

## Chapter 10

# The Impact of Multilingualism on Teaching and Learning: A Case of Sesotho Home Language in One University in South Africa

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### ABSTRACT

*Home language teaching and learning are largely dominated by monolingual-oriented practices in the South African context, and such practices are being challenged. Despite this, there remains a dearth of research on the concurrent use of more than one language in home language teaching and learning in this context. This chapter reports on the results of a study conducted on the impact of multilingualism on teaching and learning in a Sesotho home language classroom in one university in South Africa. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with six Sesotho lecturers from different universities and 12 students enrolled in Sesotho home language course. Data were analysed using thematic inductive approach. The recommendation is that teachers should consider the use of multilingual pedagogic teaching practices to address language diversity in their home language classrooms.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Multilingual classrooms seem to be common across the globe (Omidire & Ayob, 2020). By the fall of twentieth century, schools around the globe started witnessing an important change where most classrooms turned into “small villages” with linguistically and culturally diverse students (Den Brok and Levy, 2005 in Chouari, 2016). This historical development instituted notable challenges in the education sector. Equally, there are undeniable positives that ought to be associated with this remarkable development. Within the South African school context, classrooms are highly diversified. Multicultural differences in a teaching and learning environment sometimes lead to decreased participation and overwhelming feeling of inadequacy among learners, especially learners whose language is under-represented within a school setting. The South African learner population, more especially in Gauteng region speaks several languages; some are mutually intelligible, and some are not, some are significantly developed while others are underdeveloped. Issues around redressing the inequalities of the past, the diverse nature of learner population, equality in education, language debates, and transformation and/or decolonising the curriculum appear to be some of the factors contributing to the challenges in multilingual classrooms. The current chapter focuses on the impact of multilingualism on teaching and learning of Sesotho home language in one university in South Africa. Furthermore, this chapter discusses notions underpinning the understanding of the nature of multicultural classrooms in South Africa. Lastly, the chapter examines innovative pedagogies that teachers employ to address language diversity in their classrooms as well as unpacks the challenges faced by teachers in their multilingual classrooms.

The advent of democracy in South Africa required the higher education sector to make several important changes. These changes encouraged rethinking the curriculum that is offered at universities and the introduction of multilingualism. To redress the language inequalities in South Africa, the department of higher education and learning formulated and adopted a language policy for higher education in 2002. According to Madiba (2010), the language policy for higher education encouraged institutions to develop language policies that would adopt multilingualism as a policy. The introduction of multilingualism was envisaged to advance equity of access and success in higher education (Madiba, *ibid*). Despite this notable development in the language history of South Africa, some institutions were not clear about how African languages would be used in teaching and learning. Within the space of the teaching of African languages themselves, there is a disquieting silence about the methodologies of teaching these languages to diverse students. This is primarily due to the generalized attitude and assumption that students who are enrolled in African languages are primary speakers of the languages offered in institutions, even though there are cases where this assumption is not true (Khetoa, 2016).

## **BACKGROUND**

This chapter was informed by the multilingual context observed in a Sesotho Home Language undergraduate program for pre-service teachers in one university in South Africa. To be enrolled in a home language course, a prospective student must have passed Sesotho Home Language in the National Senior Certificate examination (matric level). In African languages teaching programmes, student population is such that they exhibit diversity in language capabilities. There are students whose primary language is different from Sesotho but were coerced into taking Sesotho in high school due to the unavailability of schools that offered their languages in the areas they grew up in. This category of students is chal-

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