

Effective additional language learning: isiXhosa in two South African schools

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Introduction

This paper examines isiXhosa language policy documents and practices and Grade 7 learners' writing at two schools, in order to compare how curriculum time can be spread across three languages (Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa) and the results for the status of isiXhosa and for learners' written competence in isiXhosa. There are three main sections: the first part contextualises language curriculum policy nationally and within the two schools; the second part explains the methodology; and the third discusses the research findings.

Current curriculum documents (DoE 1997, 2002) treat all 11 South African official languages as equal and advocate additive multilingualism. Language in education policy requires that learners' home languages are maintained and developed, and that they have at least three years of instruction in an African language by the end of Grade 9. Yet because the various languages have unequal status in society, language in education policy falls short with regard to the teaching and learning of African languages, particularly as additional languages. Though isiXhosa is the home language of 83,4% of the population in the Eastern Cape Province (Statistics South Africa, 2003), it is seldom the medium of instruction beyond the first three years of schooling.

A great deal of debate on language policy during the 1990s by, for example, Alexander (1995), Heugh (1995) and Lockett (1993) amount to advocacy rather than analytical research. Lockett (1993:55) argues that a successful additive multilingual policy should promote African languages, "both as a means to the desired proficiency in English and in order to recover their intellectual and cultural resources

for the nation". Yet advocacy, however politically well-intentioned, cannot replace empirical research and analysis of the nuances of multilingualism and changing school contexts in South Africa (Makoni 1994). Neither does it explain the reasons why parents make the educational language choices that they do.

The status of African languages depends more on their use and development as home languages (L1) than as additional languages (L2), but the two are not unrelated. For instance, in Kwa-Zulu Natal, according to Muller (2003), the number of learners writing isiZulu L1 in the matriculation examination has been declining at a faster rate than the number doing isiZulu L2, so that overall there has been a drop in the number of children developing written competence in isiZulu in school.

Janks (2001) provides useful insights into the relationship of inequality among the official South African languages. Janks (2001:6, drawing on Lodge) claims that the relationship between English and the official African languages is paradoxical: the "access paradox" asks how the education system can give all children access to the language of power, English, without also contributing to the dominance of English and the consequent marginalisation of African languages. A number of questions arise when one teases out the implications of this paradox for language learning. For instance, what level of proficiency in isiXhosa (L1 and L2) is sufficient to avert marginalisation of the numerically-dominant African language of the Eastern Cape? Also, can one speak of marginalisation in the case of a language that is as widely-spoken as isiXhosa in the Eastern Cape?

2. Curriculum policy and the schools' context

The assessment standards of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) for Language (DoE 2002) specify generic language learning outcomes, and provide a policy interpretation of language proficiency across L1, 2 and 3. I am particularly interested in written competence in additional languages because it is important for educational achievement and language status. Even though isiXhosa is numerically the dominant home language in the Eastern Cape, its dominance and official status

do not ensure that it functions in the formal domains of recording and writing required of an official language (Markdata 2000). Educationally, a substantial body of research, both overseas (notably Cummins, 2001 and his colleagues) and locally (Macdonald, 1990) shows that children develop higher levels of proficiency in additional languages when they are literate in their home language.

Because of the shifting role of isiXhosa in school language policy, I employ De Mejia's (2002) models of bilingual education, which can be applied to a multilingual context. Bilingualism refers to the individual, micro-level use of one or more language(s), and diglossia to the societal, macro-level functions that language(s) perform. Diglossia is defined as "a situation where two varieties of a language [or different languages] exist side by side throughout the community, with each having a definite role to play" (De Mejia 2002:37-38). De Mejia (2002) claims that there are three basic models of bilingual education: the transitional, maintenance, and enrichment models. The transitional model "refers to bilingual programmes which are aimed at language shift, cultural assimilation and social incorporation" (De Mejia, 2002:44). The maintenance model aims at language maintenance and the strengthening of cultural identity by promoting additive bilingualism. The enrichment model, like the maintenance model, aims at additive bilingualism and also at extending the L1.

