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The role of flexibility in the Context-adaptive Model for language programme evaluation: A case study

Abstract

The demand for flexible, context-adaptive language programme evaluations has increased commensurately with the demand for context-specific language intervention programmes. In turn, an emphasis on the role of flexibility in language programme evaluation models to guide context-adaptive evaluations has grown. Lynch (1996; 2003) highlights the flexibility and adaptability of his Context-adaptive Model (CAM). This article explores the role of flexibility in the CAM in theory and in practice. The first section presents a description of the model that highlights its flexible evaluation approach. The second section sketches the specific education context of a language intervention programme namely, the English as language of learning and teaching (LoLT) Course.

The third section explores the role of flexibility in a context-adaptive impact assessment of the English as LoLT Course. The final section discusses the role of flexibility in the CAM in the broader, meta-evaluation context of language programme evaluation frameworks.

Keywords: language programme evaluation, meta-evaluation, process-oriented evaluation, mixed evaluation design

1.   Introduction

The emphasis on multilingualism in the South African education context (Department of Education, 1997) highlights the need to develop and implement programmes that respond to the language learning needs of a specific context. This need will not decrease in the current global economic climate. Investors in language learning and teaching development programmes would increasingly demand to be convinced that there is a return on their investment.

Correspondingly, the need for language programme evaluations that are sufficiently flexible to adapt to the specific features of a language programme and its context has escalated. It follows that a need for flexible, context-adaptive language programme evaluation models to guide these evaluations has arisen. Lynch's (1996:4) Context-adaptive Model (CAM) offers a language programme evaluation framework that promotes a flexible approach to the evaluation process. According to Lynch (1991:84; 1996:3), his model "is meant to be a flexible, adaptable heuristic - a starting point for inquiry into language education programmes that will constantly reshape and redefine itself, depending on the context of the programme and the evaluation."

In response to the above emphasis on a flexible approach to language programme evaluation, this article aims to explore the role of flexibility in Lynch's (1996:4) CAM in promoting a context-adaptive assessment. This exploration takes place in the impact assessment of a language intervention programme for Intermediate Phase teachers in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District of the Free State province in English as the language of learning and teaching (LoLT). In the rest of the article, the course will be referred to as the English as LoLT Course. The following research question focuses the meta-evaluation research presented here: "How does the flexibility of the CAM promote a context-adaptive impact assessment of the English as LoLT Course?" The first section provides an outline of Lynch's (1996:4) CAM. It also highlights the flexible evaluation approach of the model. The second section introduces the specific education and evaluation context of the Free State LoLT Course. The third section explores the role of flexibility in a context-adaptive impact assessment of the English as LoLT Course. The final section concludes by discussing the role of flexibility in the CAM in the broader meta-evaluation context. The description of Lynch's (1996:4) CAM that follows highlights its flexible evaluation approach.

2.   The Context-adaptive Model (CAM) and its flexible evaluation approach

A flexible, rather than a fixed approach to evaluation informs the seven steps of Lynch's (1996:4) CAM. Although the presentation of these steps follows a numerical sequence, a flexible approach accommodates a continuous review process of information in previous steps of this model. Flexibility in the CAM therefore promotes an iterative, rather than a linear evaluation process.

2.1   Audience and goals (Step 1)

The first step in Lynch's (1996:4) CAM is the identification of the evaluation audiences and goals. The members of these audiences all have a stake in the programme that is being evaluated. Lynch (2003:15) refers to them as "stakeholders". Those with the most responsibility for the programme have the highest stakes. They form part of the primary evaluation audience. Lynch (2003:16) also distinguishes secondary and tertiary audiences depending on their level of contact with the evaluation context. The primary audience determines the goals, or purposes of the evaluation. The formulation of these goals is not fixed, but flexible. It can be reviewed as the primary audiences' understanding of the evaluation context and programme evolves. The flexible approach of the CAM does not only allow for a diversity of primary, secondary and tertiary audiences, but it also accommodates a variety of stakeholders in the primary evaluation audience. This leads to diverse evaluation interests that stem from the particular perspective of each stakeholder, or group of stakeholders.

