where their diverse ways of knowing are used to enhance knowledge.

Our study also drew on the pedagogical approaches to language acquisition and in a multilingual South African context, where strategies such as code-switching as described by Maluleke (2019), Shahnaz (2015) and Sultana and Gulzar (2010), translation strategies as postulated by Valdeón García (1995), and translanguaging which has recently gain attention from scholars such as García and Wei (2014), Guzula et al. (2016), Krause and Prinsloo (2016) and Makalela (2015; 2016) are viewed as integral in linguistically diverse classrooms. These strategies were used in the isiXhosa module to allow preservice teachers not to be afraid to use the language among themselves and with the learners in schools. Briefly, on the teaching strategies, code-switching is realised when two bilingual people use two languages to exchange communication or make meaning (Sultana et al. 2010). Maluleke (2019: 2) succinctly explains that code-switching occurs as a 'communicative practice where the speaker skilfully switches from one language to another without disturbing the flow of ideas'.

The second strategy in the module was translation, which is viewed as advancement over the acquisition of linguistic structures or vocabulary (Valdeón García 1995). In his research, Valdeón García (1995) aimed to see how translation strategies can help both the educator and the learner in the teaching and learning processes. Finally, a third strategy was translanguaging, which is seen by García and Wei (2014) and Hornberger and Link (2012) as a strategy for bilingual, linguistically

diverse and minority language classrooms to cope and work with different languages. García and Wei (2014) further argue that translanguaging in bilingual and multilingual classrooms aims to make learning possible where learners' English proficiency is low, and teachers serve as facilitators in class. Therefore, translanguaging as a multilingual pedagogical strategy positions learners at an advantage and helps them to comprehend better.

Sociocultural theory (SCT) (Vygotsky 1978) offered a theoretical framing for the module, as the preservice teachers worked in social settings, namely a classroom, where they used knowledge drawn from the isiXhosa module. A further reason for using sociocultural theory was that it can be viewed in collaboration with communicative competence on which the module design of isiXhosa was based. Furthermore, SCT champions language acquisition as a pragmatic process that requires taking part in socially mediated contexts (Turuk 2008). As a theoretical framework, SCT was therefore juxtaposed with the literature on communicative competence to unpack the data sets of this study.

Methodology

The study employed design-based research (Herrington et al. 2007; Herrington et al. 2010; Ozverir et al. 2016) as the methodology. This approach was deemed appropriate as it is based on intervening in a situation to find solutions to an identified problem, in this case the poor communicative competence of English- and Afrikaans-speaking student teachers in isiXhosa.

Briefly, design-based research (DBR) is used to intersect educational research with the real issues of the world through iteration cycles that are employed to refine an innovation and are based on the developed design principles[i] that guide the research process (Herrington et al. 2010). This is summarised in Figure 1 below, which illustrates the four phases of DBR that were followed and applied in this study. These phases are: (i) the analysis and refinement of the problem; (ii) development of solutions; (iii) implementation of interventions; and (iv) reflection to refine the design principles. These are the stages that we followed in this study to intervene and solve the highlighted problems with isiXhosa communicative competence.

Research site

The research site for the study was the Faculty of Education at one of the universities in the Western Cape province in South Africa. The second site for observations were different schools in the Western Cape, where preservice teachers were placed for teaching practice. All of these were public schools and most of them were so-called ex-Model C[ii] and former 'Coloured' schools.

