

Negotiating a nuanced task-based communicative syllabus of Setswana as an additional language

A B S T R A C T South Africa promotes multilingualism as one of the means for creating a common national identity in the country but with regard to the teaching of indigenous African languages as additional languages, there is a dearth of teaching material for carrying out this ideal. This article is about negotiating the design of a nuanced communicative Setswana syllabus for learners to whom Setswana is an additional language. The insight gained from data collection obtained through literature review, a questionnaire, and semi-structured individual and group interviews, is used to negotiate the design of the syllabus in question. The syllabus is nuanced by making it involve an overt teaching of grammar and critical language awareness. The study could be used to inform syllabus design for teaching South African indigenous languages as additional languages and to help promote the use of multilingualism South Africa seeks for creating a common national identity.

Keywords: syllabus design, teaching methodology, task-based, additional language, Setswana, adult learners, needs analysis

1. Introduction

Section 6 of The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996 provides for the promotion of multilingualism in order to create a common national identity because during the Apartheid era linguistic differences among the various language groups were, instead of being celebrated, perversely used to divide people. The Constitution also provides for the development and promotion of the use of the indigenous languages of South Africa, such as Setswana, which had been marginalised in the past. In this way, the country is trying to promote multilingualism

as one of the means for creating a common national identity. It is against this background that the participants of the current study asked me to start and run classes for Setswana as an additional language so that they could learn the language.

On being asked why they wanted to take Setswana lessons, some of them (the participants) said they were particularly interested in conversing with Setswana speakers who could not understand English or communicate in it well. Research carried out by Mark Data (2001:11) on behalf of the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) indicates, for example, that “communication of political, policy and administrative information in South Africa is generally understood by half of the non-English speaking population”. It is the other half, the half that cannot converse in English well, particularly the Setswana-speaking people in the Mafikeng/Mmabatho area, that the participants wanted to reach out to by means of conversing with them in a language that they understood well. Besides wanting to learn the Setswana language, some of the participants indicated they were also interested in understanding the Setswana culture embedded in the language. One of the problems faced, when preparing for the classes, was that there was not a good syllabus that could be used. The teaching of Setswana in Mafikeng/Mmabatho has been confined to the teaching of this language as a first language. Where Setswana is taught as an additional language, it is often steeped in translation and traditional grammar and is seldom used as communicatively as the participants of the current study would like it to be. I decided, therefore, to design a task-based syllabus for English speakers to whom Setswana was an additional language and make it nuanced by teaching form, culture and critical language awareness communicatively without separating these components from one another. In the current study, negotiating the design of a task-based communicative syllabus for Setswana as an additional language entails that findings in the literature, learners’ needs and views, (obtained through a questionnaire, individual and group interviews) and the teacher’s observations provide a framework for the participants and the teacher to forge in an on-going and adaptive way the structuring of a syllabus throughout the duration of the course within fairly well-defined parameters.

2. Second-/foreign language learning

Context usually determines the definitions of the terms “second” and “foreign” language. While Richards *et al.* (1985:108) remark that in North America the terms “second” and “foreign” language are used synonymously, they, however, make the following distinction between these concepts: according to them, “A foreign language is a language which is taught as a school subject but is not used as a medium of instruction in schools nor as the language of communication within a country (e.g. in government, business, or industry)”. They then define a second language as “a language which is not a native language in a country but which is widely used as a medium of communication (e.g. in education, and in government) and which is usually used alongside another language or languages”. The distinction Richards *et al.* posit does not match what is a second and foreign language in South Africa. A good example of this is provided by Kilfoil and Van der Walt (1997:4-5) when they observe that:

For many Afrikaans-speaking children, English is a second language, although it is not a language of learning/teaching (the medium of instruction). For Northern Sotho speakers, English may have been learnt later than Afrikaans (in other words,

it is their third language) but they are taught through the medium of English. In rural areas, Setswana or IsiZulu may be the second language for Afrikaans-speaking children, in the sense that they hear these languages much more often than they hear English, but they are taught English as a second language whereas for them it is actually a foreign language.

The purpose for which a language is used and the social status of that language can determine, then, whether it is a second or foreign language. For ideological and pragmatic reasons, English is, usually, seen as a second language in South Africa because of its status, not because of its usefulness to the various sections of the South African citizenry. In Gauteng, isiZulu is the most commonly used language (Kilfoil & Van der Walt, 1997:5) but since this language does not have the status that English has and is not used for wider communication outside of the country, it is not regarded as the second language of that province.

In the current study, the target language was, broadly speaking, a foreign language to the learners. There was a scarcity of resources for teaching Setswana to non-mother tongue speakers. Bookshops and libraries normally had very few support materials in South African indigenous languages, let alone the availability of these on the teaching and learning of native tongues to non-native learners. In one of the questions in the questionnaire, the respondents said they had very few opportunities to practise using Setswana outside of the classroom. Only 25% of them said they could engage in some superficial discourse now and then. This included exchanging greetings, and giving orders to their Setswana gardeners and maids but, strictly speaking, being one of the indigenous languages of South Africa, Setswana is not a foreign language in the setting of the current study hence the use of the phrase “additional language” in the title of this article. Acquiring the ability to converse more meaningfully in Setswana would, then, make the language more of an additional language than a foreign language.

