



## TRACING MULTICULTURAL DISCOURSE AWARENESS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CURRICULUM OF ESWATINI

**\*Patrick Mthethwa**

*University of Eswatini*

*Department of Curriculum and Teaching*

**Sthembile Hlatshwayo**

*Botho University*

*Department of Communication and Study Skills*

### ABSTRACT

Multicultural discourse awareness is an ideology whose time has not only come, but appropriate for inclusion in the English language curriculum. The world has become a global village, punctuated by exodus of immigrants from one place to the other in search of meaning in life. The essence of an inclusive and accommodative culturally embrative curriculum is a hallmark for recognizing and embracing cultural pluralism. Being able to envisage multicultural education dispensation, fostering equity, while on the hand combating prejudice, discrimination, or biases towards the predominant culture is essential for learning. This study traced the discourse of multicultural awareness in the English language curriculum of Eswatini. The view is that despite teachers being subconsciously aware of the diversity of students in the language classrooms of Eswatini, an awareness of a culturally embrative curriculum would yield a better understanding of appropriate multicultural pedagogy practices. Using document analysis, the study analyzed both the English language curriculum and the 2021-2023 syllabus for Eswatini General Certificate of Secondary Education (EGCSE), diagnosing the extent to which these materials assist the language teacher in recognizing and implementing the principles of multicultural education. The findings of the study revealed that while there were no specific discourses of multiculturalism in both the curriculum and syllabus, there were traces of Human Rights topics in the textbook but without reference to multicultural language education and awareness. These findings are essential for establishing a multicultural language education framework for Eswatini.

**KEYWORDS:** Multicultural education, diversity, assimilation, discourse, curriculum.

---

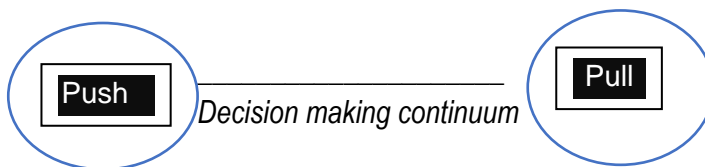
**CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:** Patrick Mthethwa, University of Eswatini, Faculty of Education. Email: [pmthethwa@uniswa.sz](mailto:pmthethwa@uniswa.sz) Tel: (+268) 25178433



## INTRODUCTION

The world’s educational landscape has been changing steadily as freedom of movement of immigrants across the globe eased lately, due to the availability of quicker and safer modes of transportation, while on the other hand, migration factors do not cease to impact the experiences of individuals and families on everyday life (Vandeyer, et al 2017). According to Krishnakumar and Indumathi (2014) there are push and pull factors accounting for migration. Recently, COVID-19, for some time, restrained the movement of both immigrants and goods across the globe. However, now such movement is slowly regaining momentum, and it is imperative that things will hopefully get back to normal – where immigrants will move from one place to the other in search of meaningful life without restrictions. In many countries immigrants from different cultures, religions, identities, and nationalities already live together. The world has become a *village* as permeability to other countries increases. Immigrants are finding the essence of life in migration, which is now inevitable as the world economy dwindles, and people move from one place to the other in search of greener pastures.

Apart from the unsavory reasons (*push factors*) compelling immigrants to leave their home countries such as wars, most immigrants migrate to look for great opportunities of their lives, including advancing their educational competencies, which later translates to better working conditions and improved livelihoods. Almost every country in the world has either documented or undocumented immigrants. As noted, some immigrants relocate because of studies, after which they do not return to their home countries but search for work in the host countries; hence, immigration is a function of people’s aspirations (De Haas, 2011; 2014). Besides the aesthetic reasons for relocating, such as exploration and the need for a different cultural experience, some relocations are caused by weak economies in home countries; hence, the movement. Europe, America, Australia, and Asia, because of their economic stability, attract many immigrants from all over the world.



**Figure 1:** Immigration Model

Depending on different circumstances, most immigrants relocate to other countries with their immediate families. In some cases though, they opt to relocate with their extended families. As shown in Figure 1, the decision of whether or not to migrate depends on the strength of the *push-pull* factors. For instance, it would be a quick decision to escape from a life threatening situation such as eruptive wars, than joining a friend who got a good paying job in another country. The cognitive weighing of the factors for either sides determines one’s decision. The centre of the continuum holds the balance of the factors, coupled with hesitations and uncertainties. After a decision to go to another country is concluded, it presents a different immigration landscape for the family.