Sample

Data were collected from the participants over a period of two years in 2018 and 2019 through questionnaires, classroom observations and focus group discussions. The students in the study
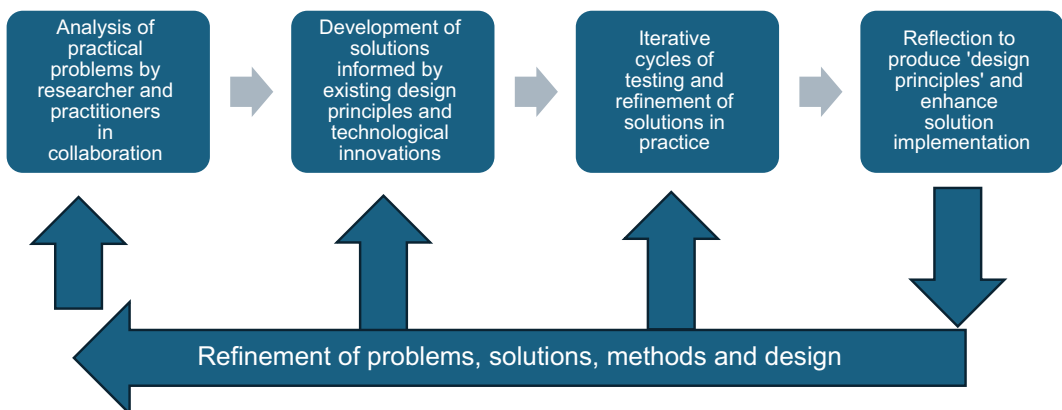
Figure 1: The four phases of DBR (Reeves 2006: 59)

were all third- and fourth-year Bachelor of Education Foundation Phase preservice teachers enrolled in isiXhosa Education 384 and 484 in the Faculty of Education. These preservice teachers were between the ages of 20 and 24 at the time of the study. Out of the 20 preservice teachers, six were English mother-tongue speakers and 14 were Afrikaans mother-tongue speakers. All of them were female participants, because there were no male students registered for the Foundation Phase programme. Using the former racial categorisations of South Africa, 17 were white and three Coloured. The first iterative cycle and implementation was done with the 384 and 484 Foundation Phase preservice teachers in 2018. In this year, there were six isiXhosa Education 484 students who were in their exit year (these students did not repeat the iteration cycle, but gave feedback) and 14 isiXhosa Education 384 students who were in their third year and were part of the second cycle in 2019.

The aim of the module was to equip the preservice teachers with isiXhosa for communicative competence. This module was taught over 14 weeks in 2018 and again in 2019 after refining and adding some of the principles which exposed preservice teachers to isiXhosa vocabulary. The teaching and learning of the module employed an interactive approach. A social space was designed where students were encouraged to learn from each other through the activities done in the classroom as well as outside (Lantolf et al. 2015; Mayaba 2015; 2016; 2017). With continuous reflection from researchers, the design principles were adapted and modified to improve teaching and effectively enhance theory.

Data gathering and analysis
Data capturing included a pre-module questionnaire, sent to the preservice teachers in the early part of 2018, in which they had to state their level of isiXhosa for communicative purposes and their expectations of the isiXhosa education module. This module was designed specifically for this study, and to assist the preservice teachers. To elicit the answers from the questionnaire, a class discussion was held, which helped to inform the teaching and learning in the module. The second set of data consisted of observations of teaching in the classroom to measure the growth of preservice teachers' communicative competence when interacting in linguistically diverse classrooms. Using Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) observation checklist, a number of elements were generated and observed. The checklist was created to observe the confidence of preservice teachers in speaking isiXhosa and the moments of isiXhosa usage in the classrooms. In these observations, fieldnotes were classified as per their communicative competence, language integration in multilingual classrooms and the use of strategies developed from isiXhosa modules. Fieldnotes were taken and consolidated after each observation to ensure that all the observed information was recorded accurately and succinctly.

A third set of data entailed focus group discussions of about three to four students each after their teaching practice. Here they shared their experiences in the module and during teaching practice, and reflected on the prospects for the module.

An analysis of the questionnaire in the first iteration was done by reading the responses. The responses were later transferred to a spreadsheet for further analysis. Analysis of the data was done for the following reasons: to understand the ability of the participants as students in the module in terms of their isiXhosa competence; to gauge which pedagogical approaches would be used in the module and at what level such approaches should begin; and finally, to identify areas for improving teaching and learning in the classroom. The observations and focus group discussions were thematically analysed (Vaismoradi et al. 2013). The final stage of analysis was intended to identify dominant themes from each of the data sets.

