

## IMPACT OF SGBS' LANGUAGE POLICY DECISIONS ON LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN HAMMANSKRAAL

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### Abstract

*This study examines the consequences of School Governing Bodies' (SGBs) decisions regarding the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) in primary schools in Hammanskraal, a linguistically diverse context where most learners are not home-language speakers of English. Despite extensive evidence supporting mother-tongue-based education, SGBs continue to prioritise English as the medium of instruction. Anchored in a qualitative interpretive paradigm, the study draws on semi-structured interviews with SGB members, classroom observations, and document analysis of learners' written work. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and Piaget's cognitive development theory frame the analysis, highlighting the central role of language in cognitive development and meaning-making. The findings reveal that English-medium instruction, when introduced without sufficient linguistic scaffolding, leads to difficulties in comprehension, participation, and vocabulary acquisition, as well as subject-specific language, particularly in conceptually demanding subjects such as the Natural Sciences. Teachers often resort to code-switching, underscoring the continued relevance of the mother tongue. The study further demonstrates a misalignment between language policy, governance decisions, and classroom realities. Furthermore, it contributes to broader debates on English-medium instruction in multilingual contexts and provides evidence-based insights to inform language policy reform, including the implementation of the Basic Education Laws Amendment (BELA) Act. Finally, the study recommends an additive bilingual approach that balances mother-tongue instruction with the gradual development of English academic proficiency to promote equitable educational outcomes.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996 provides for the establishment of school governing bodies (SGBs). The SGB is a body that consists of parents, guardians of learners, educators, learners, community leaders, school principals, optionally co-opted members and non-teaching staff (PS staff which stands for public service staff). A school governing body is a committee of elected members that oversees and manages the affairs of the school. The SGB plays a crucial role in ensuring the smooth operation and effective management of the school. It is mandatory that the majority of voting members of the SGB must be parents of learners in that school. According to sections 20 and 21 of the South African School Act (SASA 1996), the SGB's function is to develop the language policy, admission policy, and mission statement, adopt a code of conduct, and adopt a constitution. They also help with discipline, recruitment, promotion of teaching and non-teaching staff, religious practices, property administration, budget and determining times of the school day (Kekana and Makhura, 2020). Although the

school governing body represents many role players, this article will focus mainly on the language policy and why the SGBs chose English as LoLT when they drafted language policies. The article also explores the consequences of SGBs' decisions on the language of instruction. The article seeks the answer to the following research question: How do school governing bodies' decisions regarding the language of learning and teaching influence learners' cognitive development and academic performance in multilingual primary school contexts?

### **Literature Review**

Existing literature on this topic was reviewed to present a summary of different research that were conducted on the impact of the SGBs' decision on the language of instruction. Makgabo and Modise (2020) show that many SGBs from rural and townships choose English as LoLT even if some of the consequences are not pleasing. Research also suggests that non-native English-speaking learners may face challenges that contribute to academic underachievement (O'Connor & Geiger, 2009; Dawber & Jordan, 1999; Ortiz, 1997; Statham, 1997; Makgabo & Modise, 2020). English is the predominant language of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education, and not understanding the language may hinder scientific understanding. According to Ngema (2016), science requires learners to have a conceptual understanding and be able to effectively communicate it in writing (Netshivumbe & Mudau, 2021). At the Grade 7 level, learners should be able to analyse data presented in diagrams and communicate such data in words, and thus, to know some theories and laws and apply them (Nuangchalem & El Islami, 2018). It becomes difficult for learners to understand and conceptualise the content taught when they still struggle with the language used in learning and teaching STEM subjects (Mogashoa, 2017). According to Netshivumbe & Mudau (2021), English, the language of learning and teaching, has been identified as one of the primary barriers to learning science and other subjects for many non-English-speaking South African learners. These learners struggle with vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, comprehension, readability, expression, and communication when writing science examinations.

These findings were also supported by Prinsloo, Rogers, and Harvey (2018) and Mogashoa (2017). This is also confirmed by Cummins (2017), who maintains that academic skills and conceptual understanding acquired in one's native language may be transferred to other languages, as long as the teaching method actively promotes this transfer. Despite these findings, SGBs and educators still prefer English to be used as the language of learning and teaching. The participants of this study emphasised that English should be used to teach and, in the examinations, because it is a universal language. Ngema (2016) supports the statement made by the SGBs and the educators (participants) by suggesting that science terms should be taught in English to learners so that they are able to express themselves and are able to analyse scientific information because there is no other way to teach it other than in English for them to succeed academically (Netshivumbe & Mudau, 2021).

