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What role does the language of instruction play for a successful education?

A case study of the impact of language choice in a Namibian school.

ABSTRACT

Namibia is a country where the official language has been English since independence in 1990. There are different national languages in the country and a majority of the people do not have English as a mother tongue. Nevertheless, the language of instruction from fourth grade and onwards is indeed English. Consequently, for the majority of the population the education is in their second language. What this essay explores is the role English as a second language has as a medium of instruction and the implications it may have. It is a minor field study that was carried out with the help of a scholarship from SIDA (Swedish Agency for International Development Cooperation) and it took place in a school in Northern Namibia, April and May 2007. It is a qualitative study that explores the use of English among teachers and students as well as the transition from mother tongue instruction to English instruction and the implications that this can have for the quality of education. The reality of the Namibian students that have to study and perform in a second language is questioned and discussed from pedagogical and linguistic points of view. The results show that most pupils do not speak English before starting fourth grade. Furthermore, the sudden transition from mother tongue to English instruction creates some descent in the participation of the pupils and possibly in the learning, not only of the new language but also of the content subjects. As far as the teachers concern, there are positive but ambiguous opinions among them concerning English as a medium of instruction.

Keywords: English, medium of instruction, language of instruction, education, mother tongue, second language, Namibia.

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1. INTRODUCTION

On the way towards Namibia's independence, during the 80s, the call for unity under one national flag started as a way to accelerate the process. When independence finally came in 1990, one of the political changes was the official language of the country. The language policy that was established had been under elaboration for years. The choice of language fell on English, and it became not only the official language but also the medium of education throughout the country even though the importance and equality of the national languages was emphasised (Ministry of Education and Culture (henceforth: MEC) 1991: 1-2).

Since 1992 English is supposed to take the role as the main medium of instruction from grades 4-7 in school (ibid: 5). From grade 1-3, children are supposed to be educated in their mother tongue as far as it is possible, but for different reasons sometimes it is not so and in those cases the medium of instruction is English starting from the first grade. In Namibia, 0.8% of the population has English as their first language or mother tongue (Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir 2001: 307). That is an extremely low percentage and it would mean that the approximately 99% that have another of the national languages have to study in a medium that is not their mother tongue. In Namibia the population has a large variety of mother tongues. There are about 13 recognized national languages and over 50 varieties of those languages. Most of them are indigenous African languages (Wolfaardt 2001: 20, 17).

It is not an uncommon phenomenon in African countries to use a European language as the medium of education and Namibia is not an exception. What is interesting about it is that it is a rather new country still developing. The decision about using English in school was made 17 years ago and raises questions about how it works today. There have been some thorough reorganizations in education but one issue that is very interesting is the fact that a vast majority of the children in Namibia are studying in their second language. What does this mean for the children, for their education and for the development of a nation?

This study will try to sort out some related questions. With the help of the theoretical background we will elucidate on some aspects of the issue of English as a medium of instruction. After some important definitions, a brief historical background will introduce us into the Namibian context.

1.1 Aim and research questions

This study intends to investigate the linguistic situation in a primary school in Namibia. It aims to shed light on the choice of language among teachers and pupils in that school, and to

study if the choice of language of instruction influences the performance and perhaps the pupils' comprehension in this school. The ultimate purpose is to find out, through the following research questions, how language choice can influence the quality of education.

- What relationship do the pupils have with the English language before starting school?
- How does the transfer from mother tongue instruction to English take place?
- What languages do teachers and students use in the classroom and during intervals; and what does this imply?
- Why do they choose one language rather than the other?

These questions will be answered through the results of interviews and observations and some national documents that will be analysed.

1.2 Definitions

Second language: According to Oxford English Dictionary (henceforth OED) a *second language* is “a language spoken in addition to one’s native language; the first foreign language one learns”. In Namibia it is a rule rather than an exception to know more languages than one’s mother tongue, and therefore an adjustment of the definition will be made according to Finegan (2004: 557): “any language that is acquired after one’s first language”.

Foreign language: In the definition above, a foreign language means a language that is not one’s mother tongue. However in terms of status in a country, a foreign language is a language that does not have the status of a national- or official language. In this study, foreign language will refer to any language that is not one’s mother tongue even if it has an official status, as is the case of English in Namibia.

Target language: “A foreign language which it is aimed to learn or acquire” (OED). In this study it is used in theoretical explanations, but also specifically when referring to the learning of the second language of the interviewees and the observees.

1.3 Historical background

As mentioned before, Namibia became an independent country in 1990. After decades of colonization under various intruders, the Namibian people held their first democratic election and the liberation movement the South-West Africa People’s Organization (henceforth SWAPO) won. Before that, native people in this South-West African area had been invaded and oppressed by the Germans and the white South-African administrations and powers since the late 19th century and forward (Norén 1995: 8-9). Being under South African government

implied the Apartheid politics that created a segregating educational system divided into three, one for Whites, one for Coloureds and one for Africans (Mbamba 1982: 77). After independence, a new educational reform was introduced that was supposed to embrace everyone rather than segregate and select, as the old school system had done until now (Wolfaardt 2001: 39).

The Namibian territory has always consisted of various ethnic groups with their different languages. The largest group is Oshiwambo since a majority of the population are Ovambos (the denomination of the ethnic group). The other indigenous language groups are Nama-Damara, Kavango, Caprivian, Herero and Kohisan (Britannica Online). Within those groups there are various dialects and variations (Wolfaardt 2001: 20). Among the European languages Afrikaans is the most spoken followed by English and German (Britannica Online). The Apartheid regime had used this to their benefit to divide the Africans and gain more power (Nationalencyklopedin [www] (henceforth NE)). So to overcome colonisation, national movements began to arise in the 1950s and call for national unity and a common ethnic identification in order to reach independence (Harlech-Jones, 2001: 108).

According to Harlech-Jones (2001: 109ff), there exists a generally extended view about what a modern nation is. There are undisputed requirements towards the image of a “nation-state” as he calls it. In the OED (2004) the term nation-state is defined as: “a sovereign state of which most of the citizens or subjects also share factors such as language or common descent”. Harlech-Jones (ibid) attributes more definitions to the term by giving examples of what he claims is the westernized model, representing modernisation and uniformity and the unconscious separation of what is considered old and new. In terms of language, it would explain why a high-status language such as English can play such an important role.

Hence, an official language was established together with the new beginning of the Namibian nation. As in many other African independent states, the choice of official language fell on English, and in MEC’s language policy for schools in Namibia (1991: 4-5) it is stated that it should be the language of instruction from the fourth grade of primary school.