To ensure anonymity and protect respondents' confidentiality, the names of the schools, teachers and learners are pseudonyms. Both case study schools, St Katherine's and Sea View, were established in the 1890s under the auspices of missionary churches. Both are co-educational combined primary and secondary schools. Differences between the schools include that St Katherine's is an independent boarding school, while Sea View is a historically advantaged state day school. In 2003, school fees for Grade 7 at St Katherine's were R22 380 per annum for day pupils and R45 825 for boarders, while at Sea View fees were R2 750. As regards policies around language and admissions, the schools were English medium of instruction and whites-only from the start. A more open admissions policy at St

Katherine's was accomplished by integrating pupils of colour from the most junior grades and letting them work their way up, an approach of gradual assimilation. Desegregation at St Katherine's preceded legislation: an isiXhosa-speaking teacher was appointed in 1980 and the first isiXhosa-speaking pupil was admitted in 1982, i.e. four years before the Private Schools Act of 1986, which legalised an open admissions policy for private schools. The whites-only profile of Sea View changed in response to legislation. In 1993, after becoming a Model C school, Sea View admitted the first black pupil to Standard 1 and the first teacher of colour, an Afrikaans-speaker, was appointed in 1999 through the redeployment process. At both schools, none of the isiXhosa teachers were home language speakers of isiXhosa.

As regards language policy and additional languages, at Sea View isiXhosa was taught as L3 in the intermediate phase (Grades 4-6) from 1986. It was allocated one 45-minute period a week and treated like a non-examinable subject, while Afrikaans was taught as L2 to most pupils, and also as L1 to sufficiently proficient pupils. The implicit message in the curriculum was that isiXhosa as an additional language was not taken as seriously as Afrikaans. Thus, isiXhosa appeared on learners' end of term reports with a comment but no mark and was, for a while in the 1990s, not included in their reports (Interview, 17 June 2003). The teacher who initiated isiXhosa lessons at Sea View was a fluent isiXhosa-speaker in a full-time post willing to commit time and effort to designing teaching materials where none existed, but she was not a qualified isiXhosa teacher. She encountered no resistance from parents or staff to introducing an additional language into the curriculum. When she left the school in the late 1990s, various other teachers, some unfamiliar with isiXhosa and not qualified language teachers took over the teaching of isiXhosa. In 2002 Ms Nash, fluent in isiXhosa L2 and a qualified language teacher, was appointed part-time in a School Governing Body (SGB) post to teach isiXhosa. Her brief was to teach Grades 7-9 (the senior phase) for one 45-minute period a week, with an emphasis on spoken isiXhosa. The NCS Overview document (DoE 2002:18) allocates almost seven hours per week (25% of total contact time, 27 hours

and 30 minutes in Grade Seven) for languages, without specifying how a school divides this time among L1, L2 or L3.

At St Katherine's, isiXhosa was taught as L3 from 1980 to 2001. It was allocated 30 minutes per week in Grade 1, which increased to 90 minutes per week by Grade 7. Afrikaans was taught as L2 to most pupils, and also as L1 to sufficiently proficient pupils, and it was allocated 300 minutes per week in Grade 7. When I started my research, Ms Burt, a qualified isiXhosa teacher, held a full-time post dedicated to isiXhosa. In 2001, at the initiative of Ms Burt and with the support of the senior Afrikaans teacher, the policy for additional languages was changed so that both Afrikaans and isiXhosa could be treated and taught as L2. According to Ms Burt, parents had not requested the policy change. Not only had parents of isiXhosa-speaking learners not enquired whether isiXhosa could be taught as L1, some had even asked that their children did not learn isiXhosa at school. Research in the Eastern Cape (De Klerk 2000) suggests that this parental attitude is common.

3. Methodology

Since my research interest was to understand how schools are implementing the language education policy that all learners should learn an official African language for at least three years, I explored the following research questions at the two schools:

1. What challenges did a teacher face in a multilingual school when teaching isiXhosa as L3?
2. What challenges did a teacher face in a multilingual school when changing from teaching isiXhosa as L3 to teaching it as L2?
3. What is Grade 7 learners' written output where isiXhosa is taught as L2 as compared to a school where it is taught as L3?

The teachers' experiences of teaching isiXhosa in multilingual schools provide an 'insider' perspective of the changing language teaching contexts in schools, while learners' written output was analysed quantitatively and qualitatively.