### ***The Language of Learning and Teaching in South Africa***

The SASA states that the governing body has the right to choose the language to be used for learning and teaching in the relevant school. However, in deciding on the language policy, the SGB must comply with the Constitution, the SASA, and the relevant laws in the province. In addition, the Minister of Education may stipulate rules, norms, and standards pertaining to the language policy in public schools (Mabusela and Grootboom, 2016). Since the early 1990s, educators in South Africa have become aware of the need to address language issues in school education. In the former Department of Education and Training (DET) schools, some educators realised that the Language in Education Policy (1997), which encourages the switching of LoLT to English after Grade 3, was contributing to educational failure. This was confirmed by the Reviews of National Policies for Education (OECD, 2008:53), which noted that ten years after democracy, the Department of Education's Grades 3 and 6 systematic evaluation reports

(Department of Education, 2003b, 2005c) continued to indicate generally poor performance. The literacy scores for the Grade 3 systematic evaluation averaged 68% for listening comprehension, while learners achieved only 39% for reading comprehension (Mabusela and Grootboom, 2016). By demonstrating that South Africa's continued educational underachievement is directly linked to early transitions to English-medium instruction, Heugh (2017) provides a crucial policy context for this study. Additionally, Heugh contends that although multilingualism is constitutionally recognized, the prioritization of English and a lack of desire to support mother-tongue-based education beyond the Foundation Phase have hampered its implementation.

With regards to language policy, the South African Constitution stipulates that all the official languages must enjoy equal status and respect, and everyone has the right to receive education in the language of his or her choice in public schools and educational institutions where such education is reasonably practicable (Mabusela and Grootboom; 2016). Makalela's theorization of translanguaging proposes that teachers should use code-switching to facilitate comprehension during classroom activities Makalela, (2018). He views translanguaging as a valid and pedagogically sound practice that enables learners to utilize all their linguistic resources to construct meaning.

According to Dr Mark Cherry (2024) of the Department of Basic Education, Afrikaans-speaking learners demonstrate superior performance in mathematics and science compared to learners whose home language differs from the examination language, attributed to the advantage of being instructed in their mother tongue. According to 2023 TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study), South African Grade 5 learners are ranked last out of 59 countries in mathematics and science. He further stated that one of the reasons for this poor performance is the language used. For the learners who come from households where the home language is the same language as the LOLT, the results are much better compared to learners whose home language is different from the LOLT at school. The SGB members are aware of this problem, yet they still choose English to be used as the language of instruction.

### ***SGBs lack of understanding***

Maile (2002) reports that illiteracy is prevalent among SGB members, particularly among parent governors. This creates problems because they are expected to make major decisions for the school, such as drafting policies, and being illiterate hinders the parent governors from accessing relevant information to help them make those decisions. These result in SGBs relying on the inputs of educators in the drawing up and implementation of policies because they are illiterate (Van Wyk, 2004). Language policy, which the SGBs follow, is situated by Mohohlwane (2019) within the broader context of power, governance, and inequality in postcolonial educational systems. Mohohlwane asserts that language policies frequently serve to exclude by favouring dominant languages while failing to adequately promote linguistic diversity.

Educators take advantage of the situation and make decisions that suit them. Tsotetsi, van Wyk, & Lemmer, (2008) mentioned that all written materials provided by the government are available only in English. Tsotetsi further stated that it is difficult for learners to understand the written materials since they do not understand English. Uysal & Sah (2024) offer a crucial ideological perspective that further examines the reasons why SGBs continue to prioritize English. They contend that language choices in African education systems are profoundly rooted in historical and economic power dynamics that associate English with intelligence and modernity. Yet, the same SGBs want English to be used as LoLT in schools where most parents, including the SGB members, are not proficient in the language.