Data presentation
Questionnaire
The answers to the questionnaire by the preservice teachers were important because they guided the researchers on students' needs, and provided insights into appropriate pedagogical approaches to teaching isiXhosa for communicative purposes, and to prepare preservice teachers for linguistically diverse classrooms. In their answers, the preservice teachers stated that they wanted to learn isiXhosa so that they can utilise the language when they go to teach in different schools and

where there will be isiXhosa learners. The preservice teachers also shared their expectations of the module. This was deemed important as it revealed students' needs when learning the language for communicative competence purposes (Savignon 2001). Furthermore, an important aspect of DBR is to understand the problem to be investigated (Herrington et al. 2010; Ozverir et al. 2016).

The first question was designed to ask preservice teachers about their isiXhosa competence. This was done to help the lecturer to design the module at an appropriate level for all the students. Preservice teachers who were enrolled in the third year of the Bachelor of Education programme indicated their competences as exhibited in Table 1. Interestingly, none of the preservice teachers felt that they were 'excellent' or 'very good'.

How would you rate your level of isiXhosa competence?
The fourth-year students, who were doing isiXhosa Education 484, showed similar results, with the majority (87.5%) indicating that their competence was poor and 12.5% saying that their communicative competence was good. This was important to note because these students had been registered for isiXhosa from their first year of university, and in their third and fourth year they still struggled to have a conversation in isiXhosa. This evidence confirmed that the preservice teachers would have to learn isiXhosa for communicative purposes as a tool to support isiXhosa-speaking learners in schools. For them to be able to provide such support, they had to be immersed in isiXhosa for communicative purposes.

A range of questions were asked in isiXhosa to test the preservice teachers' comprehension. The answers indicated that their communicative competence was not good. Two of these questions were: *Uyasithetha isiXhosa?* (Do you speak isiXhosa?); and *Zeziphi izakhono zesiXhosa ofuna ukuzikhulisa?* (Which skills of isiXhosa do you want to develop?). A variety of answers was noted from students, as indicated below.

Uyasithetha isiXhosa? (Do you speak isiXhosa?)
Out of 20 students who answered the questionnaires, either in isiXhosa, English or Afrikaans, five said they were not able to speak isiXhosa at all. On the other hand, 15 students indicated that they were able to speak a little isiXhosa, which was indicated by phrases such as *Ndiyakwazi ukuthetha encinci* (I am able to speak a little), *Ndithetha isiXhosa encinci* (I speak isiXhosa a little bit) and *kancinci* (A little bit). In their isiXhosa writing, some errors were found, where there was a mixing of adjectives and adverbs, for example where they wrote *encinci* instead of *kancinci*, which would be the correct form.

Which skills of isiXhosa do you want to develop?
Students were given a multiple-choice question from which to choose which skills they wanted to develop in the module. They had to choose either speaking, writing, reading, listening, or all of these skills. The majority of the answers indicated that the students would like to develop all the language skills offered. Looking at both years, only 11.1% of the students indicated that they would like to develop their speaking only.

Table 1: Third-year students' perception of their own competence in isiXhosa

Multiple choices	isiXhosa Education 384	isiXhosa Education 484
Excellent	0	0
Very good	0	0
Good	22.1%	12.5%
Poor	72.2%	87.5%
Very poor	5.6%	

From the answers, it was clear that there was a strong need from the preservice teachers to enhance all their language skills. Savignon (2001) explains that these language skills need to be identified as a place for the facilitator to start and for students to realise that the language they are learning is what is required to communicate and to use for teaching and learning purposes, if necessary. This need had to be addressed pedagogically in the module and followed through when preservice teachers went for their teaching practice. Furthermore, the teaching and learning of the module had to be approached in such a way that students would cover all the skills of language learning. However, communicative competence (speaking and listening skills) was particularly emphasised, because that is what is needed in the classrooms.

How do you plan to use the skills gained from the module?
Most students indicated that they would use the skills to communicate with learners, or use isiXhosa when teaching in classroom with isiXhosa learners. This justifies the communicative competence approach as espoused by Bagaric and Djigunovic (2007) and Mart (2018). One of the preservice teachers commented; '*In order to help my learners and boost their confidence; to make isiXhosa-speaking learners value their language*' (Participant 2018).