As a measure of quantity I analysed the total amount learners wrote in their additional language lessons and the range of genres and topics for them to write about. Raison and Rivalland (1997:15) describe four forms of support for extended writing: modelled, shared, guided and individual. However, these terms have certain shortcomings: first, the terms 'shared' and 'guided' do not specify whether a text was produced jointly by a teacher and learners, or independently of the teacher by a group of learners collaboratively, or individually with the guidance of a writing 'frame'; second, none of the terms takes into account whether learners had any choice about topics for their writing. I therefore adapted Raison and Rivalland's (1997) terms: instead of referring to 'modelled' texts, I use the term 'copied' (coded as copied) as it is common for South African learners to copy a model text from the board, without the text serving as a model of a genre for learners' own subsequent writing of the same genre. I introduce the term 'controlled' (coded as contr) for grammar exercises in which children fill in a missing word or choose the correct word from a pair. I extend the term 'guided' writing (coded as guided) to include grammar exercises in which children transform a sentence or text (e.g. direct to indirect speech), as well as genre writing where children write longer texts for which the teacher provides a frame. I use the term 'independent' (coded as indep) for texts that learners produce without a frame.

As a measure of quality I focus on two aspects of complexity in learners' independently written extended texts: sentence structure and Theme choices, as well as their use of conjunctions and clauses. Increasing use of subordination or hypotaxis is regarded as a significant feature of writing development (Allison *et al.* 2002, and Kress 1994). I therefore calculate the index of hypotaxis by expressing the number of subordinate clauses as a percentage of the total number of finite clauses in each text. The start of a clause is called Theme and the rest of the clause

is called Rheme. The element most likely to occupy the Theme position in a declarative clause is the Subject. According to Hallidayan functional grammar, when the Subject of a clause is the Theme, because it is in the most likely position, it is an unmarked linguistic choice. An adverbial phrase or clause as Theme is less likely, and is considered a marked linguistic choice. Building on this analysis, I measure learners' writing ability in terms of the NCS (DoE 2002).

The Grade 7 classes were not academically streamed at either St Katherine's or Sea View, so I took a combined sample of Afrikaans- and English-speakers from the two Grade 7 classes at each school. The sample of 36 learners was made up of 10 English-speaking learners at St Katherine's and 26 Afrikaans- and English-speaking learners at Sea View.

4. Findings

4.1 The challenges of teaching isiXhosa as L3

Ms Nash (Interview, 12 March 2003) stated that her main focus in isiXhosa L3 was speaking. She identified two major challenges within her first year at Sea View. Firstly, teaching isiXhosa for three years from Grade 7-9 for one 45-minute period a week is unlikely to result in much language learning. This allocation of curriculum time exemplifies a common practice at linguistically diverse schools where an African language may be spoken by a substantial minority of children at the school. Secondly, in 2003, a typical year at Sea View, over 40% of the learners in two Grade 7 classes were isiXhosa home language speakers: 14 out of 35 and 16 out of 38. Yet, isiXhosa is not offered as L1 and is accorded less curriculum time than a foreign language when it is taught as an additional language. According to Kaplan and Baldauf (1997:129), "Most foreign language education around the world at the present time is structured to be delivered in classes of 50 to 75 at a rate of three 50-minute periods each week". Working with these figures, they find, bearing out Ms Nash's judgment, that "for most students, the rate and duration over which the language is learned means schooling alone is unable to deliver satisfactory learning outcomes" (Kaplan and Baldauf 1997:129).

This curriculum practice of devaluing African languages means that a teacher has to contend with the challenge of teaching isiXhosa L3 to classes with large numbers of isiXhosa home language speakers. Unless the teacher has the pedagogy, and insight, to use isiXhosa home language speakers as a resource in the classroom, there are disciplinary problems: Ms Nash found isiXhosa-speakers to be bored and disruptive in class since there was no value in the lessons for them. The social consequences are at odds with the aims of the curriculum to build “values very different from those that underpinned apartheid education ... to create a lifelong learner who is confident and independent, literate, numerate, multi-skilled, compassionate, with a respect for the environment” (DoE 2002:3). The practice of devaluing African languages is common, thus in the Durban area, McKay and Chick (2001:407-408) found scant evidence of progress in implementing language curriculum policy in linguistically diverse schools, instead they describe school practices “positioning [isiZulu-speaking] learners in English-only, decline-of-standards, and one-at-a-time discourses in order to maintain some measure of power in a changing society”.