When the families arrive at their target countries, children are enrolled in local schools to pursue their education; some even enrol in tertiary institutions where they do not only deal with aspects of personal development but also with personal identities (Vandeyer et al, 2017). The manner in which the immigrant children are welcomed in the new schools depends



on many factors, such as the level of preparedness of the target countries' education system in accommodating students' cultural diversity. If the outcome is that both the teachers and the curriculum do not accommodate the immigrant children, learning becomes difficult, and this creates a lasting impression of neglect, discrimination, and segregation among learners. Such a feeling does not only generate a negative perception of the host country; it further reveals the country's lack of democratic educational values and principles necessary for learning. Such perception thwarts the learners' prospects of realizing their educational goals and further deprives them a sense of belonging and self-confidence.

### **Multicultural education**

Bennett (1995) notes that multicultural education is an "approach to teaching and learning based on democratic values and beliefs that seek to foster cultural pluralism in culturally diverse societies" (p.13). With the diversification of immigrants in the world, different cultures and identities come together through the existence of multiculturalism (Coşkun, 2012). The main goal for multiculturalism is to establish an environment that allows different religions, identities, and races to live together in harmony. Bennett (1995) contends that a comprehensive definition of multicultural education includes four dimensions: The movement towards equity; the multicultural curriculum approach; the process of becoming multicultural; and the commitment to combat prejudice and discrimination.

### **Movement towards equity**

Bennett (1995) notes that this is an attempt to achieve educational opportunities and equities among all identifiable groups of children in a country, particularly ethnic minorities and the economically disadvantaged. The aim of equity is to ensure that the education system is transformed to accommodate all ethnic groups and make them benefit in the education system without impediments. He further notes that this includes the transformation of the hidden curriculum such as teacher attitudes and expectations, grouping of students, school policies and many other school activities. From this dimension, in a democratic education system, quite a number of variables for equity should be considered, without which immigrant students would be deprived of quality education.

### **The curriculum approach**

This approach values developing knowledge and understanding cultural differences; the history and contribution of ethnic groups and nations. There is a need for a democratic education system to integrate the multi-ethnic and cultural perspectives into its curriculum in order to develop knowledge and understanding of cultural diversity. The curriculum should also embrace the minority groups in the education system, including the poor, vulnerable, and underprivileged.

### **The process**

This is when one develops multicultural competencies in many ways such as perceiving, evaluating, believing, and doing things. At this level, the focus is on understanding and learning to negotiate cultural diversity among immigrants (Bennett, 1995). Actually, this means one has to understand his own culture, and how to negotiate with immigrants from other cultures without the feeling of being discriminated or prejudiced. Such a realization is important; it acts as a communication link between two or more cultures – the consequence of which will be tolerance and appreciation of cultural pluralism.



## **Commitment**

Commitment combat discrimination based on racism, sexism, ethnicity, tribalism and many other forms of discrimination students may go through. Commitment develops appropriate understanding of various cultures, and the role of attitude and discrimination. In this vein, there is a need for clearing myths, stereotypes associated with racism, sexism, ethnicity, tribalism or any other form of discrimination. The need for consideration of human similarities and dignity is paramount to observe, and should pose as a commitment for educationists. Multicultural educators guide students to view education from a humanistic perspective with a focus on the integration of ethnic and cultural knowledge, cultural reflection, self-regulation, self-development, and decision-making skills in a cross-cultural situation (Yusupova, Podgorecki, & Markova, 2015). These are some of the dimensions of multicultural education awareness. For instance, the democratization of an education system, drawing from a democratic national constitution are the main pillars of multicultural education. If a country does not believe in democratic principles, its education system reflects a deficiency in the educational freedoms.

## **Multicultural diversity at Eswatini**

Even though Eswatini is not affected by tribalism, it does have institutionalized clannism. The Dlamini clan with a so called “royal blood” and their kingship lineage regard themselves more important than the other clans. They benefit quite a number of privileges, while the other clans do not. Other than clannism, the tribes at Eswatini are largely a homogeneous Nguni group, and they speak intelligible languages such as Siswati and Zulu. However, due to the outbreak of a civil war in Mozambique from 1977 to 1992, many Mozambicans arrived at Eswatini as refugees; they camped at Ndzevane in the Lubombo region. After the civil war, most of them did not go back to Mozambique; instead, they integrated with the rest of the Swazi society and became part of the Swazi cultural narrative.

Furthermore, around the year 2000, there has been quite a lot of immigrants coming from the Middle Eastern countries, such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, China, and others. Many of the immigrants mainly come for business opportunities such as car retail industry i.e. selling of second hand vehicles from Japan and other countries. The Chinese are mainly in the apparel industry, producing garments and operating supermarkets. Most of the immigrants’ children are enrolled in local public and private schools, and this has marked the end of homogeneous classrooms in Eswatini. The schools are now culturally diverse. The population from the Middle East is bringing strong cultural beliefs partly influenced by the Islamic religion.