3. Teaching methods

A number of teaching methods have influenced how a second/foreign language is taught, and they form a large part of the current study's theoretical framework. These include the grammar translation method, the audiolingual method, the comprehensible input method, the interaction method, and the communicative language teaching method.

3.1 The grammar translation method

The grammar translation method posits that language is acquired through memorising grammar rules and isolated vocabulary, manipulation of the morphology and the syntax of the language being learnt, and translation. The method focuses on the teaching of reading of literary texts and some writing and ignores the teaching of listening and speaking skills (Richards & Rogers, 1999:4-5). The major weakness of the grammar translation method is that learners' knowledge of rules or accuracy and decontextualised input seldom translates into the ability to use them outside of the classroom. In the questionnaire used in the current study, one of the learners indicated that she hoped the course would not be as replete with translation exercises and, consequently, as ineffective as the distance learning one she had taken before.

3.2 The audiolingual method

The audiolingual method came into being mainly as a reaction to the grammar translation method, which had not made learners as fluent speakers as was required (Richards & Rodgers,

1999:5). Although it purports to develop learners' oral skills, it rarely creates opportunities for learners to use language spontaneously in and outside of the classroom and often causes learners to overgeneralise drills in places where they are not supposed to be used. Also, when new grammatical points are added, learners often fail to apply the forms they seemed to have already acquired. It emphasises, instead, memorisation of decontextualised language drills and role-play. Allowing learners to speak naturalistically is discouraged in the audiolingual method because it is thought it may reinforce the errors learners make, which are regarded as bad habits to be eliminated or avoided before they can even occur (Larsen-Freeman, 1986:40). It has, however, been proven that language errors in foreign language learning are an indication that learning is taking place (Ellis, 1995:109). This happens as learners use their knowledge creatively to construct rules governed by their interlanguage.

Both the grammar translation and the audiolingual methods are driven by structuralist approaches that emphasise the importance of linguistic accuracy right at the beginning of learning and pay very little attention to context, meaning, and conversation. The learners of the current study stressed that their course should be conversational. It was observed, in the current study, that if learners did too many role-plays in a lesson, boredom would set in.

3.3 The comprehensible input method

According to the comprehensible input method, language acquisition occurs by means of exposing learners (through listening and/or reading) to as much input they can understand as possible (Lightbown & Spada, 2006:144). This implies that learners do not need drills and practice to learn or to speak a second language as long as they are given written or oral/aural input. Consequently, learners are given a great deal of reading and listening comprehension exercises with very few or no opportunities for them to converse with their peers or the teacher (Krashen, 1985, 1989). However, learners' attention needs to be drawn to the forms of the target language through means such as negotiated output hypothesis (Gass, 1997; Swain, 1995). It is when learners are forced to verbalise their knowledge of the target language (in negotiated output) that they become aware of the gaps in their target language and are thereby made to close these gaps by putting into practice the language form and functions they are learning. As suggested in the complaint about a distance learning Setswana course one of the participants took, which most probably gave learners comprehensive comprehensible input without creating opportunities for interaction, an input-driven language course will almost always be deficient.

3.4 The interaction method

The interaction method is about the use of both comprehensible input and conversational interaction as techniques for promoting language development. It tries to stimulate conversation among learners and between learners and the teacher. Learners carry out language functions as they negotiate meaning, particularly when they work in pairs or groups performing a task or solving a problem. As they engage in their given individual and collaborative tasks, learners acquire the language forms that express the meaning being dealt with. The focus in this technique is on the "what" rather than on the "how" of what is being said.

One of the disadvantages of the interaction method is its emphasis on the use of implicit correction of learners' errors. When corrective feedback is implicit (for example, through the

use of recasts and repetitions), it might be perceived as another way of saying the same thing or a continuation of conversation rather than correction. This is one of the reasons the syllabus of the present study is nuanced, through (among other means) drawing attention to form and encouraging interrogation of the lexical and syntactic options a speaker/writer exercises in constructing a Setswana text. This practice tends to engender a great deal of animated discussion, which the learners said they need to have a great deal of in the course.

3.5 The communicative language teaching (CLT) method

The popular version of the communicative language teaching (CLT) method posits that learning and teaching a foreign language are mainly about conversation, with very little attention paid to the rules of the language being learned and critical language awareness. A nuanced version maintains that while meaning-focused instruction is important, it is also necessary to teach linguistic forms overtly as well (Brown, 2000; Ellis, 1995; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Gass, 1998; Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Long 1983), because besides the possibility that implicit correction might not be noticed, adult learners like the ones in the current study have higher cognition and may demand to know some of the rules of their target language. Moreover, since there is usually not sufficient time for learners to discover rules on their own, particularly in an adult after-working-hours class, it might be advisable to draw learners' attention to some rules. In a nuanced version of the CLT method, it is accepted that although metalanguage may be used to offer explanations, especially when adult learners raise these, as they often do, this should not be an important part of a lesson; learners should not be expected to explain why something is right or wrong.