2.2   A context inventory (Step 2) and a preliminary thematic framework (Step 3)

The second step provides a context inventory of language programme dimensions that are potentially relevant to a particular evaluation context. The purpose of this checklist is to identify the essential evaluation features of the programme and its setting (Lynch, 1996:5). The completion of this checklist heightens the adaptability of the evaluation to the specific details of the context. The flexible approach of the CAM promotes a review of the primary evaluation audiences' goals in its first step based on more detailed information about the evaluation context in the second step. The third step identifies a preliminary framework of dominant themes and major issues that emerge from the formulation of the evaluation goals and from specific information about the evaluation context (Lynch, 2003:19-20). The preliminary thematic framework focuses the data collection design, as well as the data collection and analysis procedures. The flexibility of the CAM promotes a constant sharpening of the preliminary evaluation themes. They take shape and become more specific as the data collection and analysis of the language programme and its context unfolds. New themes may also emerge from data brought to light during this process.

2.3   Data collection design/system (Step 4); data collection (Step 5); data analysis (Step 6)

Lynch (2003:22-9) offers positivist, interpretivist and mixed evaluation designs for quantitative, qualitative and a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection procedures. An analysis of comprehensive, quantitative and/or qualitative datasets informs the findings and recommendations about the evaluation goals and interests identified by the primary audience in the first step. The flexible approach of the CAM promotes the selection of mixed evaluation designs for the collection

and analysis of data that respond to the diverse evaluation interests of the primary evaluation audience.

2.4   Evaluation Report (Step 7)

A final report presents the evaluation findings. According to Lynch (1996:9), the usefulness of the final report depends on the sensitive and therefore selective communication of its findings with various primary evaluation stakeholders. Flexibility in this final step promotes the selective communication of relevant information suited to the diverse interests of the primary evaluation audience.

The above description of Lynch's (1996:4) CAM highlights the role of its flexible evaluation approach. However, the purpose of this article is to examine this models' flexible evaluation approach in promoting a context-adaptive impact assessment of the English as LoLT Course. The following section offers background information about the specific education and evaluation context of the English as LoLT Course.

3.   The English as LoLT Course: background information

The English as LoLT Course was developed as a language intervention programme in response to the specific English as LoLT needs of mostly Sesotho-speaking Intermediate Phase teachers in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District of the Free State province. It formed part of a Flemish-funded project namely, the Integrated District Development Project (IDDP). This rural education intervention project developed cooperation and alignment between management and curriculum delivery at district, school and classroom level from 2002 to 2004.

The need for a context-specific English as LoLT intervention programme was identified in the first contextual baseline survey in the ten IDDP project schools. It identified Sesotho-speaking teachers' need for guidance in using English as the LoLT (cf. Strauss, 2002). The IDDP curriculum baseline survey followed. This survey identified specific English usage needs in four of the ten project schools (cf. Mostert et al., 2002). The findings of this baseline assessment mainly informed the development of the English as LoLT Course. Its implementation was monitored during a period of eighteen months, from the beginning of 2003 until the third quarter of 2004. Two impact surveys in the last quarter of 2004 namely, the IDDP curriculum impact survey and the IDDP contextual impact survey concluded this evaluation process. The former assessed the impact of the English as LoLT Course as experienced by the participants (cf. Mostert et al., 2004) and the latter measured the overall impact of the IDDP intervention programmes in the district (cf. Strauss, 2004). The following section explores the application of a flexible evaluation approach in the CAM (cf. Lynch, 1996; 2003) to the impact assessment phase of the English as LoLT Course in order to promote a context-adaptive language programme evaluation.

4.   An exploration of flexibility in a context-adaptive impact assessment of the English as LoLT Course

This section traces the flexibility of the CAM in promoting a context-adaptive impact assessment of the English as LoLT Course. It highlights the role of flexibility in the promotion of: diverse interests in the primary stakeholders' summative evaluation goal; the selection of a mixed data collection design; a thematic review process; the inclusion of descriptive statistics; the formulation of a comprehensive course impact profile and the selective communication of valid findings.