## **Cultural responsive language teachers at Eswatini**

To be noted is that cultural responsive language teachers are now necessary at Eswatini. In most schools, there is a percentage of immigrant students. In this regard, not much is known in terms of how the English language curriculum addresses the imperatives of teaching and learning across diverse cultures. While in the Faculty of Education, at the University of Eswatini, there is no general course/s dealing with cultural awareness for pre-service teachers; CTE 319/519: *Curriculum Studies in English I* has a topic on multicultural language classroom. The topic covers cultural diversity, accommodation, tolerance, and assimilation. Therefore, pre-service teachers are partly prepared to deal with diversity in the language classrooms. Furthermore, they are taught about acculturation, where they have to help students adapt to the mainstream culture. Emphasis in this course is put on additive rather than subtractive acculturation. In addition, preservice teachers are made aware of the importance of cultural accommodation, which is a two-way process in language classes.



In the course, emphasis is that members of the mainstream culture need to adopt the minority culture, while members of the minority culture also need to integrate into the mainstream culture for effective language learning to take place. In addition, teachers are made aware of the following classroom cultural responsibilities: *Respect*; where teachers respect students' diverse backgrounds, origins and life orientation. *Detecting unfair privileges*; where all learners are treated equally and fairly. *Combating prejudice*: where teachers avoid being judgmental and prejudicial about students from other cultures. Lastly, *inter-ethnic conflict*, where teachers encourage cultural tolerance and harmonize disparities between cultures likely to cause conflict in the language classrooms.

However, the efforts to embrace multicultural education and cultural awareness in schools is a task that cannot be accomplished by teachers alone. Students should also embrace cultural diversity and avoid being judgmental about other students, including their teachers. They should acknowledge that within cultural diversity we are still humans. That is why the curriculum is an important aspect in achieving equity in education. The curriculum should embrace a broader view of democratic principles of education that synchronizes students' cultural backgrounds to enhance their academic achievements. Thus, the aspects of multicultural education, including cultural awareness should be explicit in any language curriculum.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The social contact theory explains most of the classroom expectations. Allport (1956) propounds that the social contact theory has four basic conditions to lessen negative prejudice among immigrants and foster friendly attitudes. These conditions are that, first the contact should be sufficiently intimate to produce reciprocal knowledge and understanding between groups. Second, members of the various groups should share the same equal status. Third, the contact situation should lead immigrants to do things together to achieve a common goal. Fourth, there should be institutional support for intergroup contact. Each of these conditions are essential for developing a positive rapport between groups of immigrants in contact.

### Positive teacher expectations

Multicultural education cannot be effected without the establishment of multicultural schools in which teachers display positive teacher expectations. Teachers tend to make judgements about their students based on their perceptions and, as a result, treat them differently. The teachers' practices are the habitual actions, beliefs, and professional skills they draw on during their teaching (Lampert, 2010), or the things they actually do -- the visible and invisible practices of teaching (Kennedy, 2016). Research on teaching has shown that teachers often focus on the transmission of factual information (Byram & Risager, 1999) and little or no attention is given to the role of culture in learning. Lack of understanding students' cultural orientation affects learning, especially in languages because language and culture are interwoven.

### Positive interracial contact

Casual contact between different ethnic groups reinforce existing negative stereotypes and generate new ones. Teachers often bring students with different histories and ethnicity together, without considering the magnitude of a potential cultural explosion within the groups. It is important for teachers to study the diverse cultures present in the school or class carefully, and note cultures that harmonize and those that would explode, causing more damage than good. Precisely, teachers should spearhead cultural tolerance and encourage positive contact between cultures in schools or classes. School policies



should encourage the harmonization of diverse cultures found within the schools or classrooms.

### **Multicultural curriculum**

Multicultural curriculum has ideological overtones based on democratic ideals. As noted in the introduction of this paper, the democratic ideals may be enshrined in the national constitution from where other knowledge fonts draw. A multicultural curriculum is a product of a fair-minded critical thinking skill at whose heart is teaching and learning (Bennett, 1995). Both the teachers and students should be critical thinkers that can access, gather, analyze, and synthesize information. In the process of thinking, both teachers and students should not only think for themselves but also for others. That is, the democratic ideals should be conceived to safeguard each other's learning interests. The multicultural curriculum also requires teachers and students to care about human welfare in the education sector, their families and friends. The multicultural curriculum should advocate that teachers and students are agents of change operating at a communal level. In a multicultural school, the curriculum is friendly and designed in a way that inculcates humanistic values in both the teacher and student.

### **Content integration**

Content integration describes the ways in which teachers use examples and content from a variety of cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts, principles, generalizations, and theories in their subject areas or disciplines (Banks & Banks, 2019). Content integration is important; it provides learners with the opportunity to learn about various aspects of the integrated content, including knowledge about culture, the process of learning languages, skills of adapting the curriculum, and an understanding of the socio-political effects on their learning. Such integration affords learners with exposure to proper and regional specific styles of pronunciation, word formation, grammar, vocabulary, complex sentence building, hand gestures, facial expressions, and verbal and nonverbal communication (Banks & Banks, 2019).