A very interesting phenomenon is currently taking place in Namibia. The country is going from a politics of discriminative education, where the white minority had a high-standard education and the black majority had a second-rate education (NE), towards an equal system for all. Nevertheless, to the majority, English continues to be a second language, since only 0.8% of the total population speaks it as their mother tongue (Brock-Utne 2001: 307).

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

There has been some research in the Namibian educational context but even more in other African countries where English is the official language and medium of instruction. In this section, these studies will be presented to serve as a background for the analysis together with some theories on second language learning (see Section 2.2).

2.1 Language policy in Namibia

Namibia's struggle for liberation started in 1960 (Norén 1995: 9) and the United Nations has been intimately linked with it (United Nations for Namibia, henceforth UNIN (1981: 38). Among its various publications there is a very important document that is mentioned in all texts and research about Namibia. It is a language policy (UNIN 1981: 37-38) in which eight criteria are set for the choice of English as the official language. These criteria reflect the ideas of a "nation-state" and the idea about the future of the country (Harlech-Jones 2001: 117). The language to be chosen as the official one should be the one that could live up to most of the criteria, as illustrated in Table 1 below¹.

Table 1: *Criteria for the choice of official language*

<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. <u>Unity</u>: the language had to "neutralize any competitive or disruptive sociolinguistic [inequalities] (likely to emerge if one language were chosen from amongst others)" (UNIN 1981: 37)2. <u>Acceptability</u>: the language had to be "a language with positive rather than negative associations for the people" (ibid: 37). Afrikaans, for example, was at the time the main medium of instruction in Namibia (Wolfaardt 2001: 33) but was associated with the language of the colonisers.3. <u>Familiarity</u>: the country had to have some kind of familiarity with the language, preferably with some experience in education (UNIN 1981: 38).4. <u>Feasibility</u>: the implementation had to be considered feasible in terms of costs, efforts, available resources, etc.5. <u>Science and technology</u>: the language had to be a language of wide communication to facilitate training and research programmes inside and outside the country (ibid).6. <u>Pan Africanism</u>: a common language would facilitate the wish for pan-africanism since many African countries have chosen English as an official language when they have become independent. (UNIN 1981: 38). Pan Africanism refers to a "political union of all the indigenous inhabitants of Africa" (OED 2004).7. <u>Wider Communication</u>: internationalization (UNIN 1981: 38).8. <u>United Nations</u>: the struggle for independence was intimately linked with the United Nations (UN), so if no indigenous language would be the official language, it would be reasonable that the principal language of the UN would become the official one (ibid).

¹ Table 1 is a summary and a brief explanation of the meaning of the different criteria. It therefore contains references from more sources than UNIN 1981, which is the primary source.

In his article, Harlech-Jones (2001: 117) discusses the problematic issue that came with the implementation of English as the official language; this aspect will be reviewed in this section. Even if it is clearly expressed in UNIN's document that the local languages are equal and should be preserved, the writer claims that the important issues in the language policy were more about whether English or Afrikaans should be the official language, and less about the role of local languages in education or about multilingualism. Nevertheless, the languages that were examined as suitable for an official language were the indigenous languages, Afrikaans, German, French and English. The latter matched best with the eight criteria whereas others failed in one or more (UNIN 1981: 40). However, the quotation that follows speaks for itself as to the suitability of English as a medium of education:

the choice [of an official language] is never based on linguistic or aesthetic criteria, but always on political, economic and demographic ones (UNIN 1981: 38, in Quirk et al 1972: 3).

Moreover, the arguments given for mother tongue as medium of instruction in schools were more linked to the child and its needs, the individual and the local context, factors such as concept formation, cultural identity, closer relation between school and home and practical use after primary school. The arguments for English as a medium were however considered more from a macro-perspective, for example, the ease of language planning, its functionality beyond national borders, less divisive tendencies between different ethnic groups and educational training on a national rather than a regional basis. Even though the language policy mentions examples of countries such as Cameroon and India, where local languages have been used as the medium of instruction with a successful outcome in terms of the pupils' performance (UNIN 1981: 51, 58-63), the final decision fell on English, the only viable choice at the moment, according to the document.

To continue, apart from relating language planning to the idea of nationalism and modernisation and giving arguments that question the foundation of the choices that have been made about language use, Harlech-Jones (2001: 108-120) goes as far as suggesting a review of the policy. His attitude towards a reviewed policy in education is strong and he has several educational arguments. On the one hand, he points out the factors of stress for both teachers and learners when English has to be used despite their low English proficiency level and consequently the failure to harmonize the policy with a learner-centred and participative curriculum. It is difficult for a learner to participate or for a teacher to go beyond the textbooks if there is a language deficiency. On the other hand, he refers to research findings in the Namibian context and bilingualism in general, where he quotes Krashen (1991) who states

that “one of the most salient features of a bilingual education programme is the use of the first language as the medium of instruction” (Harlech-Jones 2001: 123) because it can help students in supplying background knowledge, enhance the development of their basic reading skills and also their oral and written use of language. A conclusion Harlech-Jones draws in his essay is that teachers are “being required to implement the impossible” (ibid: 124).

2.2 Previous research on learning in a second language

Not everyone has such negative views as described previously. Brock-Utne claims that the vast efforts and work that have been put into assimilating English as the official language in Namibia “has borne fruits” (2001: 293) and she points to research statistics from 1995 where 82.8% of a group of 157 teachers said they agreed that their mastery of English was good, whereas in 1989, only 43.4% of 161 would agree with the same utterance (ibid: 295). However, besides pointing to the fact that many teachers overestimate their proficiency in English, in the same article she mentions that the expansion of the official language has “happened not only to the detriment of Afrikaans (an intended consequence) but also to the detriment of the Namibian languages (an unintended consequence)” (ibid: 296).

Brock-Utne (2004: 57-84) has also carried out some studies in Tanzania, a country that also chose English as an official language. She actually finds the English policy in there quite problematic, especially when considering the language context in the country. As opposed to Namibia, Tanzania has an indigenous language – Kiswahili – that could have been used as the medium of instruction according to Quorro (2004: 93-113). Brock-Utne (2004: 78-79) refers to Quorro who says that the key to success in English is not in using it as a medium of instruction but rather in improving the teaching of English as a subject. Otherwise, the students will learn neither of the two languages in a proper way. Furthermore, Brock-Utne (2004: 61-76) discusses the problems in applying English as a language of instruction in a constructive rather than a destructive way in the classroom. She gives examples of code-switching, translation of what is not comprehensible in one language, rote learning, memorisation and cheating at exams. She claims that the pace of learning a subject matter is slowed down by the fact that both students and teachers have to go roundabouts to produce comprehensible input (ibid: 81). These problems could also be linked to the Namibian reality since the similarities between the situations in the two countries are many, but Brock-Utne misses research that compares learners studying in English versus learners studying in their mother tongue, both in Tanzania and in other African countries.