4.1   Diverse primary stakeholder evaluation interests

A flexible approach to language programme evaluation in the CAM promoted the identification of diverse primary stakeholder evaluation interests in the impact assessment of the English as LoLT Course. Although the primary evaluation audience shared a common summative goal of assessing the course impact or desired change (De Vos, 2001: 383), they had diverse interests in its findings. Their common evaluation goal was to determine the difference that this programme had made to the English language teaching and learning needs of the identified Intermediate Phase teachers in the four project schools. However, this common summative evaluation goal had to be sufficiently flexible to accommodate each stakeholder's evaluation interests. The Free State Department of Education and the Flemish Government were the two strategic partners of the Integrated District Development Project (IDDP). These partners had to make an informed, summative judgement about their continued support and funding of the English as LoLT Course from a socio-economic and political perspective. Their main evaluation interest was accountability. They required hard data, or quantitative evidence (Lynch, 1996:171) to motivate their decision for continued support. They were accountable to their tax payers for supporting and funding effective intervention programmes that would promote transformation in education through the professional development of teachers.

At implementation level, the primary evaluation audience of the English as LoLT Course consisted of the course participants, consultants from the project implementation agency and two professors from the School of Languages of the North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus). Twelve Mathematics, Natural Sciences and English Intermediate Phase teachers (Grades 4 – 6) from the four identified IDDP schools participated in this course. These teachers were to judge whether this course had increased their confidence, knowledge and skills in using English as the LoLT. They had to make judgement calls about the most useful features of this language programme from their teacher self-development perspective. Two district officials from the Inclusive Education Section also participated in the English as LoLT Course. These officials had to identify the most useful features of the course that could also be relevant to Intermediate Phase teachers in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District. Their main evaluation interest was teacher development.

The consultants of the implementing agency were to make summative judgements about whether the English as LoLT Course had made a difference to the course participants' language teaching practices. From a curriculum and teacher development perspective, the consultants were interested in those course features that had made most difference. They were also interested in those features that had made less difference in order to improve their usefulness for future implementation. They needed qualitative data to inform the refinement of the English as LoLT Course. The two professors were to evaluate whether this language intervention programme had brought about significant changes to the course participants' teaching practice. They were interested in the accountability of these changes from a quality assurance and research perspective. A flexible approach therefore enabled a context-adaptive impact assessment of the English as LoLT Course by considering the diverse evaluation interests of its primary stakeholders from the onset.

4.2 A mixed evaluation design for the English as LoLT Course impact assessment

The flexibility of a mixed evaluation design allowed for the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data in response to the primary stakeholders' diverse evaluation interests. Lynch (2003:27-9) provides detailed guidelines and a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of a mixed evaluation design. According to Lynch (2003:27), a mixed evaluation design attempts to combine "the perspectives represented by positivist and interpretivist paradigms". A positivist paradigm or worldview sees reality as independent from the evaluator who then approaches the programme and its context from the perspective of a distanced observer (Lynch, 2003:3). This approach favours quantitative data collection and analysis procedures. An interpretivist paradigm sees reality as dependent on the evaluator's attempts to know it. The programme and its context are explored as a social construction that must be understood subjectively through the interaction of the participants in the evaluation process (Lynch, 2003:3). This approach favours qualitative data collection procedures. The English as LoLT Course evaluation explored the tensions between positivist and interpretivist approaches through mixed evaluation designs in a case study, which is a preferred evaluation method of an interpretivist evaluation approach (Greene, 2000).

The emphasis on flexibility in the CAM promoted the selection of the Illumination Model (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972) as a mixed data collection design, rather than its commonly perceived usage as an interpretivist evaluation design (Lynch, 2003:27; Patton, 1990:119). This mixed evaluation design allowed for the collection and analysis of quantitative data sets to be nested (Creswell, 2003:16) within the larger qualitative data collection and analysis procedures of the case study. The conclusions reached in the impact evaluations of the English as LoLT Course were therefore validated from an interpretivist and from a positivist evaluation approach. An extensive data base allowed for an in-depth investigation or illumination of the features of this language programme and its surrounding context that brought about significant changes in the identified needs of the Intermediate Phase teachers. This investigation took place

through an iterative review of its thematic framework. The application of this flexible review process to the English as LoLT Course impact assessment is traced in the following sub-section.