Ms Nash suggested several changes within months of her appointment. During the course of 2002 she recommended that the isiXhosa-speaking learners go to the library to read and do extra work in English, rather than attend the isiXhosa L3 lessons from which they were deriving no benefit. This move carried the approval of the English teachers and presumably of isiXhosa-speaking parents keen for their children to improve their English, since there were no objections reported from parents or the SGB. Though motivated by the seemingly benevolent desire to improve isiXhosa-speaking learners' access to English (and the more pragmatic interest to manage classroom discipline), this practice may have the effect of stigmatising isiXhosa-speakers, since Afrikaans-speakers are deemed not to need extra time in the library to cope with the demands of learning English. Significantly, it also means that isiXhosa-speakers, who constitute 40% of Grade 7 learners, cannot become literate in their home language at school.

Ms Nash's second suggestion was to start isiXhosa in Grade 4, instead of Grade 7, and to carry it through to Grade 9, so that Afrikaans- and English-speaking learners had six years to learn isiXhosa rather than the initially intended, and policy minimum, of three years. Space in the curriculum is an important consideration when adding extra languages to promote multilingualism. Ms Nash succeeded in extending the number of years that isiXhosa L3 is taught from three to six years rather than trying for more timetable slots per week for isiXhosa, within a three-year period.

Though these curriculum changes were implemented, none were documented as policy, and formalised. The other language teachers at Sea View do not necessarily have a shared understanding of Ms Nash's motivation. This means that the school does not have a record of these changes, which language teachers would need, to review the policy. Since the isiXhosa language post is contractual and part-time, the lack of a written record militates against the continuity and potential development of isiXhosa policy at the school.

A child's home language affects her experience of learning additional languages, which means that more than one of De Mejia's bilingual models of education can operate in a multilingual school like Sea View at the same time. IsiXhosa-speaking learners experience a transitional model since they are denied literacy in their L1, isiXhosa, and the school language policy promotes "language shift, cultural assimilation and social incorporation" (De Mejia 2002:44). Afrikaans-speaking learners experience a maintenance model, since Afrikaans is maintained and their cultural identity strengthened through the school policy of additive bilingualism in English for Afrikaans-speaking learners. English-speaking learners experience a combination of the maintenance and enrichment models: their L1 is extended and they have the opportunity to develop additive bilingualism in Afrikaans and isiXhosa.

4.2 The challenges of teaching isiXhosa as L2

According to Ms Burt (Interview, 19 March 2003), the curriculum shift from isiXhosa L3 to L2 required a teaching focus on reading as well as speaking. Her biggest challenge was that there were no graded readers or storybooks written in isiXhosa for isiXhosa L2 learners. What was available had been translated, generally from English. Curriculum time for isiXhosa L2 increased to virtual parity with Afrikaans L2. In Grade 7 in 2003 Afrikaans was allocated 150 minutes per week and isiXhosa 120 minutes, which amounted to one half-hour period per week extra for Afrikaans. Only a regular follow-up on the time-table would enable one to judge whether this was a tacit promotion of Afrikaans or whether, from one year to the next, the 'extra' period for language shifted between Afrikaans and isiXhosa. The school has language policy documents, including a mission statement, Language Syllabus, Progress Map, and course outlines. This wealth of documents provided evidence of the changed, and changing, status of isiXhosa in the school and curriculum, as well as teachers' formulating and conceptualising these changes.

The school policy documents for isiXhosa L3 (1999) and L2 (2003) are very similar. They share three identical learning outcomes, the first of which states that "By the end of the course the pupil should be able to speak Xhosa spontaneously in everyday situations". In addition, the L2 document also has two aims for the teacher. The one urges teachers to ensure that "pupil's first encounter with Xhosa is of a very high standard", and the other notes that "The importance of Xhosa as an official Language must be emphasized in order for pupils to realise its importance in our society". The assumption is that learners will not spontaneously realise the value of isiXhosa, and it points to the unequal status of isiXhosa in relation to, especially the formerly official languages, Afrikaans and English. The fact that the school course outline for Afrikaans, the other L2, does not contain similar aims reflects the embattled status of isiXhosa socially. More specifically, it may also signify isiXhosa teachers' awareness that curriculum or timetable shifts alone will not produce isiXhosa parity with Afrikaans, let alone English, in South Africa.