While in a nuanced CLT method it is acknowledged that there is an element of truth in saying that children learn some of the regular and routine aspects of language through imitation, especially at the earliest stages and that drills and role-play could, because of this, be used in an adult class, it is maintained that these should be done as judiciously as possible because they are likely to diminish learners' motivation if they are overused; emphasis should be on creation of meaning in contextualised language. Similarly, nuanced CLT may use some insights from the comprehensible input method such as the truth that exposure is the first step in learning a foreign language, but not lose sight of the fact that practice or conversational interaction has the capacity to force learners to process language at a deeper level where learners are made to confront their failure to verbalise what they want to say, thus drawing their attention to the language forms and notions they have not yet learned.

In addition, it is important to take into account the broader socio-cultural and political realities impacting on language learning of a particular teaching and learning environment. Mainstream second-language acquisition has been called into question mainly because it tends to ignore the social variables that influence language use, which if language learners have not acquired an awareness of, many proponents of critical socio-linguistics would probably regard their learning as inadequate. As far as the proponents of critical language awareness (for example Hall, 1997 and Lantofl & Appell, 1994) are concerned, the grammar translation, the audiolingual, the comprehensible input, the interaction, and the CLT methods are all fundamentally structuralist and lacking in their exposition of language use, if not misleading, because their main underlying assumption is that there is an "appropriate" way of using

language with which learners should comply. This ideology perpetuates the status quo and unequal power relations embedded in language use. A focus on language and power relations in learning an additional language would meet the participants' expressed need to learn not only the Setswana language but also the culture, that is, the values, beliefs and attitudes that are attendant upon power relations in language use in a critical way. Some of the participants in the current study indicated that they would like to acquire the culture that goes together with Setswana and because they are adults, they surely did not mean merely absorbing Setswana culture but interrogating it and perhaps their own against Setswana's as well.

With regard to the mode of teaching, some of the participants said in one of the interviews they would like the lessons to be multi-modal (as is the usual practice in CLT), involving the use of audios (for example, songs, recitals and rap), a performance (for example, role-play and miming), visuals (for example, drawings, paintings, and pictures) and audio-visuals (for example, films) and/or a combination of these.

3.6 A nuanced task-based communicative method

The teaching methods above informed the teacher what kind of syllabus would be in line with current second/foreign language acquisition theories and suitable for the participants in the current study. The syllabus was nuanced because while task-based, it was premised on, among others, the principle that since there is no single methodology that is sufficient on its own to meet all learning teaching situations, it is advisable to borrow what works from the various available methodologies. It was largely negotiated in the sense of being loosely pre-planned in terms of course content and in recognition of the fact that learners' needs can change during a course. It contained, therefore, elements of the process syllabus but balanced these with the teacher's judgement to pre-select the content of the first six lessons and to distinguish between learners' wants and real needs.

It was because of the importance of the participants' needs, the theoretical framework and acquisitional context discussed above, that the data collection method below was chosen.

4. Methodology

The current study is mainly qualitative and descriptive. It involved an intact group of twelve adult learners in an informal teaching and learning site. Initially, seventeen learners registered for the course but by the time it ended, five had dropped out and so only twelve were left. Of these, seven were female and five male. Their ages ranged from 20 years to 40 and above and their average age was 40 years and above. All the participants were competent speakers of English, hence the use of the phrase "English speaking", and eleven of them either did not know Setswana at all or were at the beginner's level with minor variations here and there. Only one learner was at the intermediate level. The group was multilingual and multicultural, its members having originally come from Africa, Europe, the Caribbean, North America and Asia. English was the learners' lingua franca but some of the respondents could speak other languages such as chiChewa, isiZulu, isiXhosa, chiShona, French, Afrikaans, Hausa, Twi, Lozi, Douala and Singalese. The learners lived in the Mafikeng/Mmabatho area.

Three instruments were used for obtaining data: a questionnaire, semi-structured individual and group interviews and observations. The questionnaire was used to get the participants'

biographical information and to assess their (the participants') language needs and preferences in terms of running the lessons so that when the syllabus was being negotiated, these factors could be taken into account. It was administered after the participants had had the first six lessons. This timing was chosen because it was thought that the participants needed to have some idea of what the course might be about before they voiced their opinions about it. Some of the questions were open-ended and others were closed-end.

Individual interviews were carried out informally and involved nine of the twelve participants. They occurred whenever there was convenient time to talk about the course with individual learners who sometime arrived before the lessons began or who stayed behind for one reason or another. Group interviews were unstructured and conducted at an agreed upon time and lasted about thirty minutes every three months. Both types of interviews centred on the content of the course, the aims, and pedagogy and both were meant to cross-check the information that had been collected in the questionnaire, to create another means of involving the participants in making the course relevant to learners' needs and to save time.