Regarding Namibia, not much literature is available about aspects of input and comprehension in relation to the implementation of English as a medium of instruction, even though it could have a crucial role in learning. Wolfaardt (2001: 12-15) carried out a vast study where she investigated the language policy of Namibian schools and where she saw several obstacles in English being the medium of instruction. Among other things she claims that the students' level of proficiency in English is not high enough to meet the requirements of the grade they are in. Consequently, the learners are not always able to understand instructions and as a result they are not able to perform as they would have done in their mother tongue. There are also problems with the proficiency of the teachers; even though the situation has improved since 1990 there is still a need for remediation in many cases, especially in those regions where this case-study has been carried out (ibid: 122). She asks the controversial question that also this study aims to answer: "Does the current National Language Policy make learning possible?" (ibid: 14). She does not give a clear answer to it but from her results, one could draw the conclusion that the language policy does hold back the optimization of learning.

However, Woolfaardt's (ibid: 9, 92) main focus is on the fact that many schools do not even follow the policy of mother tongue instruction from grade 1-3. Due to different interpretations of the policy, many schools start teaching in English from the first grade. According to her investigations it is ideal for children to start their early school years in their own language, particularly when the basic skills of reading, writing and concept formation are under development. According to Brock-Utne (2004: 81) it is ideal even for secondary and tertiary education.

A test that was made in a South-African school on students in fourth and seventh grade (Desai 2001) can give a hint to what type of problems there can be when using a foreign language as the medium of instruction. The purpose of the study was to compare their language proficiency in their mother tongue Xhosa and their second language and medium of instruction, English. The students were given pictures that they had to put together and then write a story in both languages. There was a great difference in the results of both languages:

[...] the Xhosa version was much more clearly expressed although in a more descriptive, rather than narrative, mode. This was the position with all the scripts. Although the English used by the Grade 7 learners was markedly better [than grade 4], it still did not compare favourably with their Xhosa. On being asked in Xhosa how they experienced the task, all pupils said that they enjoyed the task but simply did not have the proficiency in English to express themselves clearly. (Desai 2001: 332)

The language situation in South Africa is similar to the Namibian one in the sense that English becomes the medium of instruction at some point in primary school. Depending on the school it is introduced sometimes from the first grade while sometimes there is a language switch in a higher grade (Desai 2001: 329-331). As indicated by Wolfaardt (2001: 12) there are some difficulties with both the switch and with starting learning in English from the first grade; therefore she suggests bilingual programmes that according to her could be suitable for the Namibian schools (ibid: 147-163).

Since this case-study will be focusing on the effects of studying in a language that is not the children's own mother tongue, the next section will explain some theories on second language learning that are relevant to the analysis of the results.

2.3 Second language learning

Some theories on second language learning and acquisition will be presented in this section together with additional factors that affect second language learning. The theories are significant to understand the results of this case-study, since the essence of it is an exploration in the field of the effects of learning in a second language.

One thing to keep in mind is that the following theories and factors concerning language learning have all been elaborated and studied in developed countries, in places and contexts that are different from developing countries like Namibia. It does not mean that they are less relevant or valid, but it can be interesting to keep in mind that what is seen from a certain viewpoint is not always seen the same from another.

2.3.1 The Input Hypothesis

“It has always been obvious that comprehensible and appropriately contextualized L2 [second language] data is necessary for learning to take place” (Mitchell & Myles 1998: 126)

The quotation above is introducing the idea of Krashen's *Input Hypothesis*¹ of second language learning (Krashen 1985). He asserts that if the learner is exposed to enough input and the input is understood the necessary grammar is automatically provided. What is criticised in this theory is the claim that 'comprehensible input' is sufficient. However it is

¹ *The Input Hypothesis* often refers to a set of five hypotheses in Krashen's theory of second language learning (The natural order hypothesis, the acquisition/learning hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the *input hypothesis* and the affective filter hypothesis). In this section, however, it will only refer to the *Input Hypothesis*.

hard to argue against the fact that ‘comprehensible input’ is necessary, and according to the hypothesis the acquisition of a second language takes place when the input is one step above the learner’s level but always linked to a meaning. The formula to an appropriate teaching and learning level would be *input + 1* step above (i+1), meaning that the learner would be managing the language input but with a challenge to reach that next step (Mitchell & Myles 1998: 126). Nevertheless, there is a valid critique arguing that it is the learners’ “effort of composing new utterances” that makes them form and try out new portions of the second language and hence develop it further. Their mere struggle of understanding i + 1 would not be enough (ibid: 127). This criticism leads us to the next section that is closer to the constructive approach of language learning where learners have a central role in their own construction of knowledge, instead of being passive receivers of information.

2.3.2 The Interaction Hypothesis

Long’s *Interaction Hypothesis* (Mitchell & Myles 1998: 128-129) is an extension of Krashen’s *Input Hypothesis* (Krashen 1985) and explains a part of language acquisition as an interaction between the learner and someone with a higher proficiency in the second language. Long’s research showed that in the conversational interaction between a native speaker and a non native speaker, there was a collaboration to make sure that they both understood each other and could proceed in the communication. In this way, output and input had to be dealt with to make it comprehensible for the learner and ensure that s/he was receiving i + 1 rather than i + 3 or i + 0 (Mitchell & Myles 1998: 128-129).

However, this hypothesis assumes that learning will take place *automatically* as long as there is interaction and negotiation towards comprehension between the learner and the other. Thus an extension to the *Input* and *Interaction Hypotheses*, the *Output Hypothesis* was defined.

2.3.3 The Output Hypothesis

As stated previously, there are some gaps in the previous hypothesis because it states that interaction will inevitably lead to improved second language proficiency, whereas the *Output Hypothesis* has taken the theory a bit further. In this context, the term *output* refers not only to the product of the language learning but also to the process through which the learner acquires knowledge (Hinkel 2005: 471).

According to Hinkel (2005: 474-480), the *Output Hypothesis* has three functions that make learning take place:

1. *The noticing/triggering function*: while the learner is producing speech (or writing) s/he will notice some of the linguistic problems or gaps in the target language. This awareness could trigger the learner to search to correct the errors or fill in the holes of lacking language skills.
2. *The hypothesis testing function*: while the learner is testing the language – or how s/he thinks the target language should be – s/he also engages to “modify [the] output in response to feedback” (ibid: 476). In short, when feedback is given to a learner who is expecting response, the learner reflects over her or his own hypothesis of how the target language is, and modifies the outcome. Recent studies have shown that learners who produce modified output were more likely to learn than learners who did not.
3. *The metalinguistic (reflective) function*: it is based on Vygotsky’s theory (Vygotskij 1986) that language is not only a tool for expressing ideas but also a tool for visualizing them and hence making the person aware of them and moreover for creating knowledge. The tool that language is in its form of speech or writing can “construct and deconstruct knowledge” (ibid: 480).