All the answers pointed to the fact that the preservice teachers wanted to acquire the skills so that they can assist their learners when they start teaching. This could be achieved if the communicative competence was at a better level when the preservice teachers arrived at schools.

Four students indicated that they would like to use the skills in the classroom and also to reach a wider population of isiXhosa speakers, such as parents and colleagues. This information was incorporated into the module, especially in the part where the students were given scenarios and dialogues about parent and teacher meetings. This approach indicated that preservice teachers' learning of isiXhosa had the potential to sensitise them to gain better intercultural awareness and respect for other cultures (Harrop 2012; Maseko and Kaschula 2009).

How will the skills benefit you and your profession?
In reply to this question, all the students answered that they would like to use isiXhosa in their profession to help the learners, and to be approachable. The majority said that the learners' school experiences will be pleasurable if they are able to communicate with the learners in isiXhosa. They will assist those learners who struggle with English to make meaning of the learning process in their mother tongue (isiXhosa). Some of the students replied as follows:

> *It benefits me because there are many isiXhosa learners in SA that can't understand English or Afrikaans, but are in one of the Eng/Afr schools. Thus, I can communicate with them as well as be able to teach others isiXhosa* (Participant 2018).

> *It will empower me to make a change in my classroom as well as motivating colleagues to realise the importance of isiXhosa. These skills will enable me to communicate with learners as well as parents and will ensure that I can reach diverse learners* (Participant 2018).

> *It will allow me to create a relationship and understanding with any isiXhosa learners, parents or colleagues I may encounter* (Participant 2018).

These answers show that they are aware of and attentive to the realities of the country. Therefore, it could be concluded that preservice teachers would not bring negative attitudes to the module, but would be willing to learn and improve their communicative competences as much as they could.

What do you hope to do differently when you complete the course?
On the one hand, this question made the preservice teachers think about what they were about to embark on and what the results would be. The information gathered further assisted in planning and teaching the module as it provided information about what the students hoped to achieve at the end of it. As alluded to above, it was important that students in isiXhosa Education 384/484 shared their

hopes and dreams about the module for which they were registering. The students gave a number of answers, most of which were similar in one way or another and thus were clustered together under one quote: '*To be enriched by isiXhosa as a language as well as the importance of the culture and to use it to communicate with people and show my respect*' (Participant 2018).

In this answer, it is important to recognise that the preservice teachers realised that using a language goes hand-in-hand with the culture of the speakers of the language. It furthers the sentiments that when students are learning a language, they need to learn it in such a way that will later demonstrate a deep-seated respect for the other culture.

The last clause of the preservice teachers' answer centres on the issue of respect for culture. It is vital for the preservice teachers be attentive to different cultures if they are to be immersed in diverse classrooms. Likewise, the idea of teaching a language for communicative purposes and for vocational use where culture needs to be recognised has been well documented (Maseko and Kaschula 2009; Harrop 2012).

The students also gave answers about their communicative competence: '*Have more regular isiXhosa conversations with Xhosa people. Speak the language more every day*' (Participant 2018). This answer indicated that the preservice teachers wished to utilise isiXhosa in authentic environments. DBR also advocates that students be prepared for authentic contexts (Herrington et al. 2010). Authenticity and communicative competence go hand-in-hand, and it is important to note that language does not occur in a vacuum or in isolation from the authentic speakers of that particular language.

Furthermore, the preservice teachers noted that they would like to have confidence when they speak isiXhosa, which was seen as a way to assist the learners in the classrooms to learn new languages. One of the students stated the following:

> *I hope to be able to have the confidence to speak to isiXhosa speakers in their mother tongue and with that give the learners I teach the confidence to speak a new language and not be embarrassed about making a mistake* (Participant 2018).

The answer emphasised the importance of learning the language and teaching it with confidence. This highlighted the need to prepare the students and to boost their confidence. Both Harrop (2012) and Kese (2012) point out the need to increase the motivation of the students when they are learning a language, since motivation leads to student confidence. Furthermore, this motivation can be regarded as a shift in the power balance as the preservice teachers will make themselves vulnerable to the learners.