The writer's own observations were also used. These were informed by the literature on second/foreign language learning and my lived experience as a learner of additional languages (English, Setswana, Afrikaans and French) to reflect on the aspects of the design and the implementation of the course. Furthermore, two Setswana native speakers¹ sat in on some of the lessons and observed the lessons. One did this four times and the other six. The purpose of involving the observers was to obtain objective evaluation of how the course was unfolding and how it could develop in future. Their feedback was discussed with the class together with the teacher. One of them volunteered to give two lessons, demonstrating how the acquisition of vocabulary through language games could be taught. The other one gave demonstrations of how contextualised grammar, culture and critical language awareness could be integrated into one lesson.

The lessons were held in a classroom of a primary school on the premises of a church in Mmabatho. Classes took place between 18:00 and 19:00 because the majority of the learners were full-time employees and finished work between 16:00 and 17:00. The lessons were held on Tuesdays and Thursdays each week and if a bank holiday fell on any of these days, class would be cancelled. The course lasted one year. Besides being task-based, the syllabus was mainly process-based. Except for the small content the teacher had pre-selected, most of what was taught was negotiated during the course of the lessons.

Since the main objective of the course was to teach learners to converse informally in Setswana, the lessons emphasised the teaching of the speaking skill. The course engaged learners cognitively in various problem-solving tasks appropriate for the learners' age. Songs, drills and role-play were used sparingly. A workbook, hand-outs and teaching aids, such as an overheard projector, pictures and realia were used frequently. Learners would often work individually at first, and in pairs/groups later, and as a class at the end. I would also only assess how lessons were going and apply intervention where necessary. The course was not officially accredited. Learners only received a certificate of attendance through the church.

¹ Many thanks to Mr Abram Molope and Ms Kelebogile Botshelong who gave their time so sacrificially. *Le ka moso, Bagaetsho!*

5. Results and discussion

Although some of the findings of all the instruments used in this article have already been discussed above, this section highlights the key findings of mainly the questionnaire and interviews in relation to the attempt of the study to provide a pedagogically sound input to meet the participants' need to acquire conversational Setswana.

5.1 Adult learners

The questionnaire (see the appendix) revealed that all the participants of the current study were adults. Unlike children who have an advantage of a vast amount of exposure to their first language, all the participants reported having very limited exposure to the target language and very few opportunities to practise using it outside of the classroom. However, despite the advantages young learners appear to have over adult learners, Lightbown and Spada (2006:69) remark that “learners who begin learning a second language at a primary school do not always achieve greater proficiency in the long run than those who begin in adolescence”. They also observe that most studies on the critical learning period, the time when biological mechanisms specifically designed for language acquisition cease to function at or even just before puberty, are based solely on pronunciation (*loc. cit.*). Moreover, adult learners possess heightened metalinguistic awareness, memory strategies, longer attention span, and problem solving skills (Ellis, 1995:108). In addition, adult learners often use their first language and/or other languages they know as resources to acquire the target language (Spacks, 1998:735-740). Thus, the participants could use their first language and/or other languages they knew as resources, particularly as this related to lexical transfer. Shona and Lozi (Bantu languages spoken in Zimbabwe and Namibia, respectively) could, for instance, translate *thenda*, and *rata* into Setswana *rata*. English speakers could translate “teacher” and “centre” into Setswana *titshere*, and *sentara*, and Afrikaans speakers could translate *draad* and *papier* into Setswana *terata* and *pampiri*. This capacity can give adult learners an advantage over young learners.

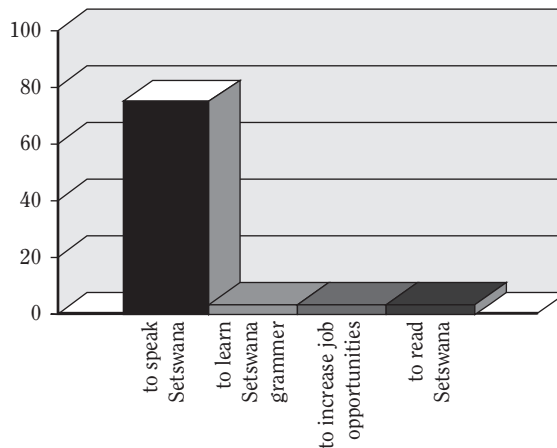
Using one's first language as a resource for acquiring one's target language can be disadvantageous, though. Some linguistic items of a first language cannot be positively transferred to a target language, particularly when the languages involved are distant from each other. This disjuncture results from the semantic vacuums and semantic restrictions present in languages. IsiZulu learners of Setswana, for example, might find it easy to equate the Setswana term *leoto* (foot) with its isiZulu equivalent, *umyawo*, but find it difficult to extend, as Setswana does, the meaning of the same term to denote “foot” and “foreleg”, because isiZulu has two terms for those notions i.e. *umyawo* and *umlenze*, respectively. Conversely, isiZulu learners would have to extend their restricted semantics of some of their vocabulary such as *ingubo* (blanket or clothes) to two notions in Setswana i.e. *kobo* (blanket) and *diaparo* (clothes).

Again, since the participants were adults, they could spell out what kind of assessment they preferred. 67% of them indicated in the questionnaire that they were against taking formal tests and 33% said they would not mind getting tested now and then and 62% of the latter said they would like the test to be oral, 25% said they wanted it to be both oral and written and only 13% said they wanted it to be written. Because the majority of the participants had said they were in favour of informal assessment and I also thought in an adult, informal conversation class

like the one this article is about, it would be advisable to utilise informal continual assessment throughout. Besides utilising my own assessment and intervention when necessary, learners were encouraged to assess themselves and to be assessed by their peers through the successful completion of the tasks they did.