Textbooks are important because they are the official instruments for codification of knowledge. Traditionally, textbooks would include a range of specific topics deemed appropriate for the learners, as determined by the authors. To integrate content into the curriculum successfully, Parker (2019) states that teachers should start by assessing the learners background knowledge before they can move forward with teaching them. One important aspect for integrating cultural knowledge into the curriculum is the focus on mediating cultural disconnects. This means embracing the learner's culture, and working to connect it to the subject content in a meaningful way. Such connections allow teachers and learners to accept each other. Furthermore, learners benefit well from a curricula based on reading, writing, listening, and speaking within specific spaces (i.e. the classroom, internship sites) rather than in a generalist approach.

### **Cultural awareness**

In essence, globalization does not imply homogenization; instead, it means we should know how to deal with cultural differences directly rather than at a distance (Nolan, 1999). The process of being aware of the cultural differences and similarities form the basis for intercultural and multicultural education, including the expectations in intercultural awareness and competence. Intercultural competence should always be seen in connection with language awareness and competence. The more diverse a society becomes, the more important is language competence, and this enables one to articulate herself/himself. Thus, cultural awareness is an important aspect worth considering when teaching. Fenner (2001) gives a very comprehensive and interesting account of cultural awareness. To her, cultural awareness is part of language awareness; both are inseparable and regarded as essential components of communicative competence. She strongly



emphasizes that practical work should be based on authentic texts. A text as a whole is an entity of form and content that carries an expression of culture. Fenner (2001) particularly focuses on the role of written texts as transmitters of culture and cultural awareness. That is to say, how to use written texts, especially pieces of literature for culture-related activities. In terms of cultural framework Byram (2012) contends that cultural awareness is based on three principles; knowledge, sociocultural competence, and attitude.

### **Knowledge**

The first principle Byram (2012) highlights is that cultural awareness is based on the knowledge of the foreign culture gained from exposure. This includes traditions, history, literature, and politics as well as the knowledge of one's own culture. Cultural awareness embodies a trail of assumptions about one's culture and others. This entails gaining cultural awareness is a two-way process; on one hand, you have to assimilate a large body of information about the foreign culture and, on the other, you have to merge this with your perceptions of your own culture. Therefore, considering a range of cultures while matching it with your own is a mammoth task. At some point, the teacher is torn between all the cultures. In a textbook, the teacher also deals with stereotypes, which cannot be excluded from the book but consciously dealt with and analyzed. The teacher first deals with his/her own culture before turning to the students' cultural beliefs and orientation.

### **Socio-cultural competence**

The second principle is socio-cultural competence, which refers to the skills an English language learner should acquire in order to cope in the target country. That is to say, how to behave in a foreign culture. Formerly, this was transmitted through dialogues with traditional speech patterns in which the learner had to deal with social situations of the target country (Fenner, 2001). Fenner (2001) stresses that these patterns become rather ritualistic and inflexible, and do not encourage learners to adapt and act flexibly in real life situations. She favors a process-oriented interaction that appeals to individual approaches. As every act of communication is unique, learners have to interact at many levels. In addition, the learner should become aware of misunderstandings in the communication processes. This helps the learner to understand the importance of negotiation of meaning in a conversation across different cultural imperatives.

### **Attitude**

The third principle is attitude, which hinges on the idea of developing a better understanding and tolerance towards others. Attitude tends to foreplay beliefs and stereotypes about individuals (Fenner, 2001). When mitigated, attitude thwarts prejudicial positions, which learners have to continuously alter to readjust their points of views. It is important to prepare the learners to understand the foreign language completely and not to despair when comprehension problems occur. However, even though learners may not comprehend one's culture completely, they still have to accommodate and tolerate it with no attitude attached.

### **Language teaching and cultural awareness**

The underlying assumption on the relationship between language and culture is that language teaching does not equal teaching a language only, but also involves cultural, political, economic, and societal aspects of the country, whose language one wants to learn. Precisely, no language is taught or learned without its culture; learning a language is learning its embedded culture. Also, despite that learning a language is learning the culture of the language, Gannon (2001) points out that "it is not surprising that culture is important when individuals must communicate directly" and also that "knowing a country's language is no guarantee of understanding its cultural mind-set" (p.18). That gives support to the fact that even a



high level of fluency, say for example, in English, can exist without a high level of cultural competence. For instance, a lot of immigrants have lived in other countries and have learnt the target language/s proficiently without understanding the underlying cultural tones of the language. In other words, the cultural mind-set and the cultural beliefs remain elusive despite the proficiency in the target language, and to realize these cultural underpinnings and behave accordingly is the end-product of cultural awareness and intercultural competence.

