Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT)

...in multilingual classrooms

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Status quo: Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT)

• For most learners English is the LoLT (> 90% after Grade 3)
• For most it is not a first language (>90%)
• Most don’t have the necessary proficiency to use it as the single medium for learning by Grd 4 .... in any grade?
• Most learners can’t read for meaning in English in Grd 4
  ... or even in their own language!
The necessary proficiency?

Social proficiency in a language (BICS) vs Academic proficiency (CALP)

...ability to use language to engage with new concepts at each level (G1 – G12)
Choice of medium (LoLT)… English or MT/HL?

1) An effective tool for learning (best?)
2) Fair to all
3) Promotes social cohesion
4) Supports learners’ sense of self worth

*Four imperatives*

*Impossible if only one language medium !!*
English or HL?

Can we go back to separate language groups?

Neither English-only nor HL-only can give us what we need for a multilingual society.

The question should be:

• *How can we use more than one medium to achieve all 4 imperatives?*
To achieve all four imperatives

• We need a **common language (CL)** for learners to be able to learn together in multilingual classrooms and
  
  ... every leaner to be able to use his/her own language alongside the **CL**

• We need ... a primary LoLT plus a secondary LoLT
  ... **TWO working languages**

*We have to move away from thinking in terms of a single medium (LoLT)*
A multi-bilingual option

Every learner uses a *common language* but can use his/her own HL alongside it *in a number of ways* to make best use of both languages and to develop both languages in the process *from Grades R to 12* *while the teacher uses* the *common language only*
Multi-bilingual teaching techniques

Use

😊 **Learner-talk** in HL... interaction between pairs of same-language learners *on set TASKS*

😊 **Learner-talk** in English... interaction with teacher and other learners

😊 **Learner-reading** in both languages ...

   with a core of bilingual materials for all subjects

😊 **Home/community** help in HL
M-bilingual learner-talk in a class of 40

• Can use up to 20 languages in the same time as using only one

... for quick peer-group interaction

... for the central task of the lesson
What needs to be done first?

1) Create a new language mindset that
   ... sees every learner’s language as a valuable resource
   ... sees more than one language for learning as empowering... an advantage
   ... sees the school as a multilingual, multicultural space for learning
A multilingual, multicultural space for learning

Can we think of an English-medium school becoming an English-based multilingual school

...that uses multi-bilingual methods when working on the key tasks of each lesson

...and teaches learners to value their own languages?
How to *create* a new language mindset in a school?

School Principal *must* take the lead:

• *to inspire* all
• *to involve* SMT to share the lead
• *to involve all teachers* in a team effort
• *to involve parents & community* to get support from the ground
What needs to be done?

First 3 things:

1) Create a new *multilingual* mindset in the school
2) Develop a plan to implement
3) Give teachers multi-bilingual techniques & update their methodologies
Practical techniques programme for teachers

Run by NAPTOSA for all teachers

6 x afternoon workshops

4 x per year

On Wits Univ campus

Or in-school by special arrangement

(linked to post-grad degrees)
Teachers…can start using multi-bilingual methods even before techniques training

• Get to know your class language profile
  
  *class lists to show home languages*

• Arrange your classroom
  
  to make same-language pair-work possible

• Encourage use of own languages for central tasks
  
  … in same-language pairs… NOT groups
  
  … for very short times at first

• Start cutting down on teacher-talk
  
  for more learner-talk & teacher-learner interaction
But won’t English suffer… if use another language as well?

• **English proficiency should improve if learners can relate English to their own language/s**

• **Multi-bilingual methods simply add an extra resource … to make it easier to learn all subjects**
But why choose English to be the Common Language?

… for multilingual classrooms in SA

- it has proved to be the most acceptable CL
- all need to learn English anyway
  for best after-school options in SA
- opens international links for all
- it does not belong to any single SA group

😊 English belongs to all who can use it

… you can make it a tool of your own
But what about \#DecoloniseEducation?