These differences between Afrikaans and isiXhosa school policy documents aside, there is a striking similarity in layout and content between the 2003 course outlines for isiXhosa L2 and Afrikaans L2. While learners seldom read school language policy documents (Interview, 20 February 2004), they do read course outlines. So the impact of similar course outlines and learning outcomes for Afrikaans L2 and isiXhosa L2 would convey a message that the two languages are regarded as equally important within the curriculum. The St Katherine's outcomes differ from the learning outcomes for an L2, or first additional language in NCS (DoE 2002) terminology, in a number of ways, as Table 1, below, illustrates:

St Katherine's: L2	NCS: L1 and L2	NCS:L3
1. Follow oral and written instructions, and act on these instructions.	1. Listen for information and enjoyment, and respond appropriately and critically in a wide range of situations.	1. Listen for information and enjoyment, and respond appropriately and critically in a wide range of situations.
2. Speak Xhosa with reasonable confidence and fluency.	2. Communicate confidently and effectively in spoken language in a wide range of situations.	2. Communicate confidently and effectively in spoken language in a wide range of situations.
3. Read Xhosa with comprehension and insight, at your [grade] developmental level.	3. Read and view for information and enjoyment, and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in texts.	3. Read and view for information and enjoyment, and respond critically to the aesthetic, cultural and emotional values in texts.
4. Write Xhosa correctly, being able to apply the language, spelling and punctuation skills which you have developed.	4. Write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts for a wide range of purposes	4. Write different kinds of factual and imaginative texts for a wide range of purposes
	5. Use language to think and reason, as well as access, process and use information for learning.	
	6. Know and be able to use the sounds, words and grammar of the language to create and interpret texts.	6. Know and be able to use the sounds, words and grammar of the language to create and interpret texts.

Table 1: Comparison of national and local school language curriculum learning outcomes

The learning outcomes in the NCS (DoE 2002) are the same for L1, 2 or 3, except that the fifth learning outcome applies only to L1 and L2. The stated reason is that the aim of L3 "is not to prepare learners to use this language as a language of learning and teaching" (DoE 2002:6). The reason that the national language curriculum has the same learning outcomes for L1 and L2 is because of an implicit

understanding that for most learners, who are African-language speakers, their L2 becomes the language of learning and teaching. By comparison, the language learning outcomes of the St Katherine's L2 policy centre on the four core language skills (of listening, speaking, reading and writing) and implicitly preclude the use of learners' L2 as a language of learning and teaching, on the assumption that all their learners are English-speakers or have English L1 proficiency levels. The St Katherine's outcomes also differ from national policy in that they emphasise appropriate language use ("follow ... instructions", "read Xhosa with comprehension and insight", "write Xhosa correctly"), and exclude the explicitly critical language awareness dimensions of national policy, ("listen ... and respond appropriately *and critically*", "read and view ... and *respond critically*", emphasis added).

A greater focus on reading and writing, to be expected in L2 compared to L3, is apparent in the 2003 course outline where the amount and sort of writing are specified. Learners are expected to read two readers, *Sondelani sithethe 2* and *Lumka*, and various poems. A variety of genres such as "advertisements, notices and posters, informal letters, dialogues and conversations, information, stories, descriptions" are listed (Grade 7 Course Outline, 2003:3). Of these, learners had written one description in the first weeks of term. The descriptive paragraph served as an introduction and an appropriate choice to precede the other potentially more difficult factual and imaginative genres.

In terms of De Meija's bilingual models of education, only the maintenance model, aimed at language maintenance and promoting additive bilingualism, applies. The overtly negative assimilationism of the transitional model does not seem to operate at St Katherine's, possibly because independent schools and learners form a small but already cohesive elite tied by their social status and proficiency in a common high status language, English.

4.3 Learners' written output in isiXhosa as L2 and L3

My plan was to copy four weeks of learners' writing in isiXhosa L2 and L3, but in fact what I ended up with was not as tidy. The isiXhosa L2 teacher, Ms Burt, gave me learners' introductory paragraph and goals for isiXhosa (the first piece of writing that they did) and four weeks of written work, mid-February to mid-March. In isiXhosa L3, because learners had one lesson per week, I copied their writing for the term, nine weeks. I did this to ensure sufficient data to compare variation in the amount written as well as in the type of writing. With more than double the classroom time for isiXhosa L2 as compared to L3: 120 minutes per week to 45 minutes, I expected learners to write more in L2 than L3.