In a language, communicative and intercultural competence are considered essential because they include the awareness of communicative processes and the ability to understand and make understood informational messages (Müller-Jacquier, 2000). In other words, communicative competence, which is linked closely to the concept of language itself, enables a person to realize communication processes involved in the target language and transmit them to others. This is considered a core skill for cultural competence. Language and cultural awareness as our main communicative tool play an important role in cultural competence. In second language teaching, some scholars think it is important to use both the student's first and second language because it is necessary that learners understand concepts presented in both cultures. This notion is supported by Torres-Guzmán (2004) who on their bilingual education experience contends that children who use their first language to solve problems and discuss abstract ideas also learn to use a second language in a similar way. Therefore, the use of the first language when teaching supports the development of understanding of the second language, culture, and language awareness.

According to Banks (2008), certain objectives should be fulfilled by educators in order to establish a multicultural education process. For that matter, teachers need to understand themselves better when they look at the perspective of other cultures and provide students with cultural, ethnic, and linguistic options. They also need to reduce the discrimination and suffering experienced by some ethnic groups due to their unique racial, physical, and cultural characteristics. Though culture is central to the field of education as a whole, it plays a special and important role within the field of language teaching. Atkinson (1999) notes, "except for language, learning, and teaching, there is no more important concept in the field of TESOL than culture" (p. 625). Because of the deep connection between language and culture, language teachers need not only employ culturally sustaining pedagogy to build upon their students' cultural backgrounds; they must also develop students' cultural awareness, in order to prepare them for encounters with immigrants from different cultural backgrounds.

### **Teaching cultural awareness in schools**

Teaching cultural awareness and learning requires different elements and strategies for teaching. It is more than simply telling students artefacts about a specific culture. It includes supporting the development of a social and cultural identity while also fostering intercultural competence. This refers to the fact that both students and teachers are supposed to learn how to deal with social and intercultural situations, and how to communicate verbally as well as how to interpret non-verbal signs of speakers of other languages. Intercultural competence embodies the ability to be able to transcend the cultural and social systems of one's culture in order to realize the rules of social interactions (Müller-Jacquier, 2000). The ability to realize these different cultural patterns requires cultural awareness. In order to be able to do that, cultural awareness and subsequently intercultural competence is needed, and achieving a multicultural competence is both a teaching and learning goal for democratic education systems.





Furthermore, the integration of cultural awareness in schools is related to an integration of language and cultural education into the general curriculum. Learners should be able to utter subject-related ideas or positions in another language that is not their first language, which means that teaching in a foreign or the student's second language is meant to help the student acquire subject-related knowledge in language other than theirs. Integrating language and cultural education into the regular curriculum; however, must not be seen only as teaching and supporting the development of language competence and cultural awareness. In other words, these skills must not be taught as a mere part of language and cultural education classes; there must be an additional focus not only on general language-related skills but also on learning strategies that help students acquire other languages more easily, as well as on general social skills that reflect social cultural patterns and rules. What schools are expected to do is to teach cultural competence and cultural awareness in connection with language competence and language awareness.

### **Cultural identity**

The development of a cultural identity is based on the idea of an individual's social identity in the sense that the individual is supposed to be able to deal with his or her environment in a differentiated way (Delanoy, 1995), i.e., the individual needs to become aware of the influence that his or her environment, including family, peer groups and the like, has on himself or herself (Vandeyer, 2017). This individual awareness is related to social competence. Communication always includes or requires, among other skills, communicative competence, and in order to foster the individual identity and support the development of social interaction skills, communicative competence needs to be supported first. Since communicative competence is transmitted through language, language education always includes more than the mere transmission of language awareness, but also of social competence and cultural competence, which is the basis for teaching and learning.

Overall, there is a need for the integration of culture and teaching cultural awareness as part of every language class in order to create a thread that every learner feels tied to, offer teachers help and give them advice and guidance on how to integrate cultural education in their language classes. Some language teachers are not aware of how to explicitly integrate cultural awareness in their teaching, and often lack the competence to do so. This leads to the fact that the education of teachers plays an essential role in transposing cultural education and awareness to schools. Language teachers should realize the need for multicultural competence, including the cultural knowledge their students bring to class. Within the framework of their own education, language teachers therefore need to concentrate on their own perception of culture and language awareness to take part in the development of teaching materials (Huber-Warring & Warring, 2005).

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study was to trace multicultural discourses in the English language curriculum of Eswatini. Eswatini has been a homogeneous country for a long time and the country has now been culturally initiated. With the ease of migration and acquiring of visas and study permits, the country has seen an influx of different nationalities, including cultural pluralism in the language classrooms. However, the country's position in multicultural education and policy directives has not been ascertained in terms of acculturation, inclusivity, accommodation, and tolerance.