Since this was a DBR study, the answers to the questionnaire enlightened us on how to formulate solutions for the identified problems to inform the intervention, starting with the isiXhosa module. The preservice teachers were enabled to interact with isiXhosa learners and, in that, to assist preservice teachers to learn vocabulary and express themselves in the form of dialogues and other forms of oral expression. This was realised during the observations of the preservice teachers in practice.

Observations
All the schools where the preservice teachers were observed were either ex-Model C or former 'Coloured' schools in different cities of the Western Cape. These are the schools that keep maintaining English and/or Afrikaans as the languages of teaching, and at times learners are not allowed to use other language resources for learning purposes (Makoe and McKinney 2014).

When observed, the preservice teachers showed different degrees of confidence, with some displaying low confidence and speaking less, and some engaging with learners in different languages, including isiXhosa. In both iteration cycles, these varying exhibitions of confidence were identified.

Communicative competence
The preservice teachers showed a range of communicative competencies when presenting their lessons. Some articulated isiXhosa words with an intelligible pronunciation and comprehension of the grammar rules. The preservice teachers utilised sentences such as the following:

- *Mamela* (Listen);
- *Sukuthetha mfundi* (Do not speak, learner);
- *Hlalani phantsi* (Sit down);
- *Phakamisa isandla* (Put up your hand);
- *Phakama* (Stand); and
- *Iza phambili* (Come forward [to the front] during the entire lesson)
  (Observations and fieldnotes 2018; 2019).

This indicates that the teachers' communicative competencies were employed. It is also important to note the use of the commands from the preservice teachers, where the learners might have perceived isiXhosa as a language to reprimand or instruct rather than teach.

Nevertheless, affectionate language was also used during the lesson, where some of the preservice teacher used phrases such as the following:

- *Iza bhuti* (Come, brother); and
- *Thula sisi* (Be quiet, sister) (Observations and fieldnotes 2018; 2019).

From the observations indicated here, we realised that the insights of communicative competence as underscored by Mart (2018) and Savignon (2001; 2018) were alive in these lessons, and the preservice teachers held the space with the clear goal of seeing learners gain some knowledge from their lessons. This was noteworthy as teachers dedicated some time to isiXhosa in the classrooms as a communication and meaning-making tool. In these lessons, strategies such as translanguaging as highlighted by Dowling and Krause (2019), Guzula et al. (2016), Krause and Prinsloo (2016), Probyn (2017; 2019) and Wang and Wang (2016) for teaching in multilingual classrooms were realised. Emphasis was on the importance of allowing heteroglossic practices in teaching and learning processes. Krause-Alzaidi (2022) recently called these strategies non-normative ways of language use.

However, not all the preservice teachers showed these communicative competencies. Some were quite nervous and not as articulate as the ones mentioned above. Out of the 20 preservice teachers observed, three showed nervousness during their lessons. Some preservice teachers just used one word translated from isiXhosa, for example when teaching different modes of transport in English and isiXhosa:

- *Inqwelo-ntaka* (helicopter);
- *Ibhaysikile* (bicycle);
- *Inqwelo-moya* (airplane);
- *Isikhephe* (boat);
- *Isigadla* (truck);
- *Imoto* (car);
- *Ibhasi* (bus);
- *Isithuthuthu* (motorbike); and
- *Uloliwe* (train) (Observations and fieldnotes 2018; 2019).

From these observations, it was also deduced that the teachers were not confident enough in their lessons and as a result their communicative competencies were not used maximally. It is noteworthy that two of these preservice teachers were in their final year of the Bachelor of Education programme. It is apparent that even those who were not confident made some use of isiXhosa in their classrooms.