5.2 Speaking

Figure 1: Participants' reasons for taking Setswana lessons.



As the above Figure 1 of the questionnaire shows, the main reason for wanting to take Setswana lessons for 75% of the respondents was that they could acquire the ability to converse in the language. (This was confirmed in the interviews where most of the participants expressed the same desire). The rest said they wanted to be able to read Setswana texts (8.33%), to acquire Setswana grammar (8.33%), and to increase their job opportunities (8.33%).

Owing to the participants' greater need to communicate in Setswana, the proposed course is focused on the teaching of basic interpersonal communicative (BIC) skills and pays very little attention to cognitively demanding academic (CALP) skills. Speaking is important for noticing or consciousness raising (Swain, 1995:129-130), which occurs when during encoding the target language students become aware of the shortcomings between what they want to express and what they can express. This realisation might result in their awareness that there are still some parts of the target language they have not yet acquired, which might, in turn, activate cognitive processes which may produce new linguistic knowledge, or which may consolidate current knowledge. While intelligibility of the message was regarded as more important than accuracy in the present course, learners' form-focused instruction was not ignored. In other words, the kind of basic Setswana targeted in the course was not *Fanakalo*². *Fanakalo* has been discredited because it often creates, maintains and perpetuates unequal power relations between the powerful and the disempowered (Adendorff, 1995: 177). Teaching form overtly was one of the nuances given to the type of communicative lessons the participants were taught.

² *Fanakalo* (also *Fanagalo*) is, according to the *South African Concise Oxford Dictionary* (2002) "a language developed as a lingua franca by the southern African mining companies, composed of elements of the Nguni languages, English and Afrikaans".

To facilitate conversation, input should be task-based. It was made clear to the learners what the tasks were that they were required to carry out, what type of materials they might have to use, and the procedure they should follow in executing the tasks. Most importantly, the tasks were made relevant to real-life situations. Sometimes contextualised formulaic phrases were used to make learners aware how much they could achieve with the limited language they had. This engendered confidence in the learner. *Ke ne ke botsa gore ...* (“What would be” ...), for example, can be used to elicit information on a wide range of issues. However, emphasis should, most of the time, be put on engaging the learner cognitively and meaningfully.

Most of the learners (66.66%) were at the beginners’ level. 25.01% of them indicated that their knowledge of Setswana was almost nil. Only one learner (8.33%) was at the intermediate level. Both the participants who said their Setswana was at the near-nil level and the ones who said they were at the beginner’s level indicated that their target competency was at the intermediate level. Only the one student who was already at the intermediate level wanted to attain a native-speaker-like competency. In other words, none of the participants said he/she wanted to be still at the beginner’s level at the end of the course. It was no surprise that the intermediate respondent’s needs were a little different from those of the rest of the class. Like most advanced learners, she had mastered the basics of Setswana and appeared to require expansion mainly in the areas of negation, socially acceptable style, conversational Setswana idiom, increased speed in decoding and encoding Setswana and more intelligible accent, especially in distinguishing low and high Setswana tones. Ellis and Barkhuizen (2006:140) note that “...learners with an integrative orientation may seek to complexify their grammatical system by adhering to target language norms. Such learners may prioritize accuracy and complexity over fluency”.

In order to make the subject matter accessible to the majority of the learners, the initial lessons were pitched at the beginner’s level where learners could be taught one- or two-word utterances communicatively: *Êê* (“yes”), *nnyaa* (“no”), *Ke a leboga* (“Thank you”), and *Ka tswêêtswêê* (“Please”). Small as these utterances are, they can be used communicatively if the teacher is creative. On this foundation, more complex input such as small talk could be added and re-cycled such as making two statements: *Dumelang, Ke nna X* (“Hello, I’m X”) *Ke ngaka ya lona entšha* (“I’m your new doctor”); asking questions: *Dumelang, ntlwana e kae?* (“Hello, where is the bathroom?”); and making a statement and asking questions: *Dumelang, a nka le thusa?* (“Hello. Can I help you?”) Again, used in context and in a cognitively challenging way, this rudimentary communication could be very useful. It is perhaps because of using an approach like this one that the majority of the participants said in the interviews that the lessons they had attended had been worthwhile.

5.2.1 Pronunciation

If the purpose of the course is to teach learners to speak a foreign language, some input on how to pronounce that language is surely necessary. Accordingly, some attention had to be paid to the pronunciation of Setswana in the current study. Pronunciation entails recognition and production of sounds, words, sentence intonation (of both questions and answers) and tone. Fortunately for the participants, who all had English as their lingua franca, most of the English consonants are similar to the Setswana ones, except that while the Setswana /x/ is missing in standard English, the English /z/, /v/, /θ/, /ð/, /g/, and /ʒ/ are not found in Setswana. And whereas English has twenty

four vowels, Setswana has seven. It was, therefore, relatively easy for the participants to effect positive transfer of most of the English consonants and vowels to Setswana.