### **The Basic Education Laws Amendments (BELA) Act**

President Cyril Ramaphosa announced the commencement of the Basic Education Laws Amendment (BELA) Act in 2024, and shortly after, the new Basic Education Minister, Siviwe Gwarube, stated that language policies in schools would be reviewed and updated to align with

the new law (Schrieber, 2024). The enactment of the law occurred in September 2024, but its implementation was partially delayed by the president, with two clauses (4 and 5) being pushed back by three months for further review and consultation. According to the Bela Act, the government will be responsible for setting the language policy in public schools. Prior to this, school governing bodies had been responsible for setting the language policy. The minister, Gwarube, admitted that learners taught in their mother tongue continue to outperform those taught in a second language, highlighting a persistent educational divide (Schrieber, 2024). She further stated that this linguistic divide limits learners' ability to grasp complex concepts, resulting in lower academic achievement in subjects such as mathematics and science. By illustrating how pedagogical translanguaging can be purposefully and methodically employed to enhance comprehension in content areas taught through a second language, Probyn (2019) extends the theory of translanguaging into classroom applications. Given that conceptual comprehension in the Natural Sciences is largely dependent on language, her work is especially pertinent to the emphasis of this study.

Language plays a vital role in facilitating learning, and research has consistently demonstrated that learners taught in their native language outperform those who are instructed in a language different from their home language. The minister stated that: "The constitution provides everyone with the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public institutions, where that education is reasonably practicable. This right must be progressively but equitably realised in line with the available resources." The department has taken proactive steps to ensure a smooth implementation of the new law by providing training to officials in provinces and education districts who will be directly impacted by the change (Schrieber, 2024). She further stated, "At the start of the 2025 school year, these trained officials will guide school principals and school governing bodies through tailored training sessions, supported by oversight from the DBE. Also, the national norms and standards for language policy will be reviewed in the next financial year and, where necessary, will be updated to align with the Bela Act. This will assist school governing bodies in promoting mother tongue education at the school level in a meaningful way that will benefit our learners." (Schrieber, 2024).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory were used to anchor this study. These theories are interconnected and share commonalities in their emphasis on social and cultural contexts, constructivist thought, meaning-making- and interpretation in learning. The theories relate to the study because they emphasise that using a dominant language not native to the speakers could be influenced by a group of people, namely society (SGBs), and it could result in learners having linguistic challenges in learning.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory focuses on the contributions that society makes to child development and how society is critical in child development (Cherry, 2018). Society could include the parents, teachers, peers, SGBs, and other stakeholders. All the mentioned stakeholders are critical in the language acquisition of learners. The learner who is well grounded in the home language will be able to transfer those skills in developing higher-order cognitive functions. Socio-cultural theory also highlights that cultural beliefs and attitudes affect how instruction and learning take place (Cherry, 2018). According to Thobejane (2018), Vygotsky sees language as a social concept since it is developed during social interactions. Vygotsky further explains that the more learners engage with other people, the more they gain knowledge (Thobejane, 2018).

Piaget's cognitive development theory is important in explaining language development in children, and the theory states that children start to learn how to recognise and pronounce words at an early age. It states that children develop symbolic thinking and language at the age of 2-7 years old. They start to understand their native languages at a very young age. Later in life, this

proficiency in their native languages enhances their cognitive abilities, such as problem-solving, critical thinking and memory.

Vygotsky's social constructivism theory adds to Piaget's theory, explaining that learners at an early age construct their knowledge and gain more knowledge when interacting with others. Vygotsky's social-cultural theory and social constructivism both emphasise that learners' language skills improve when they interact with other people (Cherry, 2018). The problem is that they spend most of their time interacting in their home language. This means that they construct their knowledge and gain more knowledge in their native languages.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This study followed a qualitative research approach and falls under the interpretive research paradigm. Researchers use the interpretive paradigm to view the world through the experiences of the participants (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). Interviews, questionnaires, classroom observation, and documentation were used as collect data tools. The participants were the SGB members and the teachers. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with the SGB members to understand their reasons behind choosing English as LOLT over Setswana in the primary school in the area where Setswana is the main spoken language. The classroom observations where teachers were observed while teaching. Finally, the document analysis was done using the learners' exam answer books to see how they responded to the questions. Data collected were used to understand the reason behind choosing English as LOLT in the Science class.

### **Participants**

Two primary schools were selected, and they were designated as School A and School B. The two schools are located in Hammanskraal, Gauteng province in South Africa. The first chosen school is from Stinkwater which is in the township part of Hammanskraal, and the second chosen school is from Majaneng which is a rural village. Stinkwater and Majaneng are both located in Hammanskraal and fall under the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality. The City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality had a population of 4 040 315 in 2022 (Statistics South Africa, 2022). The participants were purposefully selected based on their in language policy formulation and implementation. SGB members were selected because they are legally mandated to determine language policy under South African School Act (SASA), while teachers were selected because of their role in endorsing these policies in classrooms. It is for the above reasons that participants possessed relevant experiential and institutional knowledge.