Language integration
Observation of the preservice teachers revealed that many used varied and skilful ways of integrating isiXhosa in their lessons. The majority managed to integrate isiXhosa either through translations, or where English and isiXhosa texts were put on the board together. The picture (see Figure 2) is an example of how a teacher used isiXhosa to mitigate difficult learning practices. As shown in this
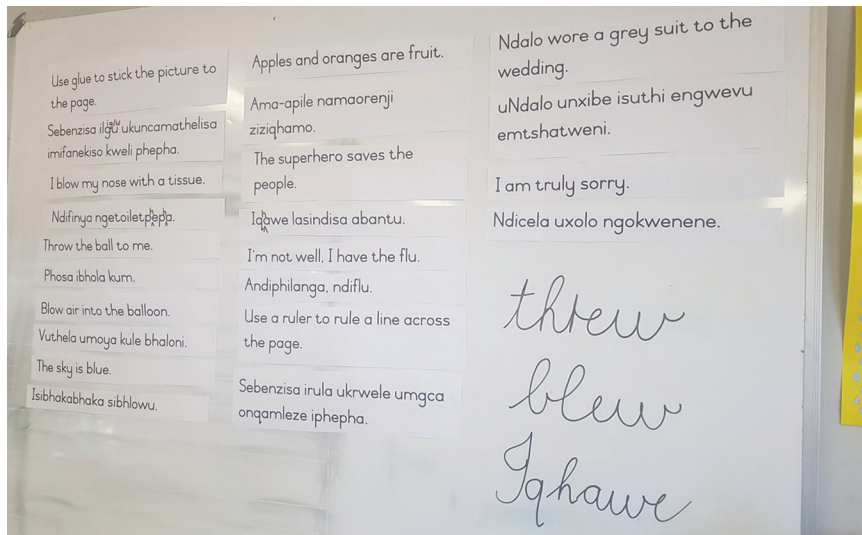
Figure 2: Example of language integration

picture, the preservice teacher translated each sentence from English to isiXhosa. It is important to note that the preservice teacher was placed in the Intermediate Phase (Grade 4–6) for her teaching practice. It is significant because the language in the higher grades becomes complex, and the preservice teacher rose to the challenge.

Furthermore, the preservice teachers utilised phrases in three languages (see below: isiXhosa, English in brackets, followed by Afrikaans). The sentences below are examples of this approach:

- *Phosa ibhola* (Throw the ball) *Gooi die bal*.
- *Thatha ibhola kwisikhwama* (Take the ball from the bag) *Haal die bal uit die sak*.
- *Phosa ibhola kwibhakethi* (Throw the ball into the bucket) *Gooi die bal in die emmer* (Observations and fieldnotes 2018; 2019).

The examples provided above represent a well-articulated linguistic flexibility by the learners guided by the teacher(s), as they asked questions and gave sentences in three languages as resources for the learners. This is a further demonstration of legitimising languages in the classrooms as resource-making tools, rather than a hindrance.

The preservice teachers and learners benefited in the classrooms, and thus the learning was seen as a two-way process between the former and latter. Language was not an obstacle, but was integrated in such a way that the learning process was flexible (Harrop 2012). The learners' utilisation of linguistic resources from their background to make meaning was the main priority of the preservice teachers. In this process, teachers used vocabulary and phrases acquired from the isiXhosa module.

Strategies acquired from the isiXhosa module
In the observation, the researchers were also interested to see whether the preservice teachers were able to utilise the strategies and skills acquired from the isiXhosa module. The preservice teachers' modelling of strategies such as songs, rhymes and other pedagogical approaches were developed for vocabulary. Below, two songs and one rhyme are quoted.

- *Khanikhandele ezo ntakana?* (Won't you look at those small birds?)
- *Intloko, amagxa, amadolo, neenzwane* (Head, shoulders, knees and toes)
- *Umvundlana othile* (a certain rabbit) (Observations and fieldnotes 2018; 2019).

These were also sung in the lesson to get students ready for the lesson about body parts. In this activity, we could see the emergence of authentic learning where theory and practice intersect (see Herrington 1997; Herrington and Herrington 2006; Herrington et al. 2013). There was a clear intention from the preservice teachers to push themselves beyond what they had learnt from the isiXhosa module. This point was crystalised in the focus group discussions when students came back from teaching practice.