In the case of phonetics, teaching segmental features of the target language is said to be less important than teaching supra-segmental features because errors of the former do not affect meaning as much as errors of the latter do (cf. De Klerk & Gough, 2000:361). At least two prosodic feature differences between English and Setswana might have to be borne in mind when English speakers are being taught Setswana as an additional language. Firstly, while Setswana is, like all South African indigenous languages, mainly syllable timed and the main stress of a Setswana sentence occurs on the penultimate syllable, an English sentence is, on the other hand, mainly stress-timed. In the Setswana sentence *Ke batla metsi a tsiDidi*, the main stress is placed on the second last syllable. Secondly, whereas tone in English denotes attitude, in Setswana it is phonemic. Uttered in a high tone, *buu* means “to talk” but in a low tone, it means “to skin”. If *mma* is uttered in a high tone, it means “sit” but “me” if it is uttered in a low tone. Fortunately, again, for the participants, Setswana has only two tones, high and low. Thirdly, lengthening of consonants is a phonemic Setswana phenomenon, which is lacking in other languages: *bana* means “children” but *banna* means “men”; *gola* means “grow” but “*golla*” means “release”, and *Mo lae* “give him/her advice” but *mmolaye* means “kill him/her”. Fourthly, aspiration in Setswana or lack of it affects meaning but in other language it may not do. Pronounced with an aspirated /p/, *phala* denotes “a buck” but without it, as in *pala*, it denotes “difficult”. Similarly, uttered with an aspirated /t/ *thulo* means “repairs” or “collision”, but without one, as in *tulo*, it means “a place”.

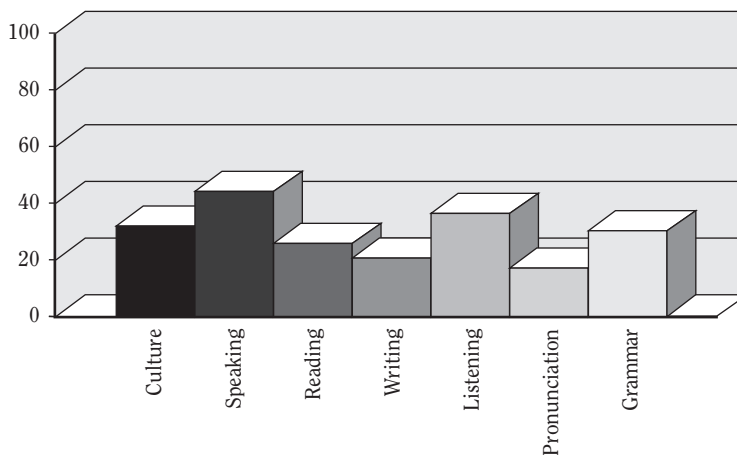
Although there is a large degree of correspondence between spelling and the phonetic symbols represented, there are several problems areas regarding the similarities between Setswana spelling and pronunciation. The spelling of **o** in *podu* /pudi/ (a goat), *phothi* /puti/ (a duiker), and *modi* /mudi/ (a root) does not suggest how this letter is pronounced. The letter **o** is pronounced as /u/ because of the raising caused by the /i/ in the second syllable. Similarly, the letter **e** in *seditse* /siditse/ (a whisk), *Matshedisu* /matshidiso/ (a person’s name) and *sediba* /sidiba/ (a well) is pronounced as /i/ owing to the raising effect of the /i/ in the subsequent vowel. Furthermore, “g” is pronounced as a velar voiceless fricative /x/ and never as the alveolar stop, /g/. Although the information above could be taught in only a few modules, the teaching of pronunciation should be ongoing, with more emphasis placed on intelligibility than on accuracy and context.

5.3 Listening

Figure 2 below of the questionnaire indicates that the second most important content the learners wanted to learn was listening to Setswana. Also, in the interviews many of the participants said that they often experienced difficulty decoding Setswana native speakers’ “fast” speech. This result is not unexpected because conversing involves both speaking and listening. Thus, if teachers do not teach listening, they do a disservice to learners’ speaking ability.

The teaching of listening should be goal directed and learners should be made aware that attentive listening will result in their successful completion of a task. The level of difficulty should neither be too high nor too low because if it is any one of these, learners will be bored.

Figure 2: Participants' ranking of the course content



To reduce anxiety, it is advisable to let learners know beforehand what the text is about. Authentic texts with spoken discourse features should be chosen. This makes comprehension easier but one should guard against not causing learners to be dependent more on these props than on decoding the spoken text. In a mainly conversational syllabus like the one of this study, more interactive than unidirectional texts should be used. Assessment should test the learner's ability to complete a task successfully. Listening tasks may involve some recall, but it should emphasise the testing of the ability to listen, comprehend, and use knowledge to solve a problem. Errors of speaking and writing should be ignored since the objective of the course is to develop learners oral skills.