2.3.4 Factors affecting second language learning

Apart from the theories of acquisition and learning that have to be taken into consideration when talking about second language learning, there are several factors that influence the learning of a new language. Some of those factors will be presented below. They should be taken into consideration in the classroom, so that an optimal learning situation can be provided. Logically enough they are not only applicable on second language learning, but also the learning of any subject.

2.3.4.1 Styles and strategies

Every person has its own personality traits that definitely affect their learning. Sometimes we are not even aware of them, but it is important for the learner to get to know different ways of learning so they can benefit as much as possible from the language instruction.

The term *styles* refers to the fact that the characters of the learners are different in the sense that they might be for example more perceptive visually than aurally or more reflective in the process of the intake of information. The styles affect the way we learn and it is very important for a teacher to be attentive to the diversity of the pupils.

The term *strategies* refers to the fact that we have different methods to approach and solve a problem or a task (Brown, 2000: 113). In the second language classroom it is important to

make space and time for the learners' varying strategies in order to optimize the learning process. It can be considered as the teacher's responsibility to introduce different methods in order to touch all strategies and styles.

2.3.4.2 Affect

Affect is a wide concept and can be interpreted in many ways, Krashen (1985) had some thoughts about this that he presented together with the *Input Hypothesis*. However, before him Bloom (1956) among others, made a taxonomy that was related to education and language learning, where three key concepts were defined: *receiving*, *responding* and *valuing*. In the process of learning a second language, the learners have to be *receptive* to who they are communicating with and to the language itself. They need to be *responsive* to the persons they are interacting with and to the context, and finally they must *value* the "communicative act" (Brown, 2000: 143-144).

Understanding how human beings feel and respond and believe and value is an exceedingly important aspect of a theory of second language acquisition (ibid: 144).

Within the affective domain there are some sub-factors that relate to second language acquisition. *Self esteem* is one factor that can be referred to in general, to the learner's personality or certain traits of personality and it can also be referred to a specific task in a specific situation. It is not yet known if high self-esteem improves a learner's language skills or the other way round (Brown 2000: 147). According to Brown (ibid), an optimal and successful learning situation is due to the teacher's attention both to "linguistic performance" and "emotional well-being". It is also important to have a high self-esteem so that *inhibition* does not hinder the trying of new hypotheses and making mistakes for example in pronunciation or grammatical structure, because *risk-taking* is indeed another factor that a language learner cannot be without (ibid: 149).

Anxiety is another factor that like *self-esteem* can be defined on two levels; like a general tendency or trait in personality or as a "state [that] is experienced in relation to some particular event or act" (Brown 2000: 151). Whereas the first level is difficult to detect in second language learning, the second one that is bound to a certain situation and can be referred to as the "foreign language anxiety", has been investigated more. Most results have identified that there is a debilitating and a facilitative anxiety that either harms or helps the learning process (ibid: 152). The explanation is that sometimes a bit of anxiety is positive because it means that a process that is leading somewhere is taking place. It is a bit like

nervous tension that drives the learner to push her or himself. When it is negative anxiety it can block the processes and hinder the learner from taking in and reflecting on the language. So a low anxiety level in the classroom is something to strive for as long as we are attentive to the facilitative anxiety that could actually help the student (ibid).

2.3.4.3 Motivation

The motivation factor is discussed not only in the second language learning context but in learning in general. It is something that can be “global, situational or task-oriented” and according to Brown (2000: 162) the three mentioned types are required in the language learning process. There are even more sides of motivation in the context of second language learning. One is the motivation related to *instrumental* goals, such as good grades or better jobs. The other one is the *integrative* motivation that comes from the learner’s desire to be involved in the second language culture. Yet another side is the *intrinsic* motivation that is related to the “reward [of] the activity itself” as opposed to the *extrinsic* motivation that is related to success in a task and a reward beyond oneself. Grades, prizes and “behaviours [...] to avoid punishment” are examples of *extrinsic* motivations (ibid: 162-165). The four categories of motivation mentioned in this paragraph are close to each other and can be somewhat easy to mix, but the difference could be explained as follows:

While many instances of intrinsic motivation may indeed turn out to be integrative, some may not. For example, one could, for highly developed intrinsic purposes, wish to learn a second language in order to advance in a career or to succeed in an academic program. Likewise, one could develop a positive affect toward the speakers of a second language for extrinsic reasons, such as parental reinforcement or a teacher’s encouragement (ibid: 165).

2.3.4.4 Meaningful learning

In mental terms, the more other facts a fact is associated with in the mind, the better possession of it our memory retains. (Brown 2000: 85, in William 1890: 662).

Brown (2000: 83-86) refers to Ausubel’s meaningful learning theory (1963) that states that learning acquired in a meaningful context is remembered for a longer time. A rote-learning may not have a meaningful situation to be related to, neither for association with the learners cognitive structures, nor with anything else than performance results in the classroom. There has to be a more integrative meaning to learning so that real knowledge can be constructed. This is also illustrated in the Namibian National subject policy guide (MEC 2001: 4) where the model for literacy training in English circles around meaning.

3. METHOD AND MATERIAL

This minor field study has been carried out in a school in Northern Namibia and is therefore a case study based on a qualitative method. It is the result of interviews, observations and national documents put together. In this chapter, the method and material will be described and discussed. Factors limiting the study will also be mentioned.

3.1 The qualitative method

A qualitative method is usually described as interpretative. It tries to understand the reality from the point of view of the participants (Bryman 2002: 250). In this case the interviewees and the people under observation are in focus and there is a search for meaning in their behaviour or answers. It is different from the quantitative method in that it is more oriented towards the use of words to present the results, instead of numbers and statistics (ibid: 272), and therefore there is no claim to generalize the results. Instead of being related to the population, the generalizability is related to the theoretical conclusions that can be drawn from the empirical results (Bryman 2002: 271).

3.1.1 Interviews

A semi-structured interview form was chosen in order to obtain a representation of the interviewees' thoughts and opinions in relation to the research questions. The advantage of the semi-structured form is that all interviews are based on specific themes that can provide a structure to make the analysis easier and less subjective, as well as provide a foundation for detecting similarities and differences in the interviewees' answers. At the same time, the semi-structured interview gives a flexibility to work in an interviewee-centeredness, where there is more space for reflection and elaboration of thoughts. This can provide us with a clearer picture of the interviewee's view, instead of focusing on the interviewer's questions based on theory only, which risks narrowing the interview and missing the nuances of the real situation (Bryman 2001: 301-307).