School & language level	Grammar exercises	Comprehension exercises	Extended writing tasks
Sea View isiXhosa L3 (9 weeks)	1 task on sounds (contr) 4 Vocabulary tasks (3 contr & 1 guided) 3 Imperative form tasks (guided) 6 tasks on greetings and introductions (1 copied, 1 contr & 4 guided)	None	None
St Katherine's isiXhosa L2 (4 weeks)	1 Vocabulary task (contr); 4 Imperative form tasks (1 contr and 3 guided); 1 exercise of statements in present tense (guided); 1 exercise practising the imperative, statement and question forms (guided)	None	None

Table 2: Amount and kind of isiXhosa writing at Sea View and St Katherine's

Table 2 shows that the amount written in isiXhosa L2 at St Katherine's in four weeks is greater than L3 at Sea View in nine weeks, but the bulk of writing in both schools consists of grammar exercises.

In both isiXhosa L2 and L3, learners wrote mainly grammar exercises focused on developing their accuracy and formulaic greetings and introductions. In the period under review, all the writing was controlled and guided, with learners doing no independent writing or comprehension exercises. An emphasis on guided rather than controlled writing is consistent with L3 assessment standards (DoE 2002).

However, L2 assessment standards require learners to be introduced to a range of genres, and a balance between controlled, guided and independent writing. Part of the reason for the absence of extended texts in isiXhosa L2 writing at St Katherine's is that for most of their schooling the Grade 7 learners at St Katherine's had done isiXhosa L3. As noted, isiXhosa shifted from L3 to L2 at the beginning of 2002.

Because there was no independent writing in either L2 or L3, there was also no writing over which learners had any choice about the topic. The sentence-length grammar exercises in L3 were imperatives or formulaic (greetings and introductions), while the sentences in L2 also included present tense and negative forms of the verb, in addition to imperatives.

To convey some of the differences in learners' isiXhosa written competence, I compare the independently written introductory paragraphs of three isiXhosa L2 learners with the guided paragraphs of three isiXhosa L3 learners. The Sea View learners are Amy, Karen and Kevin and the St Katherine's learners are Palesa, Carol and Clive. The Sea View learners' paragraphs, below, exemplify controlled writing in which learners simply inserted their names into pattern sentences. As they are identical single-clause simple sentences, there is no hypotaxis and no point in Theme/Rheme analysis.

Amy, Karen and Kevin's introductions

Molo Nkosikazi Nash. Igama lam nguAmy. Ifani yam nguHarris. Ndilala eRhini. Hamba kakuhle.	<i>Helle Mrs Nash.// My name is Amy.// My surname is Harris.// I live in Grahamstown.// Go well.//</i>
Molo Nkosikazi Nash. Igama lam nguKaren. Ifani yam nguCross. Ndihlala eRhini. Hamba kakuhle.	<i>Hello Mrs Nash.// My name is Karen.// My surname is Cross.// I live in Grahamstown.// Go well.//</i>
Molo Nkosikazi Nash. Igama lam nguKevin. Ifani yam nguPeters. Ndihlala eRhini. Hamba kakuhle.	<i>Hello Mrs Nash.// My name is Kevin.// My surname is Peters.// I live in Grahamstown.// Go well.//</i>

The Grade 6 assessment standards for writing focus on controlled and guided writing. Some of the genres for L3 mentioned in the assessment standards include filling in simple forms, writing dialogues and popular songs. Controlled writing in the

first term would not be out of place, provided there was progression to guided writing, which would mean that the introductions above be developed into self-descriptions like that of the St Katherine's learners, for instance.

St Katherine's learners' L2 texts are analysed even though all the sentences, bar two in Clive's paragraph, are single simple clauses. Palesa's paragraph in the original isiXhosa is included together with my English translation alongside it, while only the English translation and analysis of Clive and Carol's paragraphs are given.