4.3 A thematic review of the English as LoLT Course impact assessment

The flexibility of the CAM (Lynch, 1996:3) took shape as an iterative evaluation process that constantly redefined and sharpened the English as LoLT Course thematic framework. The process of progressive focusing in the Illumination Model (cf. Parlett & Hamilton, 1972; Lynch, 2003; Patton, 1990) was used for this purpose. This process systematically reduced the extensive database of the English as LoLT Course impact assessment to identify the core features of this language programme, their links with one another and with the context. These features were expressed as evaluation themes.

The preliminary thematic framework in the baseline and implementation monitoring phases of the English as LoLT Course consisted of seven evaluation themes. They examined issues that emerged from the primary audience's evaluation goals and from detail about the evaluation context. The themes were: tension between policies and classroom implementation; English language learning and teaching needs; teacher and learner motivation and attitude towards learning and teaching; management support to the implementation of English as the LoLT; the role and status of English in the project schools; the role and status of Intermediate Phase teachers in curriculum decisions and the role and status of English in the Phuthaditjhaba community.

This preliminary framework informed the content of the data collection instruments. Standardised, open-ended interviews (Lynch, 1996:127; Patton, 1990:288) were held with teacher participants in small focus groups, with the two district officials who participated in the course, with a provincial official and with the course moderator. The questionnaires that were completed immediately after the interviews covered the same content to support, qualify and verify the information provided in the interviews. Data collected from 19 October 2004 to 4 February 2005 provided a rich database for the process of progressive focusing in this interpretivist data analysis of the English as LoLT Course impact assessment.

The flexible, iterative process of progressive focusing consisted of five major steps: focusing, organising, coding, classifying and reducing, and interpreting the data (Lynch, 2003:135-147). The first step reviewed the seven themes in the preliminary evaluation framework. The second step organised the interview and questionnaire data collected about these seven themes. The information was transcribed and an electronic filing system, as well as a hard copy system, was created. The electronic database of the N6 programme (developed by QSR International, 2002) recommended by Lynch (2003:137) was used to organise and analyse the data. It facilitated easy access of the qualitative data in the transcribed text. The N6 programme is a qualitative data analysis software programme developed by Tom and Lyn Richards with QSR International, a company that

develops qualitative research software to assist researchers in qualitative and mixed method research.

The third step highlighted key words and brief phrases to code free nodes in the N6 database. The lines in which these key words and phrases appeared were selected as the smallest unit of analysis and linked to the nodes. These nodes formed the core of the interpretivist analysis. A total number of 82 nodes were created and linked to the preliminary evaluation themes in order to reduce and summarise the data. This review process reduced the seven evaluation themes of the preliminary thematic framework to four. The themes on the role and status of English in the project schools and on the role and status of English in the Phuthaditsjhaba community, as well as the theme on management support to the implementation of English as LoLT were combined. All of these evaluation themes contributed to the creation of a supportive context for the use of English in the learning milieu. This merged evaluation theme was labelled: Milieu in the electronic classification. The theme on the tension between curriculum policy and classroom practice was labelled: Policy vs practice. The evaluation theme on mixed levels of competency and proficiency in using English as the LoLT was labelled: Languages. The evaluation theme on teacher and learner motivation and attitude examined course impact on teacher and learner relationships towards English as the LoLT. This theme was labelled: Relationships. A new theme emerged from a high frequency of key words and phrases (e.g. changed and make a difference) signifying the evaluation of the course impact. This new theme was labelled: Evaluation. These five evaluation themes were coded as top level tree nodes in the N6 database.