### **Data Analysis**

The interview questions were developed in alignment with the study's research questions, the literature on language policy and the English medium instruction. Also, the two theoretical frameworks of Vygotsky and Piaget were taken into consideration when the interview question were developed. The main aim of those developed questions was to explore rationales for language choice by the SGB members, what they perceived to be the benefits and challenges, as well as observing the learner responses. Classroom observations focused on language use, learner participation, and the frequency together with instances of code-switching. Regarding the document analysis of learners' written work, this provided additional insight into language-related learning challenges. Since this study was conducted at the research sites that were unfamiliar to the researcher, there was no bias during data collection.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Findings**

The findings of this study can inform language policy in other multilingual contexts by supporting the extension of mother-tongue instruction beyond the Foundation Phase, as learners

in the Intermediate Phase still struggle with English as the medium of instruction. Additionally, there should be structured additive bilingual education models in place to support both teachers and learners in the classroom. For the SGB members to make crucial decisions, such as deciding on the language of learning and teaching, there should be mandatory linguistic assessments to determine the learners' ability to cope before adopting English as the medium of instruction.

The findings reveal a complex interaction between language policy, which supports the LoLT being taught in English at grade four, the learners' cognitive development, and sociocultural influences. Vygotsky's theory emphasizes the significance of social support in language acquisition; however, the study reveals that learners often lack the necessary parental and community involvement due to language barriers. Similarly, Piaget's theory suggests that cognitive development should facilitate second-language acquisition, yet learners struggle with fundamental English skills. These discrepancies indicate that using English as LoLT presents challenges that contradict both theoretical perspectives, necessitating a more contextually appropriate approach to language instruction that considers cognitive and sociocultural factors.

Data gathered from the interviews indicated that the SGB members are aware of the above-mentioned consequences, yet they still prefer English to be used as LoLT, citing that English is a universal language and using English in schools will give the learners an advantage in the future when communicating with people across the globe. They (the SGB) only focus on the positive consequences and choose to ignore the negative consequences of using English as LoLT. Perhaps the SGB members are unaware of these negative consequences. The two interviewed SGBs stressed that English should be introduced as LoLT from Grades R to 12 to equip learners with linguistic skills and prepare them accordingly for the intermediate, senior, and FET phases. Tsotetsi, Van Wyk & Lemmer (2008) demonstrate that sections 20 and 21 of SASA stipulate that the SGB of public schools must develop a mission statement and determine the language policy of the schools. Therefore, they are empowered to either change the LoLT to English or to Setswana. The new law, called the BELA Bill, was implemented in 2024, and it came as a solution to this problem. The BELA Bill no longer allows SGBs to choose the language of instruction in public schools. According to the Bela Act, the government will be responsible for setting the language policy in public schools.

The study's findings revealed that, although SGB members make decisions regarding the language of learning and teaching, these decisions require their linguistic skills and evidence of their ability to make such decisions. Without the above, their decision on the choice of language of learning and teaching negatively impacts the learners' cognitive development and academic performance. Mohohlwane (2020) assertion that democratic participation in school governance does not always lead to fair results, especially when decision-makers lack linguistic and pedagogical knowledge, is reflected in the study's conclusions.

## **Discussion**

The findings are discussed according to Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory. The findings of this study on the use of English as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) reveal both positive and negative consequences. The two theories that anchor this study were used to analyse the findings to understand how language choice affects cognitive and linguistic development among learners.

### **Positive Consequences in Relation to Theoretical Frameworks**

#### ***Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory***

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory emphasises the role of social interactions in cognitive development. The decision by School Governing Bodies (SGBs) to use English as LoLT aligns with Vygotsky's belief that language acquisition is a social process influenced by cultural and societal factors. One SGB was asked during the interview why they preferred English as LoLT, and the answer was that it would help learners in the future when they must work abroad; yet,

the SGB himself wanted to be interviewed in Setswana. The justification provided by the SGBs that English is an international language and is necessary for academic and professional success highlights their recognition of English as a tool for global communication and access to educational resources. By situating SGBs' language decisions within a wider national trend of policy-practice misalignment, Heugh's (2017) work strengthens this study, supporting the idea that local government choices are influenced by systemic constraints rather than individual preferences. The results of this study mirror the claim that extended mother-tongue instruction is not a remedial approach, but rather a fundamental prerequisite for cognitive growth and academic achievement.