A language can’t “colonise your mind” unless you abandon your own language

… but reject a system that does not make space for you to use your own language as well
But what about monolingual communities?

- In *genuine* monolingual communities (e.g. in rural areas)
  ... Use the community language as the CL with English alongside ... across curriculum from Gr 1-12
  ... *learning to read in both languages and using bilingual methods from start*
But what about existing monolingual classrooms… in multilingual areas?

• E.g. Afrikaans-medium schools / institutions…
  Should we still have them
  … if social cohesion a national objective?
But won’t English as CL marginalise Afrikaans?

If Afrikaans speakers are included in multilingual classrooms with all other learners, they can “own” English as their CL ... AND still have at least 5 ways to use & develop Afrikaans:

1) ... as support-medium (bi-talk & bi-text)
2) ... as subject (HL)
3) ... in remedial groups / tutorial work with TAs
4) ... spoken & supported in home
5) ... supported by own cultural organisations
But why not parallel-medium?

Afrikaans speakers vs “the rest” (9 African-language groups + English + others) in the same old institutional structure (with its Afrikaner history)

Perceptions of “otherness” keep growing on both sides… still seen as an Afrikaner space to be defended or attacked
But if learners & parents choose Afrikaans as CL for a multilingual school?

An Afrikaans-based multilingual school all use Afrikaans + their HL

*via multi-bilingual methodology*

With 3 languages taught as academic subjects … Afrikaans, English, Own HL

*(more difficult to provide for the range of indigenous HLs, if Afrikaans has to be taught as a subject)*
But what do English-speaking learners do?

Multi-bilingual methodology requires them to

• *Talk-for-task* in English
• *Read-for-task* in two languages (with bi-text)
  English + FAL (e.g. isiZulu)

*Language & subject teachers collaborate*

so learners use same subject-text materials in both subject and language classes
From here ??

• All starts with Principal (with SMT) leading mindset change in own school…

• Followed by teachers using simple basic M-bilingual techniques in own classrooms

• Carried forward by collective pressure from Principals & teachers in District to push for …
  * teacher training in multi-bilingual techniques
  * core textbooks in bi-text through to Grd 12
  * District resources for good language-as-subject teaching in all indigenous languages
Own languages-as-subjects?

All *use* English-as-medium
   plus *own* HL-as-medium

All also *learn* 2 languages-as-subjects
   English plus own HL
   *(at an academic level)*

*plus a 3rd language-as-subject for social and practical communication*
Interim Introduction of African Languages as subjects (IIAL 2014)

Aims to get

- Learners to learn own indigenous languages as subjects
- Eng/Afrik learners to learn an indigenous language as a subject

...These are seriously important aims but

• necessary resources not being provided by govt
• a 3rd language at an academic level (FAL)???
• This policy does not address the more serious language-as-medium problem...
Own languages-as-subjects?

District “language clusters” to offer all 4 language families
- Nguni (4 groups taught together)
- Sotho (3 groups)
- Venda/Tsonga (2 groups)
- Afrikaans

... Multi-level teaching where academic & prac levels together

... extra-mural options where a wide range of languages

... 3 indigenous languages available in every school at academic & prac levels
The way ahead for the SMT?

1) Create a new multilingual mindset in the school
2) Develop a plan to implement it
3) Give teachers the M-bilingual techniques & updated methodologies
4) Get the M-bilingual resources needed
5) Provide language-as-subject teaching in own languages

4) Sustain your new approach via ongoing communication and feedback
Using a single-medium LoLT for a multilingual society...

- Grossly inefficient, grossly expensive and a social injustice for the majority!

- Senseless to keep ignoring the problem
  - Can’t wait for govt to take the lead
  - No policy change is necessary to use all our HLs as extra resources

- We can make a major difference to teaching and learning by using all HLs together with English
  ... in a systematic way that is anchored in multi-bilingual text