The fourth step classified the data to identify underlying patterns. Text searches were done to access and review the data linked to the tree nodes. In addition, matrix searches explored the different perspectives of the primary evaluation audience in relation to the underlying patterns. A top tree node labelled: Evaluation Audience was created for this purpose. Tree nodes were linked to the transcribed texts of the Free State Department of Education district officials, the provincial official, the teachers, the course moderator and the implementing agency consultants. The final, thematic framework for the interpretivist evaluation of the assessment phase was reduced to three evaluation themes. These were: the exploration of the course impact on teaching practices; the link between the course impact on the teaching practices and the learning milieu, and the way in which the different evaluation interests or perspectives of the primary evaluation audience impact on the teaching practices and on the learning milieu. These evaluation themes formed a new level of top tree nodes. A display of the thematic framework for the impact assessment of the English as LoLT Course is presented below in Figure 1.
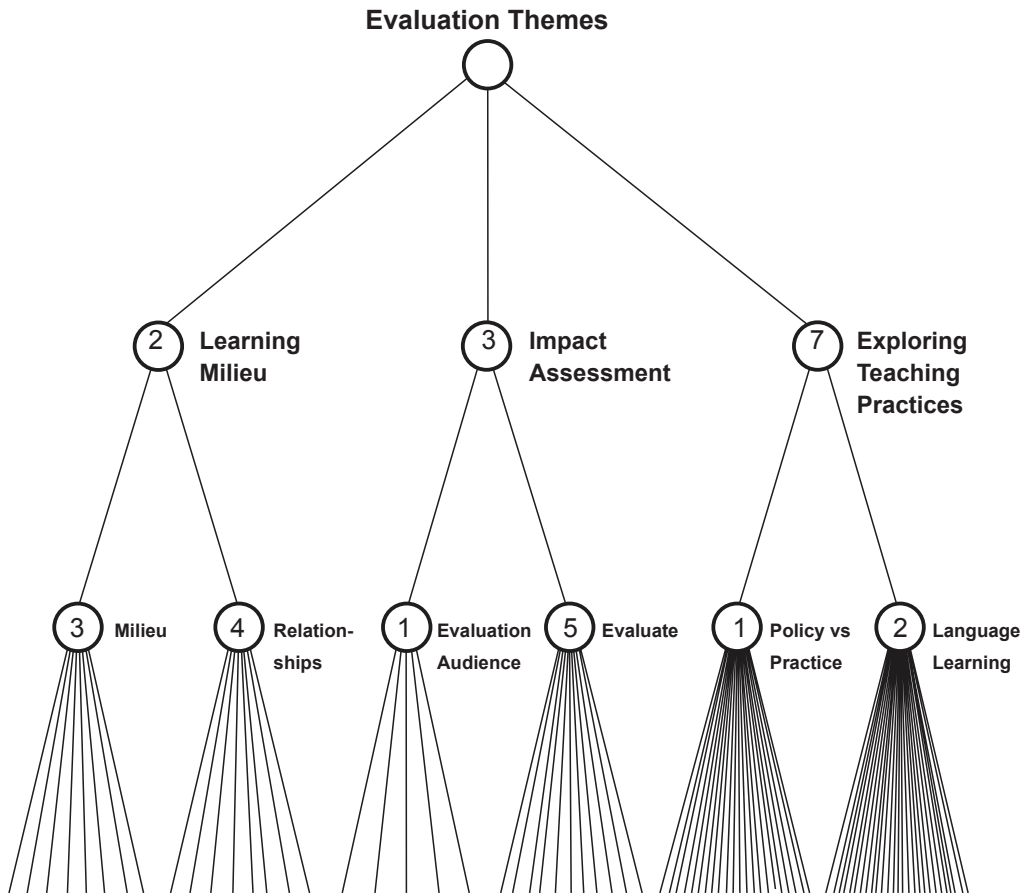
Evaluation Themes

Figure 1: N6 Tree Node Display of the Impact Assessment Thematic Framework

The fifth step focused on data interpretation, although this process had already started by codifying, classifying and reducing the data. The patterns that had emerged from a review of the English as LoLT Course classification system and data display were formulated and explained. The N6 tree node display of the impact assessment thematic framework in Figure 1 therefore facilitated a participatory evaluation of features in the English as LoLT Course that impacted most on teaching practices and in particular on language teaching practices. This evaluation also focused on the education context of the four IDDP schools. It explored, or illuminated the interaction within and between the two basic concepts of the Illumination Model namely, the instructional system (curriculum) and the learning milieu (education context) (cf. Parlett & Hamilton, 1972).

Complementary to this interpretive analysis, the emphasis on flexibility in the CAM allowed for an analysis of descriptive statistics in the English as LoLT Course impact assessment. The following sub-section illustrates this analysis.