Translation of Palesa's paragraph

Igama lam nguPalesa. Ndivela eBotswana. Kushushu phaya. Ndineminyaka emi12. Ndithanda ukutya iilekesi neetshipsi. Ndithanda ukudlala imidlalo esikolweni sam. Ndifunda eSt. Katherine's. Abahlobo bam banintsi. Ndithanda ukukhwela ihashe kodwa sine izinja ekhaya. Ndithanda abazali bam. Ndithanda ukuya ukuthenga impahla.	<i>My name is Palesa.// I live in Botswana.// It is hot there.// I am twelve years old.// I like to eat sweets and chips.// I also like to play games at school.// I am studying at St Katherine's.// I have many friends.// I like to go horse-riding// but we have dogs at home.// I love my parents.// I like to go shopping for clothes.//</i>
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Analysis of Palesa's paragraph

Theme			Rheme
Textual	Interpersonal	Topical	
1.		My name	is Palesa.//
2.		I	come from Botswana.//
3.		It	is hot there.//
4.		I	am twelve years old.//
5.		I	like to eat sweets and chips.//
6.		I also	like to play games at school.//
7.		I	am studying at St Katherine's.//
8.		I	have many friends.//
9.		I	like to go horse-riding//
but		We	have dogs at home.//
10.		I	love my parents.//
11.		I	like to go shopping for clothes.//

Analysis of Carol's paragraph

Theme			Rheme
Textual	Interpersonal	Topical	
1.		Your name	is Carol.//
2.		I	live at 2A Lansdowne Rd, Grahamstown.//
3.		I	like sweets, a butterfly and a dress.//
4.		I	don't like carrots, a tie and namafo ¹ .//
5.		I	'm studying at St Katherine's.//
6.		I	have three dogs.//

¹ Namafo does not exist as a word in isiXhosa.

7.		I	have two cats.//
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Analysis of Clive's paragraph

	Theme		Rheme
	Textual	Topical	
1. Hello		my name	is Clive.//
2.		I	live in Grahamstown and Port Elizabeth.//
3.		I my names	have brothers and a sister// are Calvin, Craig and Kate.//
4. In Port Elizabeth		I	farm dairy.//
5.		I I	like the farm// have a motorbike and two four-wheelers.//
6.		I	like sweets and chocolates.//
7. but		I I	don't like fish// like fishing.//
8.		I	have two dogs// called Sindi and Roxi.//

The L2 learners' paragraphs have more developed vocabulary and varied sentence structure than those of the L3 learners. The dominant verbal processes that they employ are mainly Relational ('is' and 'have') and Mental ('like'). These L2 paragraphs are independently written descriptions, while the L3 introductions are controlled grammar tasks. This is in line with the assessment standards for writing (DoE 2002), which spell out a wider range of genres for L2, especially when the L2 will also be a medium of instruction, than for L3. Since African languages are the only languages taught as L3, this means that their usage in school writing is likely to be restricted.

Conclusion

The main purposes of isiXhosa writing, both L2 at St Katherine's and L3 at Sea View, are for grammar practice and testing. The common focus on the imperative form at both schools may foster an assumption that Afrikaans- and English-speaking learners are unlikely to speak as social equals to isiXhosa-speakers in isiXhosa, which would make it difficult, even for L2 learners, to develop critical language awareness. IsiXhosa home-language speakers who are not learning their L1 at school are developing their primary literacy in an additional language, English, and

compromising their literacy levels in their L1. All these consequences of local school language policy are at odds with national language in educational policy.

The implementation of language learning policies at school reflects the unequal power between languages. In countless schools, such as St Katherine's and Sea View, SGBs have not formulated language policy that promotes African languages or meets the needs of isiXhosa-speaking learners. Thus, teachers who are fluent speakers of isiXhosa, not necessarily qualified isiXhosa teachers, take on the task of teaching isiXhosa. When qualified teachers are appointed, they are often employed on a part-time basis. This part-time status is likely to compromise their commitment and capacity to promote African languages in the curriculum.² Despite Edelsky's (1991:28) view that school language programmes cannot shift unequal power relations between languages, this case demonstrates the potential for teachers to effect actual curriculum change. Ms Burt and Ms Nash negotiated greater time allocation for isiXhosa in the school curriculum and thereby ensured it a higher status.

Prevailing language education practices are reinforcing continuing diglossic patterns of African language use, rather than multilingualism. After more than ten years of democracy in South Africa, the pervasive role of African languages is still within the sphere of oral, personal, informal usage. It remains to be seen whether African language speakers will extend the use of African languages in the formal sphere in both speaking and writing, and also as languages of public (and personal) record.

² I make this as an experiential observation; it is not prompted by my interaction with the teachers in this research.

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