Focus group
When the students returned from teaching practice in each iteration cycle, they were invited to focus group discussions lasting 30 to 60 minutes. Broadly, preservice teachers had to share their experiences of teaching practice. They shared their perceptions about the isiXhosa module, commented on their communicative competence in isiXhosa, and their ability (or lack thereof) to function in linguistically diverse classrooms. They were also specifically asked to gauge their communicative competences as they used isiXhosa in their classrooms.

When asked about whether their communicative competency had improved, the students expressed their gratitude about the isiXhosa module which they viewed as something that helped them to work with isiXhosa learners in schools. The following extracts were some of the positive answers from the students:

> *I think that in the beginning of the year I was very worried because I knew that my Xhosa…I hadn't been practising during the holiday, so I was worried that I would have forgotten everything. But I remembered a lot more than I thought, which was great. But I've definitely grown since the beginning of the year. I've learnt a lot more. I'm much more comfortable. Sometimes when I'm doing other things, I find myself thinking in isiXhosa. Not very well, but sometimes*.

> *Yes, there has been. I think also and the confidence to speak it*.

All 20 preservice teachers gave positive answers and indicated that their communicative competencies had grown during teaching practice. In their answers, they also confirmed the effectiveness of the module. In this, the preservice teachers were equipped with knowledge about language for them to function in social contexts (Bagaric and Djigunovic 2007). Furthermore, they again were able to function in the authentic environments as espoused by Herrington and Herrington (2006) and Ozverir et al. (2016).

Discussion
The data presented and discussed in this study contributes towards understanding strategies for developing communicative competence in isiXhosa for English- and Afrikaans-speaking preservice teachers. Through observations, it was found that the preservice teachers' communicative competencies were present in the classrooms, where they assisted learners who are isiXhosa speakers.

Looking back at the research questions, it is evident that the preservice teachers valued the module and that, despite initial anxieties, they were able to apply their improved isiXhosa skills in promoting learning and teaching in their classrooms. The data shows that the preservice teachers showed a range of communicative competencies when presenting the lessons, including grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competencies. They showed understanding of vocabulary and language conventions (grammatical) and were able to use the social rules of language such as formalities and directness (sociolinguistic). Furthermore, with regard to language integration, the preservice teachers showed techniques to overcome language gaps, and plan and assess the effectiveness of communication (strategic and discourse). These competencies were taught in the module and realised in practice when the preservice teachers were working with the learners in different schools.

However, as much as the data indicate these successes where preservice teachers demonstrated their knowledge of isiXhosa skills, there were also challenges. It is important to note that at times not

all the communicative competencies were present. This means that the preservice teachers made some errors in their pronunciation, and sometimes did not understand grammatical rules. These outcomes were realised through different iterative cycles of the research.

Design-based research is intended to render tangible outcomes. These include the development of a product or artefact (in this case, a module), design principles and societal outcomes that show the benefits of the study to the broader society. We show how each of these outcomes was manifested through the research.

The product developed (an isiXhosa module for communicative purposes in teacher education) highlighted examples of approaches to teaching and learning that can help solve the identified problem (Herrington et al. 2007; 2010). The isiXhosa module was designed as an artefact to help solve the problem identified among the Bachelor of Education Foundation Phase preservice teachers, which was communicative competence and the ability to function in linguistically diverse classrooms.

Design-based research aims to develop a set of principles which can be extracted from the data, and which can help in the addressing of similar problems in other contexts. According to Herrington et al. (2007), there is value in developing design principles as they are continuously implemented and refined to inform interventions. Arising from the data on students' implementation and experiences of the module, several principles for the teaching of isiXhosa to preservice teachers can be distilled. These are discussed below.