4.4 The inclusion of descriptive statistics in the English as LoLT Course impact assessment

The flexibility of a mixed evaluation design in the CAM (Lynch, 2003:27) also promoted an analysis of descriptive statistics in the English as LoLT Course impact assessment. The singular nature of the case study (Stake, 2005:443) excluded the presence of a comparison group required in a typical positivist, quasi-experimental evaluation design (Lynch, 2003:22). The quasi-experimental design in the IDDP curriculum impact survey illustrates the use of a programme group with pre-test and post-test design (Lynch, 2003:24). The purpose of this analysis, viewed from a positivist paradigm (Lynch, 2003:28), was to measure whether there had been an improvement in the competencies of the cohort of twelve Intermediate Phase teachers who participated in the English as LoLT Course over a period of eighteen months. It also measured whether any improvement could be regarded as significant in practice.

The observation questionnaire devised for the initial baseline survey was also used for the follow-up survey. The questionnaire had a twofold data collection purpose, the collection of quantitative data (specifically frequency counts) and of qualitative data (narrative reports made by the observers). The reliability of the sub-scales of the questionnaire was determined by means of Cronbach's alpha (cf. Mostert et al., 2004:5, Table 1). The reliability was calculated when the results were analysed. The reliability of the sub-scales was above 0.8 which, according to Weir (2005:29), is considered as the minimum acceptable reliability level. The reliability of the data collection that took place on 13 and 14 September 2004 was increased by means of a standardisation process. The team of eight observers held a benchmarking session prior to the school visits and a feedback session after the data were collected. This team represented the following stakeholders of the primary evaluation audience: provincial and district officials from the Free State Department of Education, the two professors from the School of Languages of the North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus) and consultants from the implementing agency. They were divided randomly into four teams. Two team members observed each teacher. The use of an observation team of at least two raters per class controlled the inter-rater reliability of the observation scales operationally (Mackey & Gass, 2005:358; McNamara, 1996:117).

A review of descriptive statistics of the twelve teacher course participants in the IDDP curriculum baseline survey (cf. Mostert et al., 2002) enabled a comparative analysis with their impact assessment survey statistics. Data in 5-point Likert frequency and quality rating scales (Lynch, 2003:71) were analysed quantitatively (i.e. means, standard deviations, percentages) as well as qualitatively (i.e. narrative reporting by observers). Table 1 presents the results of a comparative analysis of the descriptive statistics available from the first and second classroom observations.

Table 1: Comparative Analysis: Twelve Teacher Participants

Variable	N	Observation 1		Observation 2		Effect size
		Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	
Planning & organization	12	2,75	0,89	4,27	0,46	1,71 ***
Written lesson preparation	12	3,21	1,24	4,15	0,52	0,85 ***
Lesson presentation	12	3,45	0,71	4,27	0,44	0,76 **
Usage of English	12	3,68	0,61	4,16	0,42	1,15 ***
Learner output & monitoring	12	3,36	0,70	4,54	0,51	0,79 ***
Atmosphere & relationships	12	4,01	0,75	4,62	0,39	0,72 **
Learner experience	12	3,22	0,83	4,09	0,45	0,81 ***
Language proficiency rating	12	3,78	0,66	4,02	4,02	0,35 *
Professionalism	12	4,37	0,64	4,69	0,45	0,69 **
Key: * small effect ** ** medium effect ** *** large effect						

Cohen's (1988) effect size d was calculated to establish whether the means between Observation 1 and Observation 2 differed significantly in practice. The d-values (cf. Cohen, 1988) were interpreted as follows: d = 0,2 indicates a small effect; d = 0,5 indicates a medium effect, d = 0,8 indicates a large effect. No p-values were calculated, because there was no sampling and no intention to generalise findings to a larger population of all the teachers in the schools or district (cf. Steyn & Ellis, 2006:175; Seliger & Shohamy, 1989:220). Table 1 indicates that there was a practically significant difference between the mean scores of the first survey and the mean scores of the second survey. All categories, but one, differed with a medium to large effect size.