## METHODOLOGY

### Materials and analysis

Since the focus of the study was on tracing the multicultural discourses in the English language curriculum, the main materials subjected to document analysis were the policy directive, syllabus, and prescribed text book. Both the syllabus and the prescribed textbook are used for teaching at the senior secondary schools at Eswatini.

### The Eswatini national education policy directive

Looking at the policy directives, the following essential skills are provided by the Ministry of Education and Training (2018) policy document;

- inculcate values and attitudes, as well as knowledge and understanding;
- encourage respect for Human Rights and freedom of speech;
- respect the values and beliefs of others, relating to issues of gender, culture and religion;
- develop desirable attitudes and behavior towards the environment;
- provide insight and understanding of global issues which affect quality of life in Eswatini and elsewhere, e.g. the AIDS pandemic, global warming, misdistribution of wealth; and technological advances.

### Syllabus

The document reviewed was the English language syllabus subject code 6873. The syllabus is applicable at the senior secondary schools at Eswatini. It is a government document that spans its use from 2021 to 2023. The document is a nationwide English language syllabus for senior secondary schools. This means all public senior secondary schools at Eswatini will use the document until its next revision. The document's copyright rests with the Examination Council of Eswatini (ECESWA). ECESWA is a statutory council responsible for running external examinations at Eswatini. It conducts external examinations in collaboration with the University of Cambridge, which accredits certificates to deserving candidates. At Eswatini, English language is a compulsory subject together with Siswati, Mathematics, and Science. In the broad guidelines, the Ministry of Education and Training, in accordance with the national policy statement on education, declares that part of its mandate is to "provide a curriculum and assessment system that would enhance students to complete their secondary education and be equipped to meet the changing needs of the nation, including attaining international acceptable standards" (EGCSE English Language Syllabus, 2021-2023, p. 3).

### Aims of the syllabus

The aims of the syllabus are as follows:

- To develop awareness of the usefulness of English language as a medium of national and international communication.
- To promote the value of effective language command and use for personal development;
- To develop an awareness of the nature of language and language learning skills along with skills of a more general application.
- To form a sound base for the effective uses of English for the purposes of further study and employment (p.3).

The syllabus further addresses the assessment objectives for the four language skills, writing, speaking, listening, and reading.

**Prescribed textbooks**

*Enjoy English Senior Secondary* is the learners' textbook used for teaching English language. It is a prescribed textbook endorsed by the National Curriculum Centre (NCC) and the Ministry of Education and Training, respectively. However, teachers are allowed to use other supplementary materials to buttress the prescribed textbook. The textbook has 204 pages, excluding the table of contents. There are ten (10) units in the book, and each unit is dedicated to some language aspect. Each unit has ten (10) activities except unit 10, which has four (4) activities. The activities are as follows:

**Unit 1: (Taking off)** covers the following activities: Let's talk about taking off; reading and understanding diaries; how well do you understand; using nouns and pronouns; let's explore experiences in new environments; using punctuation; writing a friendly letter; how well do you understand timetables; understanding poems; and listening to and understanding announcements.

**Unit 2: (Human Rights for all)** covers the following activities: Let's talk about Human Rights; reading and understanding fiction; how well do you understand; using pronouns and articles; let's explore debating; using simple and compound sentences; report writing; how well do you understand timelines and researching issues; understanding a formal letter of complaint; and listening to and understanding radio plays.

**Unit 3: (Fun express)** covers the following activities: Let's talk about entertainment; reading and understanding new features; how well do you understand; using verbs; let's explore role plays; using compound sentences; writing a narrative; how well do you understand celebrity profiles; understanding poetry; and listening to and understanding music.

**Unit 4: (What a wonderful world)** covers the following activities: Let's talk about travel and culture; reading and understanding travel information; how well do you understand; using the simple tenses; writing a descriptive essay; how well do you understand role-play; understanding poems; and listening to and understanding announcements.

**Unit 5 (Communication and the world of work)** covers the following activities: let's talk about the evolution of communication; reading and understanding fiction; how well do you understand; using perfect tenses; let's explore group discussion; using complex sentences, interjections, and the apostrophe; extended writing; how well do you understand graphs; extended writing; and listening to and understanding announcements.

**Unit 6 (For the love of the game)** covers the following activities: let's talk about sports; reading and understanding fiction; how well do you understand; using contractions and the apostrophe; let's explore interviews; using modal verbs and prepositions; extended writing; how well do you understand; understanding sports terminology; and listening to and understanding sports commentary.

**Unit 7 (One life, live it well)** covers the following activities: let's talk about life skills; reading and understanding advice for youths; how well do you understand; using direct and indirect speech acts; let's explore impromptu speeches; using punctuation marks; extended writing; writing a factual composition; understanding figurative language; and listening to and understanding medical advice.