5.4 Integration of skills

Because adult learners often know full well what needs a language course they are taking should meet, and because of the time constraints that often occur in an adult class like the one of the current study, the course needed to be as relevant, efficient and effective as possible. The major aim of the current study was to provide opportunities for the participants to develop oral ability. As regards the other major language skills, namely reading, writing, and grammar, the participants did not rank these that highly. Conversing, however, might involve some reading of a text or correction of pronunciation, and listening might involve some writing and grammar. Consequently, a small amount of input on reading, writing and grammar was added to the lessons.

5.5 Reading

Reading texts should be authentic, self-contained, varied, and drawn from the learners' everyday life. They should not be chosen mainly as a means to exemplify a language item but they should be chosen for communicative purposes, which may be based on a theme/s or learners' needs. Pictures and other non-verbal texts and themes help to create context and make meaning clearer. Recognition of a language item is, according to Swain and Lapkin (2001), more effective if it is embedded in a contextually rich, content-based curriculum.

Learners' vocabulary could be expanded through raising their awareness of the morphology of Setswana vocabulary. Good examples in this regard include the adoption of words through vowel insertion between consonant clusters foreign to Setswana: *trekker* (Afrikaans for "a tractor") > *terekere* (Setswana), "project" > *porojeke* (Setswana); suffixation of an "r" and a vowel at the end of borrowed English words with a linking "r": 'teacher': *titšhere*, "hoover" > *hubara*, "furniture" > *fanitšhara*; recognition of frequently occurring or "international" vocabulary such as "hamburger" > *hamperaka*, "T-shirt" > *T-tšhete*, "taxi" > *tekesi*, 'pizza' > *phitzara*, "internet" > *inthanete*, "coach" > *khoutšhu*, "Coke" > *Khouku*; and recognition of Setswana noun classes: *mo- ba-* as in *motho* ("a person") *batho* ("persons") *le- ma-* as in *lefoko* ("a word") *mafoko* (words), *se- di* as in *sediba* ("a well") *didiba* ("wells"). Lightbown and Spada (2006:146) point out that "One needs only about 1 000 to 2 000 most frequently occurring words to participate in an everyday conversation". And if a new word occurs frequently learners may remember it when they come across it in a new context.

5.6 Writing

For the proposed course, writing could be mainly discourse-based, focusing on everyday purposeful communication with a specific audience in mind. In this way, the audience becomes not only the teacher but also the other learners, role-played pen-pals, gardener, domestic help, employer, or neighbour written to. Thus, writing becomes less formal because the topic, the writing style and assessment are not pre-determined, and forms part of the learner's world since it is more functional. Approaching writing in this manner also gives learners an opportunity to practise various styles of the target language.

5.7 Grammar

Grammar is necessary for the enhancement of learners' communicative skills (Swain, 1995:133). For this purpose, one could use processing instruction, among other techniques, in which learners are taught to decode information correctly mainly through understanding the language forms of a text itself rather than context, prior knowledge, repetition, or other clues used in the top-down information processing technique.

The grammar module could be proportional to fluency. Form-focused activities could form the larger part at the beginning of the module and focus should then gradually shift to fluency and critical language awareness activities in the middle or later stages. This does, however, not mean that grammatical accuracy lessons should form the basis for fluent language use; fluency develops from a language being taught and practised together with grammar right from the outset so each lesson should be a point of contact with grammatically correct fluent language use.

Grammar is underpinned by culture-bound values, beliefs, and attitudes (ideology) learners might not be aware of if their attention is not drawn to these assumptions and viewpoints present in grammar, among other language areas. In one of the open-ended questions of the questionnaire a few learners expressed a desire to acquire Setswana culture. But because cultures change continually, it is impossible to teach learners fixed ways of reacting to other cultures. As Kramsch (1993:350) points out, "what language learners have to acquire is less an understanding of one another's national group than an understanding of 'difference' per se". It is therefore sometimes necessary to adopt in the proposed course a post-structural view of

language usage which regards meaning as plural not singular; that words, expressions, and propositions change their meaning according to the subject position held by the person who uses them. This suggests that the teaching of culture should be integrated into the teaching of the other aspects of language. In the words of Kramsch (1995:44), [learning a foreign language is] “no longer limited to a corpus of literary texts; the current model of foreign language study now includes the ethnographic variability of language as it is used by native speakers in the variable practice of everyday life”.

6. The ultimate syllabus

The items the teacher had brought to class and those that emerged from negotiations with the learners ultimately resulted in the syllabus below.

6.1 Speaking

Speaking tasks emphasised teaching learners to carry out a range of speaking skills such as making enquiries; asking for directions; exchanging greetings; initiating a small talk and sustaining it; joining a conversation; using stabilisers; solving problems based on conversational games; negotiating and creating meaning; role-playing; interpretation and translation; giving oral report; engaging in drills and songs; taking part in language games involving the use of pictures, maps, drawings, charts, diagrams, and concrete objects; interviewing people about their biographical detail and giving a report on this later; presenting an oral demonstration in Setswana (e.g. preparing a Setswana traditional dish or changing a flat tyre); and using utterances to indicate that one is following a conversation.