The descriptive statistics (cf. Table 1) indicate that the English as LoLT Course had a large effect on the classroom practices of the twelve Intermediate Phase teachers in the following categories: planning and organisation, the usage of English, learner output and monitoring and learner experience. These categories showed a remarkable improvement. In addition, this language programme had a medium effect on written lesson preparation, professionalism and on atmosphere and relationships. These categories also showed an improvement. The language proficiency rating of the teachers showed an improvement, although a slighter one in comparison to the improvements in the other categories. These results provided statistical evidence that the English as LoLT Course had made a positive impact on the cohort of twelve Intermediate Phase teachers of the four IDDP schools who participated in this language intervention programme.

4.5   A comprehensive English as LoLT Course impact profile

The flexibility of a mixed evaluation design for the impact assessment of the English as LoLT Course offered a comprehensive impact profile. The extensive database that informed this profile consisted of quantitative and qualitative datasets collected from interviews with primary stakeholders of the evaluation audience; questionnaires that clarified interviewees' responses; programme participants' final examination output and the IDDP curriculum impact survey of the twelve teacher participants in the course. The thematic evaluation framework of the English as LoLT Course focused the final interpretation of datasets in its extensive database.

A comprehensive profile of impact assessment results on the use of English as LoLT in participants' language teaching practices and in their learning context is presented here. An interpretation of the datasets linked to the language learning focus of the teaching practices theme (cf. Figure 1, Top Tree Node 7) led to the formulation of course impact findings on participants' use of English as the LoLT in their teaching practices. An interpretation of the datasets linked to the learning milieu theme (cf. Figure 1, Top Tree Node 2) formulated the findings on the development of a supportive English language learning context.

The English as LoLT Course made a significant difference to the Intermediate Phase teachers' competencies in using English as the LoLT in their teaching practices. It provided strategies and techniques to develop learners' basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and their cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) in their home language and in English (cf. Cummins, 1997). It was evident that the programme participants had learnt how to develop and use learners' BICS in their home language, as well as in English, in order to develop their CALP in English as the LoLT. However, it was also apparent that the development of teachers' skills to strengthen and further clarify the newly developed English concepts in learners' BICS and CALP was still required. The English as LoLT Course developed programme participants' own language usage while modelling communicative language teaching. However, teachers had indicated the need to further develop their own English language usage. Teachers' grammatical consciousness still needed to be developed by means of the closer identification, correction and prioritisation of their grammatical errors. The crucial role of teachers as primary resources in providing a supportive context for the development of learners' BICS and CALP has become evident from the above evaluation.

The English as LoLT Course made a difference to the Intermediate Phase teachers' competencies in creating a supportive learning and teaching context for English. This language programme had an impact on the role and status of English beyond the classroom in its endeavour to provide a supportive climate for the development of learners and teachers' BICS and CALP in English. The school management team members, teachers and learners of the four IDDP schools committed themselves to use English in their school and class room routines. The course raised their awareness of the value of English in everyday communication and as the LoLT. However, the impact of the course on the accessibility and usage of resource materials to improve learners' English

language acquisition was only partly effective. Although the English as LoLT Course had brought about an increase in the provisioning of learning and teaching material and in the use of this material, there is still room for improvement in the involvement of the school management, parents, and the department. The language in education policies of the four IDDP schools could offer a way of formalising and increasing governmental and community involvement. This process would involve the parents who are members of the school governing bodies (SGBs) of the four schools. The twelve Intermediate Phase teachers who participated in the English as LoLT Course could use their increased competencies in using English as the LoLT to offer curriculum inputs in the language-in-education policies of the four IDDP schools.

4.6 The selective communication of valid findings.

The flexibility of the mixed evaluation design in the English as LoLT Course validated the impact assessment results from an interpretevist, as well as from a positivist paradigm. These findings catered for the diverse evaluation interests of the primary evaluation audience. The comprehensive final English as LoLT Course evaluation report responded to the accountability interest of its two strategic partners. It included descriptive statistics on the overall positive course impact for the Free State Department of Education and for the Flemish Government. This quantitative evidence could substantiate their decision about continued support for the English as LoLT Course.