**Unit 8 (Stereotypes)** covers the following activities: let's talk about gender and stereotypes; reading and understanding stereotypes; how well do you understand; using adjectives and adverbs; let's explore stereotypes; using nouns; summarising and making notes; how well do you understand graphic information; understanding dialogue and argumentative essays, and listening to and understanding telephone conversations.

**Unit 9 (Crime and punishment)** covers the following activities: let's talk about crime and punishment; speed reading and understanding; how well do you understand; revising language; let's explore making presentations; using active and passive voice; writing an imaginative essay; how well do you understand visual language; filling in an accident report; and listening to and understanding safety guidelines.

**Unit 10 (Assessment)** covers the types of papers written in the final examination. Paper 1: Reading and directed writing; Paper 2: Continuous writing; Paper 3: Listening and Paper 4: Speaking.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Having carefully examined the three (3) documents; policy directive, the syllabus, and the prescribed textbook, it suffices to say the discourse of multicultural awareness in the policy directive is evident, even though with little expansion. The policy explicitly mentions the importance of respecting the values and the beliefs of others. It further highlights a need to respect issues of gender, culture, and religion. Notably, this is a broader conceptualization of an ideal learning environment, cutting across all ethnicity and realizing the universality of mankind, despite their heritage and/or cultural orientation. It is a noble cause that the Ministry of Education and Training of Eswatini, through the Examination council, could recognize the importance of flagging the recognition of Human Rights in the area of education.

The Right to education is one of the essential entitlements for every individual, in particular children. While the Human Rights are noted in the policy document, there is no mention of the same anywhere else. The clause on Human Rights mirrors what is in the constitution of Eswatini – that Human Rights should be respected. However, the policy document has not been unpacked to foreshadow Human Rights practices within the English language classrooms. The aspect of respecting the values and beliefs of others is a crucial notation for teachers and students. As noted, the broadness of issues on prejudice is driven largely by many factors, resulting to unsavory perceptions teachers and/or students develop as a consequence of incongruent beliefs and practices.

In both the English language curriculum and syllabus, it was observed that the topics about Human Rights are left to the teacher's discretion despite that gender, culture, and religion are broad statements with huge implications for practice. While gender constitutes male and female dichotomy and can be easily understood, culture is very broad and partly vague. Every culture has its nuances appreciated by its owners as a recognition of their identity, and its multidimensional nature is elusive in the classroom, except just recognizing its existence. For instance, if a teacher has ten (10) students from different cultural backgrounds, it means there are also ten cultures the teacher has to grapple with in that class. The implication is that the teacher needs to recognize the cultures and accommodate learners born and bred in these cultures.

Furthermore, in the policy directive there is no expansion on how learners could benefit from the policy statement; and, a policy directive falling short of informing practice is insufficient to cushion immigrant learners. While the constitutional



mandate to respect Human Rights could be enshrined in a constitution or policy directive, subsequent documents such as the curriculum and syllabus should interpret these policies in relation to practice. The language teacher has to appreciate the implications of the directives within classroom practice. It is important to note that, regarding the textbook, there were also traces of Human Rights. For instance, Unit 2 of the textbook has a topic on Human Rights, and there is a subsequent heading on Human Rights, the contents of which are not articulated. That is, there is no specific informational content on Human Rights. Perhaps, the assumption is that the language teacher would bring materials on Human Rights to class. It is however important to point that teachers may view the Human Rights topic differently, leading to different unorthodox perceptions. Also, leaving the Human Rights topic to the teachers' discretion may jeopardize the lesson, especially if the teacher is not well versed with the topic and/or did not get correct/sufficient information. It is important to note that while the topic on Human Rights was not the object of this study, it dovetails into the important aspects of respecting students' culture, beliefs, and practices.

Overall, the absence of teaching materials dealing with multicultural language education and cultural awareness downplays a full realization of cultural diversity in the education system of Eswatini. Cultural content in textbooks is important to lay a foundation for cultural accommodation and tolerance in the classrooms. The interracial prevalence permeating our societies, in particular schools, warrants a high level of cultural awareness and inclusivity in both the curriculum and teaching materials. The English language curriculum has to reflect broadly on the constitution, regarding Human Rights, and also reflect on the national language policy directive. A curriculum reflective of the language policy should tailor down to the language syllabus and finally to the teaching materials to ensure its implementation. It is also important to emphasize that modern textbooks have to include explicit activities based on cultural diversity, accommodation, and tolerance – the absence of which will result in cultural incongruence between teachers and students and therefore affect learning.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we note that the demographic outlook of Eswatini has, like in many countries, changed to pluralistic societies, and accommodation of the diverse cultures in the education sector can no longer be avoided. A transformative nature of multicultural approaches and models to language teaching is indispensable. On the other hand, a policy directive foreshadowing key signposts on language awareness enhances teachers' practice, while thwarting uncertainties and hesitations on the implementation of such policy statements through the curriculum. Preparing and guiding teachers towards a multicultural education system depends largely on the seriousness of the commitment to safeguard the values of justice. Clarity on issues of how to move towards equity are not only important but also necessary for budding equal educational opportunities. To achieve teachers' positivity on interracial contact, multicultural curriculum is important. A teacher who understands multiculturalism would further appreciate that cultural diversity in class is a cornerstone for understanding how learning is affected by lack of cultural tolerance and also the importance of assimilating and acculturating diverse learners in a multicultural laden language classroom.