The emphasis on English as a medium of instruction due to the availability of textbooks, examination papers, and educational resources supports Vygotsky's notion that knowledge is socially constructed. By advocating for English, SGBs aim to integrate learners into a globalised educational and economic system, thereby increasing their future opportunities. Using English in multilingual settings, such as Hammanskraal, is consistent with Vygotsky's view that language mediates learning and is crucial for cognitive development in a socially diverse environment.

### ***Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory***

Piaget's theory suggests that language development occurs in stages and that cognitive growth influences a child's ability to acquire and use a second language. The argument that early exposure to English prepares learners for tertiary education and professional life aligns with Piaget's assertion that cognitive abilities expand as children mature.

From the Concrete Operational stage (ages 7-11), children are expected to develop logical reasoning and transition to learning a second language. The SGBs' preference for English assumes that learners in this stage can effectively acquire English without significant cognitive difficulty. Moreover, at the Formal Operational stage (age 12 and above), learners should be capable of abstract reasoning and applying second-language skills effectively. However, the findings suggest that many learners struggle with basic English skills, indicating a discrepancy between Piaget's expected developmental trajectory and actual learner performance. Uysal & Sah (2024) contend that language policy frequently replicates inequality by marginalizing African languages and restricting epistemic access for learners from linguistically minoritised communities, and the results of the study support this claim.

### **Negative Consequences in Relation to Theoretical Frameworks**

This section highlights the negative consequences related to the above theories. Those consequences are also perceived as a contradiction to what the two theories stand for. Those contradictions are highlighted below.

### ***Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory***

While Vygotsky's theory supports social interactions as essential for language learning, the findings indicate that using English as LoLT in arrears where English is either a second, third or even a fourth language creates barriers rather than facilitating knowledge construction. The decision by SGBs to implement English as LoLT, despite their own difficulties understanding English educational materials, highlights a contradiction to their decision. The lack of parental and community involvement due to limited English proficiency undermines the role of social support in learning.

The observed classroom lessons revealed significant discrepancies between theoretical expectations and actual classroom experiences. Teachers were found to frequently code-switch between English and Setswana, highlighting the necessity of the mother tongue in bridging learning gaps. According to Vygotsky, this reliance on the native language demonstrates that learners require scaffolding to acquire English proficiency.

According to Vygotsky, learners acquire knowledge through interaction with more knowledgeable others (MKOs), such as parents, teachers, and peers. However, the study findings

show that many learners are raised by grandparents who do not understand English, limiting their access to MKOs who can support their learning. This contradicts Vygotsky's notion that learning is a collaborative process, as many learners lack social support at home due to language barriers. Cummins'(2017) argument that subtractive bilingual models impede knowledge transfer is supported by the results of this study, which highlight learners' challenges with English academic language and teachers' reliance on home languages through code-switching. This study supports the claim that mother-tongue instruction promotes greater cognitive involvement and long-term academic success by adhering to Cummins' framework and demonstrating that it does not impede English learning.

### ***Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory***

Piaget's theory assumes that language development progresses systematically, allowing children to build upon prior knowledge. However, the findings suggest that non-native English speakers struggle with basic literacy skills, contradicting Piaget's assertion that children transition smoothly to second-language learning. Learners at the Formal Operational stage, from the age of 12 and above, should theoretically be fluent in English, but the study reveals persistent difficulties with spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension. Furthermore, Piaget's theory posits that children construct knowledge through active engagement. However, classroom observations indicate that learners disengage from lessons due to their inability to understand the content in English. This contradicts the expectation that learners at the Concrete and Formal Operational stages should effectively process and apply second-language knowledge.