The findings on the teaching practices of the twelve Intermediate Phase teachers responded to their teacher self-development interest. These conclusions were communicated in a presentation to the teachers and to their schools. They were mainly informed by qualitative evidence. Discussions about the teachers' continued development in English and in English language teaching practices followed this presentation. The findings were also shared with the secondary evaluation audience of Intermediate Phase teachers in the IDDP schools who did not participate in this language programme. The two district officials from the Inclusive Education Section requested that the same presentation be shared with the Intermediate Phase Subject Advisors and the relevant provincial curriculum co-ordinator in response to their teacher development interest. The course impact results were therefore communicated with a tertiary evaluation audience. They could consider using this language intervention programme for the continued professional development of Intermediate Phase teachers in English as the LoLT.

The consultants of the implementing agency used the final evaluation report to review and refine the content of this language programme from their curriculum and teacher development perspective. The validated findings of the English as LoLT Course responded to the accountability and research interests of the two professors from the School of Languages of the North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus).

The above exploration offers the following empirically-based response on the role of flexibility in promoting a context-adaptive impact assessment of the English as LoLT Course. The flexibility of the CAM promoted a participatory evaluation process in the specific evaluation context of the English as LoLT Course. It accommodated diverse

stakeholders and stakeholder interests in its specific cultural and linguistic context. However, the primary evaluation audiences' common, summative evaluation goal of determining the changes brought about by this language programme was not flexible, but fixed. It anchored the purpose of this evaluation, while the emphasis on flexibility in the CAM promoted an iterative process of progressive focusing on features in the English as LoLT Course and its milieu that had made a difference. The iterative nature of this process facilitated a review of information about the evaluation context that enabled a continuous, context-adaptive evaluation process. The flexibility of the mixed evaluation design furthermore allowed for the collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative evidence to accommodate the diverse evaluation perspectives of the primary evaluation audience. In addition, the mixed evaluation design validated the findings presented in the comprehensive, context-specific profile of the English as LoLT Course impact assessment. The selective communication of these findings responded to the diverse interests of the stakeholders. This flexible approach increased the usefulness of the comprehensive English as LoLT Course impact profile to its diverse evaluation audiences. The following section discusses the role of flexibility in the CAM in the broader language programme evaluation context.

5.   The flexibility of the CAM in language programme evaluation research

Lynch (1991:84) offers his context-adaptive model as "a framework for discussing the role of programme evaluation in applied linguistics research". He illustrates the flexibility of his model's first three steps during a negotiated revision and refinement of evaluation goals and research questions in the Project-Oriented Computer Assisted Language Learning (PrOCALL) innovation (Lynch, 2000:417-9).

Ross (2009:757) acknowledges the contribution of Lynch's "context adaptive" approach to the formative potential of language programme evaluation. He discusses the exploratory work of Lynch in process-oriented, mixed-mode language programme evaluation that emphasizes the importance of stakeholders' values and ethical concerns in the evaluation process (Ross, 2009:757). The usefulness of the ranking process in the first step of the CAM (Lynch, 1996; 2003) becomes apparent in Brown's (1998:22) application of the model to an English Language Intensive Course for Overseas Students evaluation. It serves to remind the evaluator of the primary stakeholders' evaluation goals in order to further focus the enquiry. Brown (1998:36) confirms the value of this language programme evaluation model as a framework that ensures a thorough and systematic evaluation through its recursive features. Ward (1998:79) has found that the CAM (Lynch, 1996; 2003) worked well as an evaluation framework for evaluating a three-day technical report writing programme in Hong Kong. This application of the model credits its comprehensiveness and flexibility in allowing a variety of data sources and methods to increase the reliability of the evaluation.

In the broader development programme evaluation context, there is an increasing demand for responsive, process-oriented evaluations based on actual observations of educational, cultural and linguistic activities (Smith, 2010:384; Ross, 2009:756). In the case of the English as LoLT Course, the flexibility of the CAM has enabled a process-oriented impact assessment that responds to the specific, rural language learning and teaching context of the Intermediate Phase Sesotho-speaking teachers who used English as their LoLT. It remains to conclude that the flexibility of the CAM has contributed to the usefulness of this model in theory and in practice. In evaluation theory, the usefulness of a flexible evaluation approach in the CAM could contribute to its effectiveness as a collaborative and participatory model that is more locally flexible and adaptive (Smith, 2010:386). In practice, this model has provided a framework for a flexible, context-adaptive impact assessment of the English as LoLT Course.

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