Four teachers were interviewed at the same school. They taught different subjects in different grades. To maintain their anonymity, the teachers' names have been changed to Liam, Hanna, Sophie and Amanda. They had all been teaching since before independence, first without qualifications and later on they had received training. The four of them were between 35 and 45 years old.

The selection of the interviewees was based on random choice except for one teacher who was selected because of the level she was teaching on. All teachers were invited to participate but their work took up a lot of time and did not leave them much space to spare for interviews. As mentioned before, one of the teachers teaching in the fourth grade – Amanda – was under special focus because of the fact that she took over those classes that up to the third grade had had their mother tongue as a language of instruction and now started their transition into English.

The interviews took place in privacy without recording the conversations. The method of taking notes instead of taping was deliberate. By eliminating the recorder the situation became more relaxed and untied. The situation of a foreigner arriving at the school asking questions was already somewhat contrived. Recording what was being said would not have contributed to spontaneity. It is obvious that by taking notes it is more difficult to concentrate on what the interviewee is saying and the combination of listening, writing and talking at the same time could of course hinder the fluency of resulting questions and instant feedback from the interviewer to the interviewee. Nevertheless, the first argument weighed more heavily than the other in the quest for deeper and reflective answers.

3.1.2 Observations

For a more wide-ranging picture of the school situation regarding the research questions, observations were made. The observations took place in classrooms, the staff room, and the school yard. Both teachers and students were under observation, and a scheme with key questions served as a reference to what to observe (see Appendix). As with the interviews, the choice of classrooms was random. The observations mostly took place in the interviewed teachers' classrooms, but here too the fourth-grade teacher Amanda was under special focus because of the transitional stage she worked with.

There is always a risk that people who know they are being observed act a bit differently than they would normally. This phenomenon is called the observer's paradox by Labov (1966) and it has been shown that "differences in age, gender and race between the field worker and the interviewee" can worsen it (Mackey & Gass 2005: 30). Nevertheless, the daily participation of a stranger makes her or him familiar with the environment, so hopefully that problem diminished.

3.1.3 Documents

There are some national documents that were used for the analysis of the interviews and observations to give a broader basis for the conclusions. One is “Toward a language policy for Namibia. English as the official language: Perspectives and strategies” (UNIN 1981), where there is a discussion about English becoming the official language and how it would be implemented. Another is “The language policy for schools 1992-1996 and beyond” (MEC 1991) where the plan for the use of languages in schools is explained and discussed. Lastly, the “English first language syllabus (grades 1-4)” (MEC 2005) and “National subject policy guide (English first language grades 5-10)” (MEC 2001) are used for the comparison of the observations and the interviews with the national guidelines for language and education.

3.2 The case study

The school in question was a public school in a rural area of Namibia with approximately 400 students from grades 1 to 10 and with 18 employed teachers. In this part of Namibia the dominant language group is *Oshiwambo*. Thus the mother tongue of the majority is one of the eight dialects within the Oshiwambo language group. In the results, only the word *Oshiwambo* will be used even though its dialects have different names and are even taught as different subjects in school. The reason for doing this is to avoid confusing the reader. However, it has to be clarified that even though people speaking the different dialects of Oshiwambo understand each other, only two of the dialects have been formally standardized and are therefore used in education.

To continue, a very common feature of Namibians is that they speak in more than one language, for example Afrikaans, English and some other indigenous languages. Nevertheless, this part of Namibia is special because the majority of the population that lives here are primarily Oshiwambo-speakers. So even though this study only refers to one school, the type of school, teachers and students are fairly common in this region.

3.3 Problems and limitations

There were some factors that limited the course of the field study. Firstly, concrete problems such as the teachers’ lack of time and the examination period made it difficult to get interviews. The school day was from 7.45 to 16.00 with only one interval of 30 minutes for lunch and during the period of study there were examinations taking place three hours every

morning. In addition, there was even more work for the teachers because apart from teaching they had to mark the exams.

As mentioned before, the results of the research are only attributed to this particular school and cannot therefore be claimed to symbolize the general situation in Namibia. However, the analysis which is based on the theoretical background and on previous research can give this school “some sense of representativeness” (Silverman 2005: 128).

4. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In this section the results of the interviews and observations will be presented and analysed. The results are grouped under different themes and provide answers to the research questions presented in Section 1.1, which will eventually lead us to a conclusion of the essay.

4.1 The pupils’ relation to the English language

As mentioned before, all pupils are Oshiwambo speakers, which means that their mother tongue is one of the eight Oshiwambo dialects. When they come to school they are taught in either Oshindonga or Oshikwanyama which sometimes is not their dialect but according to the interviewees everyone can understand each other’s dialects. Up to grade 3 they will have English as a subject so this is when they should start preparing for the English-only education that starts in fourth grade.

It became clear from the observations that the communication with the younger pupils in the lower grades was all in Oshiwambo. For example, during the morning devotions when the whole school gathered to sing, pray and share some new information on what was going on, the teachers who had something to say talked first in English to the older students and then repeated it in Oshiwambo to the younger pupils. In these moments, the reactions from both the older and the younger students were almost inexistent when English was being used, while laughter and some group answers like “yes” and “no” could be noticed when Oshiwambo was used.

Furthermore, some evidence that the children do not learn English until they come to school is shown by the interviewees’ concern that there is no exposure to English for the children in this region of Namibia, a factor that makes it more difficult to inspire them to use the language and hence learn it. In this matter, Wolfaardt (2001: 87-88, 107) is also critical. She claims that according to the theories of successful second language acquisition there has to be an exposure to the target language, which is not the case in Namibia. Furthermore, it is quite

logical that if there is no real incentive to learn English it will become more difficult and make less sense.