The overuse of code-switching in classrooms further suggests that learners rely on their native language as a cognitive tool, supporting Vygotsky's assertion that language is essential for thought development. However, Piaget's theory would suggest that by the age of 12, learners should already be able to function in English without heavy reliance on their first language. The observed classroom behaviours indicate that many learners have not yet reached the expected level of linguistic competence in their second language, challenging Piaget's developmental assumptions.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations of the study are stated below, and they were made for the Department of Basic Education, SGBs, and the schools. The Department of Basic Education should at least make training manuals for SGBs and parents available in all languages spoken in the province, especially in rural areas where many people do not understand English. SGBs are also parents, and they play key roles in their children's educational paths. Therefore, they need to be capacitated with the necessary skills, knowledge, and expertise to make informed, effective, and strategic decisions regarding the importance of grounding their children with the correct language. In line with promoting bilingualism and multilingualism, the Department of Education should provide translation services, such as bilingual resources, science dictionaries, or textbooks, to support learners.

Also, to help learners, the Department of Basic Education and Schools should provide translated assessments or offer bilingual assessments to cater to the diverse linguistic needs of learners. This would ensure that learners who are more proficient in their mother tongue have an equal opportunity to perform better in the examinations. The study noted that the research participants struggled with spelling proficiency. To address this, the study recommends introducing spelling competitions, such as spelling bees, across all grade levels to foster improved literacy skills and healthy academic competition. To enhance scientific literacy, teachers should systematically introduce key scientific terms when presenting new topics. Additionally, learners should engage in regular activities, such as definitions, concept mapping, and vocabulary exercises, to reinforce their understanding of scientific terminology.

Furthermore, the study recommends that the Teacher Training programmes should include the module(s) on bilingual pedagogy and translanguaging strategies.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study provides empirical evidence that premature English immersion, without appropriate scaffolding in the mother tongue, compromises comprehension and participation. In other multilingual contexts, policymakers can draw on this evidence to justify extended mother-tongue instruction, structured bilingual models, and mandatory linguistic impact assessments before adopting English as LoLT. This study was conducted in the Hammanskraal area and is only limited to few schools. Therefore, the findings only reveal the reality in those research sites where Setswana is used as the predominant language. I suggest that more studies should be conducted in other areas to see what the results would be like.

The findings reveal that the SGB's decision on language policy poses a complex interaction between language policy, cognitive development, and sociocultural influences. While English as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) is promoted as a gateway to global academic and economic opportunities, it simultaneously presents significant cognitive and social challenges for non-native speakers. However, a critical oversight occurs when SGBs neglect to consider the potential negative repercussions of their decisions, instead opting to disregard them. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory underscores the necessity of social support in language acquisition, yet the study highlights the absence of adequate parental and community involvement, intensifying learning difficulties. Similarly, Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory suggests a structured progression in second-language learning. Still, the findings indicate that there is a persistent gap between expected linguistic development and actual learner competencies.

The reliance on English as LoLT, without sufficient linguistic scaffolding, creates barriers that hinder effective learning. The observed classroom practices, including frequent code-switching, highlight the need for a more contextually appropriate approach to language instruction. A balanced language policy that integrates learners' home languages while gradually developing English proficiency may provide a more effective strategy for enhancing comprehension and academic success. Future educational policies should consider cognitive and sociocultural dimensions to create an inclusive learning environment that supports language development without compromising understanding and engagement. In response to this gap, the government introduced the BELA bill, granting them the authority to establish language policies in public schools. The study's conclusion that learners have difficulty comprehending subject matter in English and that teachers' spontaneous code-switching acts as crucial support, rather than a pedagogical failure, is supported by Probyn's (2019) research. By portraying classroom language mixing as a theoretically sound instructional approach rather than an improvised reaction to learner challenges, Probyn's work enhances the study's instructional implications. This viewpoint is consistent with the study's conclusion that exclusively English policies are pedagogically inconsistent with learners' linguistic reality. Makalela's (2018) work makes the case for additive bilingual methods and supports the informal practices instructors use to mitigate the limitations of language policies imposed by SGB decisions by highlighting translanguaging as a valuable resource.

## **FUNDING**

This study received no external funding. All research activities, including data collection, analysis, and report writing, were completed using personal resources. Even without funding, the study was carried out successfully using available tools and a practical approach.

## **INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT**

Participation in this study is voluntary. By taking part, participants confirm that they have been informed about the purpose, procedures, possible risks, and benefits of the study. They also

understand that their identities will be kept confidential and that the information they provide will be used only for research purposes.

#### DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data used in this study are not publicly available because participant privacy and confidentiality must be protected. This is done to follow ethical research standards and data protection rules. However, researchers who need the data for validation or further analysis may submit a request. Any request will be reviewed case by case, and data can only be shared with approval from the appropriate institutional ethics board.

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