Principles for the teaching of isiXhosa to preservice teachers
Enable preservice teachers to interact with isiXhosa-speaking learners
This principle was shown to add value in the teaching of isiXhosa to English- and Afrikaans-speaking preservice teachers who were not confident in using isiXhosa for communicative purposes. Furthermore, the principle allowed the preservice teachers to interact with isiXhosa-speaking learners during their teaching practice. Finally, this principle informed the intervention, where the preservice teachers were presented with authentic contexts where they could speak isiXhosa with speakers of isiXhosa, effectively enhancing preservice teachers' communicative competencies, which is supported by the sociocultural theory for social learning as outlined by Lantolf (2000) and Lantolf et al. (2015). In this context, these scholars view sociocultural theory as socially recognised in learning the language, meaning that for people to learn a language there has to be interaction.

Equip preservice teachers to work with multilingual learners in schools, prepare preservice teachers for multilingual contexts/linguistically diverse classrooms and increase preservice teachers' linguistic abilities
The second set of principles were clustered together because they were similar. These principles were developed with the understanding that the teachers are immersed in multilingual classrooms and thus it was prudent to prepare the preservice teachers for the realities of South African classrooms. The principles that informed the intervention with preservice teachers allowed isiXhosa-speaking learners to express themselves in their home language, a view supported by Guzula et al. (2016). This is where the preservice teachers were encouraged to be receptive to the teaching strategies such as translanguaging, effectively creating beneficial spaces for the learning and teaching of learners from different linguistic backgrounds. Finally, there were notable outcomes based on these principles, where students' confidence increased with regard to their communicative competencies and teaching in multilingual classrooms. A pedagogical approach was developed to use language integration in classes to accommodate the different languages.

Finally, as a societal outcome of DBR, there was a development of these teachers as professionals who embodied communicative competence and confidence in working in multilingual settings. The preservice teachers, in return, benefited learners in schools where they conducted their teaching practice. Anderson and Shattuck (2012) posit that there is often a need to challenge and engage participants to think of some research results that have the potential to make a difference in their educational practices. Over and above ensuring that the preservice teachers were able to function in linguistically diverse classrooms, the other notable societal outcome was the potential to work with learners and effectively contribute to the implementation of IIAL (Department of Education 2014) and the education fraternity at large.

A notable strand is how the data connects to sociocultural theory as espoused by Duff (2007) and Lantolf (2000). This occurs in communities where people progress through taking part in different linguistic, cultural and historically formed settings such as the places of work, family, social gatherings and institutional contexts like tertiary and basic schooling (Lantolf et al. 2015; Mayaba 2016). The data presented here attests to the development of these preservice teachers in an authentic context of being placed in a situation of having to teach learners from different language backgrounds.

Conclusion and recommendations

The findings of this study offer insights into how Foundation Phase preservice teachers can be prepared for teaching isiXhosa-speaking learners in linguistically diverse classrooms. More broadly, the study illustrates how education students can be equipped to navigate multilingual classrooms, to ensure that knowledge and learning processes are enhanced. We argue that intentionality when training teachers must put emphasis on the rich linguistic repertoires that South African learners bring to classrooms every day. Additionally, the training of the teachers can bring prominence to the intersection between policy, research and practice where scholars find synergies on how these phenomena can connect. Based on the findings in this study, it is recommended that further research on teacher preparation for multilingual competence be moved from the periphery to the centre of the Bachelor of Education degree programme. This is important because the South African classrooms are increasingly becoming multilingual. Furthermore, it is recommended that the preservice teachers be immersed in communities where there is a predominance of African languages such as isiXhosa to enable them to learn the languages faster and in authentic contexts.

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Endnotes

[i] The principles are a crucial aspect of a DBR study. These principles are developed through iterative cycles and modified to improve the intervention (Herrington et al. 2010). In this study, the collaborations between the stakeholders, the preservice teacher, and the researcher and literature search were used to develop the design principles. The point of this current study was to share some of the design principles and the journey of developing the isiXhosa module to improve the communicative competences of the preservice teachers. Due to the limited space, more design principles are explained and presented in a separate publication.

[ii] These schools, which were formerly reserved for whites only by the apartheid government, enjoyed more economic, departmental and political support than the other schools where the black majority of South Africans were taught. The South African school system was racially divided until 1994, after which a single national system was established 'based on constitutional principles of equality and non-discrimination' (Christie and McKinney 2017: 2).

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