In the particular case of this school, the direct incentive is the functionality of English for further studies and better jobs. However, when the reality of a person contradicts the claimed opportunities, the incentive is just superficial. As the Language Policy (1981: 59) questions at one point: What is primary education for? “Is it a basic education for the majority of the pupils who may receive no further education, or are they to be seen as preparatory schools for the minority who go on to secondary and tertiary education?”. The answer is that in Namibia it will be a basic education for all, but that is when the language conflict comes into the picture. If education is supposed to be accessible and optimal for everyone, one prerequisite is that everyone can take part of it. In the case of our research school, the English language can be an obstacle for many pupils that do not come into contact with it in a natural way in their environment. If the pupils have problems with understanding the instruction because of the language, then one cannot say that the education is for all. An extract from the Language Policy (UNIN 1981) questions the conflict of the child’s educational development in a language that is not its own:

If primary education is to serve a large number of Namibians who will need to become better farmers, shopkeepers, housewives, and others then the question may be asked: Can such essential skills be imparted to children in a language with which they are unfamiliar? Would it not be placing too heavy a burden on children to require them to learn a language and a set of new concepts simultaneously? Would not cognitive and conceptual development be better facilitated through the child’s own language or one which is familiar to him? (UNIN 1981: 59-60)

When this policy was written there were fewer students moving on to higher studies than there are today. Nevertheless, the majority do not go on to tertiary education and therefore it could be relevant with a new language in education policy that from the linguistic point of view takes account of everyone. Referring back to Wolfaardt (2001: 147-163), she has suggestions for bilingual education programmes that could be applied in Namibian schools so that the conflicts expressed above could be resolved, keeping in mind the results of this case-study: that the majority of the children come to school without mastering English. The introduction to the official language begins in first grade, so if the lack of exposure to it is one of the big problems, maybe a bilingual programme would be necessary to balance the gaps between real life and the subject matters. In this way there could be links to the student’s world, and a principle for learning is a meaningful context. Moreover a learner-centeredness would more likely be attained if there are associations to the student’s prior experience. The

learner-centred approach is maintained by the curricula and syllabi and is the basis for the Namibian educative philosophy. It is an approach to develop the student from its own reality, needs and skills (MEC 2005: 4) but it is unlikely to be reached if the conditions are not met.

4.2 The transition process from mother tongue to English

As explained in the previous section, in this particular school mother tongue instruction is used up to the third grade. When the child begins fourth grade the transition to English starts. The teacher in charge of this grade was Amanda. She was the class teacher and therefore taught all subjects. According to her, the children who came to her class did not understand much English and struggled a lot to keep up the pace. She had to speak slowly and easily so they could understand, and she said that if she noticed that they were “stuck” she used Oshiwambo to make them understand. On the one hand, she was fairly positive to having English as medium of instruction because:

You can meet people from other countries, reading and talking in English, listening to radio.

Saying this, she was expressing the functionality of English, and the skills above are premises for further education and good jobs. However, there is no proof that English would need to be the sole medium of instruction to reach those goals. Furthermore, she expressed a contradiction when asked if there was any difference in learning a subject in the mother tongue or in English:

In mother tongue the learners catch up easily and understand easily. The teachers' explanations are sometimes not so good in English

The observations in her classroom revealed that an English-only instruction was used except for the Oshiwambo lessons. It was interesting to see the pupils' behaviour during the lessons. During the regular content subjects that were held in English the pupils were very passive. It was mostly the teacher who held the floor; she lectured about the subject and then posed a question to the learners. The only time when there was actual interaction between both parts was when they answered her questions. In these moments, the teacher usually gave response depending on the student's performance. When answers were satisfying, the feedback was often shown with positive comments and smiles, but when the pupil could not answer, the teacher did not show understanding but rather blamed the individual for not paying attention:

Why don't you understand, were you sleeping and singing?

It would appear as if the debilitating anxiety level of the learners was quite high if one takes into consideration that there is also corporal punishment involved in the teaching. In addition to this, one can speculate whether the pupils even followed the teaching. It is possible that there was no comprehensible input, and there seemed to be no space for an actual interaction teacher-to-learner or peer-to-peer, where they could play a bigger role and construct knowledge rather than receive information. It seemed that the input-, the interaction- and the output hypotheses were not practiced in the classroom when compared to the classes of Oshiwambo and to how the students and the teacher acted there.

Even though the author did not understand the language and what they were talking about it became extremely clear that the understanding was lacking in the regular content subjects. An example of that is that in the Oshiwambo classes the pupils raised their hands often and were very eager to answer the teacher's questions. Amanda did not take up so much space here and almost every student showed a will to participate. Their answers were also longer and not directly read from the textbook.

There can be many reasons why these differences were so evident, but above the factors that cannot be identified from the observations, for example easier questions from the teacher or a more interesting topic; they had more likely to do with comprehensible input and stronger identification with the language. The Oshiwambo classes were closer to the output hypothesis than the classes in English. The Oshiwambo lessons were much more dynamic and whether the teacher asked open questions or expected certain answers from the students, they were very much involved in what was taking place in the classroom.

When discussing with Amanda the transfer of the children from the third to the fourth grade, she explained that it was certainly difficult for them to keep up the pace and catch up in English. Nevertheless she was quite positive to the question of how it was possible to learn content subjects – such as mathematics – in English when it was the first time they had to use it. She stated that at the end of the year they had all improved their English language proficiency and that by explaining and working on it every day it could only get better:

Today one understands, tomorrow three understand, the next days six understand and so on. Revision is important.

The fact that the observations were carried out during the end of the first term can explain her statement. The Namibian school year consists of three terms, which means that the children

had only been in fourth grade, experiencing English as a medium of instruction, for approximately three months.

Undoubtedly the transition to English in the fourth grade is a challenge and an enormous responsibility for the teacher receiving the children, in this case Amanda. She is an enthusiastic teacher who is good at eulogizing her pupils, taking examples that were close to the children's life and visualizing what she meant with concrete examples such as stones in mathematics and pupils themselves in social science. Moreover she repeated her sentences many times as she said she did. Still, the methods used were not constructivist in the sense the 'output theory' requires, but more based on completing her sentences and her questions that had given answers. Nor did there seem to be any opportunity for trying other methods and varying the lesson (in order to appeal to different learning styles and strategies) since the material was very poor. The only material they actually possessed was textbooks, but they had to be shared between five and seven children. This was the case in all classes and the material does indisputably play a big role in the quality of the instruction. That is important to have in mind when moving on to the next sections that comprise all classes under observation (including the fourth).

4.3 Language choice in the classroom and during intervals and its implications

One of the questions that was formulated in Section 1.1 was which language was being used in classrooms and intervals and why. Without further analysis it can be stated that during the intervals it was Oshiwambo that dominated among both teachers and students. In the classrooms under observation it was English that dominated. However, it is interesting to go deeper into the communication between the different parts and analyse it further.