## REFERENCES

- Atkinson, D. (1999). TESOL and culture. *TESOL quarterly*, 33(4), 625-654. Allport, G. W. (1956). *Prejudice in modern perspective*. Institute of Race Relations.
- Banks, J. A. (1996). *Multicultural Education, Transformative Knowledge and Action: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*. Multicultural Education Series.
- Banks, J. A. (2008). *An introduction to multicultural education*. Sixth edition. Pearson, Boston.
- Banks, J. A., & Banks, C. A. M. (Eds.). (2019). *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Bennett, C. I. (1995). Preparing teachers for cultural diversity and national standards of academic excellence. *Journal of teacher education*, 46(4), 259-265.
- Byram, M., & Risager, K. (1999). *Language teachers, politics and cultures*. Multilingual Matters.
- Byram, M. (2012). Language awareness and (critical) cultural awareness–relationships, comparisons and contrasts. *Language awareness*, 21(1-2), 5-13.
- Coşkun, M. K. (2012). Din kültürü ve ahlak bilgisi öğretmen adaylarının çok kültürlü eğitime yönelik tutumları (İlahiyat-Eğitim DKAB karşılaştırması). *Dumlupınar Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, (34), 33-44.
- Delanoy, W. (1995). Cultural Learning in the FL-Classroom. From 'Landeskunde' to 'New Cultural Studies'. *British Studies Now: Anthology*, (1-5), 37-42.
- De Haas, H. (2011). *The Determinants of International Migration*, DEMIG Working Paper 2. International Migration Institute, University of Oxford.
- De Haas, H. (2014). *Migration theory: Quo vadis?* DEMIG, Working Paper, International Migration Institute, University of Oxford.
- Examination Council of Eswatini (2021) English language syllabus: Subject Code 6873.
- Fenner, A. B. (2001). *Cultural awareness and language awareness based on dialogic interaction with texts in foreign language learning*. Council of Europe.



- Gannon, M. J. (Ed.). (2001). *Cultural metaphors: Readings, research translations, and commentary*. Sage.
- Ge, L., Brown, D., & Durst, D. (2019). Chinese international students' experiences in a Canadian university: Ethnographic inquiry with gender comparison. *Journal of International Students*, 9(2), 582-612.
- Huber-Warring, T., & Warring, D. F. (2005). Assessing culturally responsible pedagogy in student work: Reflections, rubrics, and writing. *Journal of Thought*, 40(3), 63-90.
- Hlophe, C; Schroeder, K. & Sekokotoana (2005). *Enjoy English, Senior Secondary*, Macmillan, Boleswa.
- Kennedy, M. M. (2016). How does professional development improve teaching? *Review of educational research*, 86(4), 945-980.
- Krishnakumar P. & Indumathi T. (2014) Pull and push factors of migration, *Sona Global Management Review*, 8 (4) 8-12.
- Lampert, M. (2010). Learning teaching in, from, and for practice: What do we mean? *Journal of teacher education*, 61(1-2), 21-34.
- Müller-Jacquier, B. (2000). *Linguistic awareness of cultures: Grundlagen eines Trainingsmoduls* (pp. 20-51). Popp.
- Nolan, R. (1999). *Communicating and adapting across cultures: Living and working in the global village*. ABC-CLIO.
- Parker, R. D. (2019). *How to interpret literature: Critical theory for literary and cultural studies*. Oxford University Press.
- Sue, D. W. Ivey, A. Pedersen, P; (1996). *Toward the development of multicultural counselling theory*: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, USA.
- Torres-Guzmán, M. E. (2004). Language, culture, and literacy in Puerto Rican communities. In *Sociocultural contexts of language and literacy* (pp. 121-145). Routledge.
- Vandeyar, S., Vandeyar, T, & Gamedze, S. (2017). Crossing the border: Immigrant student identities in Swaziland schools. *Social Identities* 23 (5) 533-547.



Yusupova, G. F., Podgorecki, J., & Markova, N. G. (2015). Educating Young Immigrants in Multicultural Educational Environment of Higher Education Institution. *International Journal of Environmental and Science Education*, 10(4), 561-570.