6.1.1 Pronunciation

Pronunciation tasks included recognising and producing Setswana consonants and vowels in context; recognising and producing Setswana lexical and sentence intonation in context; and recognising and producing high and low Setswana tones in context; recognising and producing Setswana phonemes (minimal pairs) in context, and correcting one’s own mispronounced sounds where necessary.

6.2 Listening

Listening tasks included the following: Total Physical Response instructions; arranging items according to information heard; identifying the difference according to information listened to; decoding an oral/aural text and passing on the information correctly; using a map to follow directions according to information heard; completing a chart, table, diagram, drawing, or picture from the information heard; searching for information; checking a schedule or programme while listening and writing something down; writing a dictation, miming skits; transferring information, (for example listening and completing a form, a diagram, a grid or a map simultaneously); checking a schedule or programme while listening to enquiries and writing something down; listening to information and passing it on to another person; and listening to a text and predicting what will follow next.

6.3 Reading

Reading tasks included comprehending flyers, news bulletins, timetables, brochures, notices, menus, cartoons, instruction leaflets, cartons used for packaging, product wraps, advertisements, and short official letters to read aloud; making predictions; interpret visuals with linear texts;

decoding inferential meaning; critiquing a text; applying recognition to match cognates and adopted words; and filling in a cloze-test using various verbal and non-verbal texts.

6.4 Writing

Writing tasks included employing the Setswana orthography to create a text; matching various styles to various audiences; filling in various texts including diagrams, pictures of traffic signs, tables, maps, charts, itineraries, forms and tables; writing a shopping list, short messages, postcards; viewing and listening to an audio-visual text and filling in a map or diagram based on it; writing a dictation and a cloze-test; and confirming in writing arrangements made over the telephone.

6.5 Grammar

Grammar tasks included understanding the Setswana basic grammar rules of making a statement, asking a question, and giving a command in contexts provided, for instance, by pictures, itineraries, application forms, tables, real objects, diagrams, charts, audio-visuals and language games; carrying out various language functions; and critiquing unequal power relations in Setswana grammar.

7. Conclusion

The syllabus was mainly negotiated. An analysis of the learners' needs, the acquisitional context and the principles of teaching an additional language, particularly to adult learners, was used to create parameters within which negotiation was carried out. This was combined with a loosely structured content the teacher had contributed. At the end of the course, a syllabus could be constructed. Since the learners' main aim for taking the course was to converse in Setswana, the syllabus was made to be as communicative as possible. The syllabus was also nuanced by making the teaching of linguistic forms and critical language awareness overt and eclectic in terms of teaching methodology. Content was contextualised, task-based, authentic, and cognitively demanding. Lessons were integrated, multi-modal, varied and cyclical. The culture of the target language was taught as an intrinsic part of and not an addendum to the learning processes in order to provide context, and create chances for learners to appreciate and interrogate the values, beliefs and attitudes that went with it.

One of the limitations of the study was that it was based on an existing small group one could do very little to change and because of the smallness of the class, the findings, valid as they are, cannot be generalised. Another one is that the course lacked accreditation. If it had had accreditation, it would most probably have offered more motivation to the participants. Generally, the course had a fairly good level of success and could be used as a basis for negotiating the design of a communicative syllabus of a South African indigenous tongue as additional language.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire for the participants of the study

This questionnaire is aimed at assessing your needs regarding your Setswana lessons so that, with the information obtained, a course that is as relevant as possible can be designed. Please tick the box of your choice next to the questions that have been asked, and where there is a line, please give a short answer. The last question is open-ended and allows you to talk about any issue/s the questionnaire has not covered.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

TEL. (H) _____ (B) _____

FAX: _____

MOBILE: _____

E-MAIL: _____

MALE	
FEMALE	

AGE

below 20	20 - 30	31-39	40 and above
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DATE: _____

1. How long would you like the course to be?

3 months	6 months	1 year	more than 1 year
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2. How often would you like the lessons to be?

Once a week	twice a week	three times a week	more than three times a week
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3. How would you rate your knowledge of Setswana?

Nil	beginner's level	intermediate level	advanced level
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4. Indicate your reason for taking Setswana lessons.

to be able to speak Setswana	to know Setswana grammar	to increase my job opportunities	to be able to read a Setswana text
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Any other, please specify _____

5. At the end of the course, at what level would like your competence in Setswana to be?

at the beginner's level	at the intermediate level	at the advanced level	at the native speaker's level
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6. Rank the items below in their ascending order of importance in the course from 1-4. In other words, the criterion is

1 = unimportant

2 = optional

3 = reasonably important

4 = crucial

Course content Items	1	2	3	4
Listening				
speaking				
Reading				
Writing				
Culture				
Pronunciation				
All of the above				

7. Do you have any opportunities of speaking Setswana?

Yes	No
-----	----

If yes, please specify _____

If no, mention the main barrier for your lack of opportunities for speaking Setswana

8. Can you speak any other language besides English?

Yes	No
-----	----

If yes, please mention the other language/s.

9. Would you like any formal assessment of your performance in the course?

Yes	No
-----	----

10. If yes, what type of assessment would you prefer?

Oral	Written	oral and written
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11. Any comment you would like to make?

Thank you very much for answering this questionnaire.