4.3.1 Teacher to learner communication

In this section, it is interesting to keep in mind the energetic Oshiwambo lessons in fourth grade described in Section 4.2. The lessons that were under observation were mostly dominated by the teachers' speech, and the role of the learners was mostly to respond to the teachers' questions, which often had given answers. Some lessons included rote learning and repeating what the teacher said and many times learners had to complete the teacher's sentences with a word or two. To the teachers, this was a confirmation that the pupils had understood. It is very much in line with the 'input theory' (Mitchell & Myles 1998: 126) where comprehensible input is enough for learning to take place. However, these methods work against the constructivist 'output theory' (Hinkel 2005: 471-480) on second language

learning and learning in general because there is no room for the pupil to reflect and actively create their own knowledge by reflecting and testing. Moreover, to the observer, it was not really proven that there had been an actual understanding. Those times when there were open questions for the learners to answer, silence often filled the classroom and the teacher answered her own question. If the learners answered one of the open questions, it was often a short answer, and the teacher filled it in afterwards with a more “complete” answer. Even if the teacher made space for creative speaking when asking open questions, what mostly ruled amongst the students was silence. One lesson in ninth grade treated the topic “Education is power”, and the teacher asked:

What is it, in your understanding?

One of the pupils answered:

Yes.

Another gave an extended answer but it turned out that she was reading from the textbook. The teacher was satisfied with this and the pattern repeated itself throughout the whole lesson. The students did not answer the questions unless the answers could be found in the book.

Three of the teachers claimed they almost exclusively addressed their students in English, whether they were in the classroom or outside, and whether it was in a learning context or in an informal context. Sophia admitted that she mixed and used Oshiwambo intermittently and felt that the students could understand her better when she used their mother tongue.

At one point, after a lesson, Hanna was asked why her students did not answer her questions even though she was clearly open to reflective answers. The reply was:

Maybe they don't understand when their peers read the text. We only studied the text once. They understand better when they read and have more time.

She also said that the grades would be higher if the teaching were in Oshiwambo which confirms what Wolfaardt (2001: 14) claims in her study of Namibian schools. During the last days of school, when the grading was taking place, Hanna pointed out that nobody could get the highest grade in English. In the other subjects they could, but in English they just did not reach the requirements. Hanna claimed that it was very difficult to improve the students' English skills and knowledge and that the transition in fourth grade from mother tongue to

English was complicated. At one point when conversing about the issue her spontaneous comment was:

What to do dear, when it's not your language it's not your language.

It is interesting how this comment reflects a reaction against the alienation of the child's reality, that is not really expressed in the interviews but that is claimed in previous studies on mother tongue. The language policy for schools (MEC 1991: 4) states that according to international research "education should promote the language and cultural identity of learners through the use of Home Language medium at least in Grades 1-3". It is the child's identity and can be a very useful tool to link the home with the school and hence create a wider and perhaps more meaningful context for the pupil.

Nevertheless, all the interviewees were positive to the future of English as a medium of instruction. They claimed that the students were eager to learn and that the future teachers were better trained than they had been.

The more we use it with learners, the more they learn.

Although Liam claimed that he saw a difference between the younger students and the older ones, where the younger needed explanation after explanation and there were problems in understanding, he was convinced that English-only was very important. The reason he gave was an instrumental one that did not involve learning so much but rather the importance of knowing English in Namibian society. This is also confirmed by Wolfaardt's (2001: 122) theoretical study; that content subjects tend to improve the pupils' language despite of the level of proficiency that the teacher has.

He also claimed that he strictly used English in his classes, partly because the concepts in his subject were easier in English and according to him, the vernacular was poor in words in this subject. The other reason he gave was that some learners do not listen when they know the teacher is going to give an explanation in Oshiwambo after the English explanation:

If they learn that their teacher will only use English, they pay attention so they don't miss anything.

Nevertheless, the students showed little feedback when addressing them in English. If this was because of lack of language understanding or because of other factors cannot be stated from this study, but when comparison is made to the Oshindonga lessons and the way the

pupils participated there, it could be a hint to the fact that the lack of language mastery hinders participation.

4.3.2 Learner to learner communication

The communication and interaction that took place among the learners of the school was in Oshiwambo. There is no doubt that what comes naturally when they talk to each other is their mother tongue, and this includes the pupils of all ages. The use of Oshiwambo predominated in spite of the fact that the students from grade 4 to grade 10 did encounter English during the whole day in the classroom. It is difficult to state whether they could follow the teachers in class or if they found it hard to have English as a medium of instruction, but sometimes when they were in classroom discussing a task peer-to-peer their medium was not English. However, some of them seemed eager to learn English and wanted to be better at it.

Another interesting occurrence was when a girl in grade six was sitting next to me, reading a newspaper online. When her eyes suddenly fell on a link to news in Oshiwambo she was very surprised and wanted to click on it, she read the articles and translated it into English for me. What was interesting here was the eagerness that this girl showed towards the news in her language. We had been sitting for a long time reading the news in English but the enthusiasm she showed when she found the link in Oshiwambo indicated the significance the mother tongue has to a person. This can be related to Desai's (2001) study that points out that the proficiency in a language is manifested in the expressions of the student. In the case of her study it was a written task that measured the difference in the use of English and Xhosa. In this case there is no way of measuring but the observations can still imply the same points. Moreover, the interviewees all claimed that comprehension of English was more or less a problem for their pupils.

4.3.3 Teacher to teacher communication

The teachers were all Oshiwambo speakers and most of the time when they were interacting with each other they used their mother tongue. There were many instances when the teachers used Oshiwambo among themselves while talking about informal things and joking but also when it was clear that they were discussing some school matter, for example when exams were being marked or when they came to the principal to ask about something. Even during a meeting with the principal and the vice principal Oshiwambo was used.

On the contrary, at other meetings when all teachers were present and general information was given and discussed, the medium of communication was English. A likely reason for this

is that the written information and documents that were received from higher instances such as the regional sector office, were in English. In addition, most of the interviewed teachers pointed out that general meetings were held in English but not without problems.

Hanna mentioned that at these general meetings there were many teachers who did not express themselves because they did not feel secure about their mastery of English. Sometimes they had a hard time expressing themselves or understanding and sometimes they were afraid of being laughed at. This was confirmed by Liam who mentioned the problem of teachers leaving meetings without asking any questions or sharing comments and opinions. He explained it as a lack of language that originates in the old education system where the medium of instruction was Afrikaans and where black teachers did not get a proper education before starting to work. In those days it was only necessary to finish grade 12, and English was just a subject a few times a week. This is a concern that Brock-Utne (2001: 295) and Wolfaardt (2001: 136) have also expressed, i.e. that the English proficiency of the teachers may not be what it should be in order to use it as a medium of instruction, especially in the region where this case-study was carried out.

Hanna also stated that she tried to use English with her colleagues but that it was not natural and some even thought it was artificial to use English when their mother tongue was one of the Oshiwambo dialects. Sophia also used Oshiwambo with her colleagues. Liam said that he almost always used English with his colleagues except when someone talked to him in Oshiwambo first, because then it was difficult to switch. Finally Amanda said that English was used when talking about formal work matters and even to make jokes and talk about informal things, but that Oshiwambo was the language for more serious and private issues.

Summing up, the interviewees' answers differed from one another. While some claimed that they spoke mostly English with each other, others claimed the opposite. The observations showed that outside the classroom, most teachers spoke Oshiwambo with each other and English only occurred on some occasions, mostly during formal meetings. This could be an indication that the teachers feel more comfortable and natural when they communicate in their mother tongue, something that is not so stunning but rather normal for every human being. What is relevant to this study is that it appears difficult to transmit a suitable language when one does not feel comfortable using it. On the other hand, there is a difference between the formal, scientific and colloquial use of the language. The language used in the classroom is formal, scientific and subject-specific, while the language used outside the classroom might be more informal and connected to everyday matters.

5. CONCLUSION

Is language crucial for a successful education? The answer is undoubtedly yes. If we construct our cognitive development with the help of language it can be stated that the language we think with and use for our daily life is crucial. Education is part of our daily life, be it in formal or informal ways. In this essay we have explored formal education and the influence language choice can have on it.

The results of the interviews and the observations were broad and sometimes contradictory. They showed a school with a majority of Oshiwambo-speaking teachers and students in the second most populated area of Namibia, where most of the inhabitants are from the same ethnic group. In order for them to communicate with each other they can use their mother tongue and have done so for generations. The history of Namibian education has always consisted of various languages and most of the time the Namibians have had to go through school using a medium of instruction that was not their native language (Wolfaardt 2001: 22-38). Since 1990 it has been English, a language that according to the language policy (UNIN 1981: 37) is familiar to the population. The term familiarity can be discussed, because according to this case-study the language that comes natural to the teachers and students is not English but their mother tongue.

The study has shown that before starting school, children have very little or no contact with English. It is when they start first grade that they are introduced to it a few times a week during lesson time, and from third grade they are forced to use it as a tool for study. Their lessons are in English and their teachers teach mostly in English, but that is all. One can speculate whether they will be exposed much to English when they grow older, for example through television, radio or other channels. However, it seems that the lack of exposure is a big issue and obstacle in the acquisition together with a reduced method of transition from mother tongue instruction to English. The answers that the interviewees gave were quite similar. On the one hand they do see some problems in using English as a medium of instruction, but on the other hand they see some positive outcomes. What is more, they do not seem to imagine any other solution to the instruction language issue, either from a financial perspective or from a linguistic one.

The schools' financial situation of schools in Namibia is not very promising. The teachers at the target school always talked about the problems of not having enough materials for teaching, the shortage of textbooks, workbooks, pencils, papers, etc. The same can be stated

from the observations. It seems almost impossible to think of a change of language policy when the situation of the school is so poor.

Furthermore, the interviewees also saw problems in changing the language policy because of the fact that so many languages are spoken in Namibia. They did not see how it could be possible to use any other language than English in education. In theory it would be possible to train teachers and produce materials in the different local languages but it would be very expensive and if that amount of money is to be spent on schools in Namibia, one may ask if there are not more imperative things to spend it on. The main thing to invest in should be at least school lunches for the pupils and perhaps a rearrangement of the schedule so that they could have breaks in-between their lessons. Without basic needs such as food and rest, the conditions for learning are rather poor.

Then again, this study focused on the effects of language choice in education and it has shed some light on the use of English in the school under observation. According to the results, the conclusion to be drawn is that together with other factors such as the teachers' authority and their methods, the use of English as a medium of instruction hinders the full participation of the pupils because it does not seem to provide comprehensible input, it does not seem to work as a tool for constructing knowledge in the content subjects and it is an obstacle for the learner centeredness that is desired by the ministries of the country. The difference in behaviour when Oshiwambo was used among the students and among the teachers, gives another hint that the official language does not facilitate the participation of the people but maintains a "culture of silence", a term coined by Freire and attributed to the oppressed people in colonised countries (Senkoro 2004: 51).

Language has a crucial role in education because of the cognitive tool that it is. Furthermore, education has a crucial role in the development of a country. It is a chain that involves many other factors such as for example socioeconomic needs, but to restore the identity of a people that have been deprived of so much also involves the use of their own language.

It is mainly through the medium of language that successive generations are supposed to benefit from the experiences of those before them. It is also via language that each generation shares, disputes, resolves and refines its experience. However, in order for language to function that way its users, i.e. speakers and writers, must be competent in and familiar and comfortable with it. (Senkoro 2004: 47).

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APPENDIX

Observations

Classroom

- Which languages does the teacher use? When?
- Which languages do the pupils use? When?
- Is there any code-switching/code-mixing? (students/teachers)
- What is important? Understanding concepts or repeating in Language of Instruction?
- What teaching methods are used?
- What materials are there available for teachers and pupils, and in what language/s?
- What type of feedback is given to the pupils?
- How does the teacher act when teaching in English vs. teaching in mother tongue?
- In what situations is English/mother tongue used? (teaching, disciplining a student, discussions, jokes, asking teacher for help, group tasks)
- Is there any difference in the participation of the students when using English or another language?

Intervals

- In which language/s do the pupils interact with each other?
- Does code-switching/code-mixing occur in the pupils' interaction?

Interviews

Background

- Age?
- Gender?
- Mother tongue?
- Educational level?
- Position?
- At what level and which subject/s do you teach?
- How long have you worked as a teacher?

Relation to English

- When did you first come into contact with English? or When did you learn English?
- Where/How did you learn English?
- When (in which contexts) do you use English? Why?
- When do you use your mother tongue or another language? Why?

English in school

- In which languages do you teach? Why? (own choice/policy)
- How do you apply English in your teaching? Why? (own choice/policy)
- What are the advantages of doing that (using or not using English)?
- What are the disadvantages?
- What materials do you use? In what language/s are they?
- How can students participate? (e.g. do you ask questions, discussions, group tasks, presentations) (written/oral participation)
- How do students participate?
- In what language do you talk to the students in your class? Why?
- Do you talk to the pupils outside the classroom? When/why?
- In what language do you talk to the students outside the classroom?
- Do you have exams? What type of exams? In what language?
- In your view, how do pupils perform on the exams?
- In what/which language/s do your pupils interact in classroom? Why? (they have to/they want to).
- Do you know in what/which language/s they interact on intervals?

- Does the school encourage usage of English among the students? Why/why not?
How?
- In what language do you talk to your colleagues?
- What do you think about the language policy in Namibian education? Why?

Future

- What possibilities can you see in using English as a medium of instruction? For students/teachers.
- What problems? (students/teachers)
- Can you see if there is any difference for the students to learn in English or in another language (e.g. a mother tongue)?
- How do you think the future will be like in your teaching, regarding English as a medium of instruction?
- Is there anything else you would like to add?