

What Content Can Be Taught Using Zulu Proverbs and How? A Case of One Durban Secondary School

Zinhle Nkosi

University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

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ABSTRACT The purpose of the paper is to discuss the content that can be taught through the use of proverbs in the classroom, and, to discuss the strategies teachers use when teaching proverbs. The study used qualitative study methods. Five Grade 12 teachers who teach isiZulu in one Durban secondary school participated in the study. Interviews and classroom observations were used as data generation methods. Among the findings were that proverbs have a potential to teach different content, which includes Ubuntu (which means humanness), and vocabulary and good behaviour. Besides, it was found that different strategies can be useful to teach proverbs to secondary school learners.

INTRODUCTION

IsiZulu is one of the African indigenous languages of South Africa, mostly spoken in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. Before the advent of Western knowledge systems, the Zulus already had their indigenous ways of knowing that they used to teach the youth about different life aspects. They had no formal education, and have for years developed their own sets of experiences and explanations linked to the environments in which they live (Kimwaga 2010). For instance, they would teach their children the norms and values of society, and inculcate in them the concept of ‘*ubuntu*’ (humanness) which they believed would make children grow up and be responsible citizens. In this way, idioms, proverbs, riddles, songs, and folktales were used as vehicles of knowledge transmission. However, Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) in South Africa have always been marginalized, suppressed and also subjected to ridicule (Hays 2009). It is surprising that even after the abolishment of apartheid, Indigenous Knowledge Systems and African languages are still not taken seriously, despite government initiatives to promote them. This paper discusses some of the content that can be taught through using proverbs. It further discusses the strategies used by the teachers to teach proverbs to secondary school learners in isiZulu classrooms. The paper firstly gives the definition of Indigenous Knowledge Systems as well as proverbs. The paper also highlights the relationship between proverbs and IKS. This is followed by the discussion regarding the nature of proverbs. Fur-

thermore, an explanation of the methodology employed in the research is discussed. What follows is a presentation of the results and discussion. Finally, there is a conclusion and recommendations.

Defining IKS and Proverbs; and Their Relationship

According to Mapara (2009: 140), ‘Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) are a body of knowledge or bodies of knowledge of the indigenous people of particular geographical areas that they have survived on for a very long time’, and are forms of knowledge that have originated locally and naturally (Altieri 1995: 114). Semali et al. (1999: 3) believe that IKS reflect: ‘The dynamic way in which the residents of an area have come to understand themselves in relation to their environment and how they organize that folk knowledge of flora and fauna, cultural beliefs, and history to enhance their lives.’ However, Onyancha et al. (2005: 247) observe, that ‘Indigenous Knowledge (IK) has been disregarded, stigmatized, and suppressed.’ As stated in the introduction, proverbs are part of IKS. They are summary statements of generalised truths that have been gathered through the experiences of previous generations (Mapara 2009: 145). Proverbs are as old as humanity itself and they have been in existence for years and years, used by indigenous people, and therefore are indigenous forms of knowledge. However, proverbs are not confined to the old expressions, because some of them must have come into the language in fairly recent years (Nyembezi 1990). For exam-

ple, the expression: *Wahamba okwejuba likaNowa* (he has gone like Noah's dove) is based on the Biblical story of the flood. This expression could only have come into the language after the Christianisation of the Zulus (Nyembezi 1990: 1). Therefore, in working with indigenous African proverbs we are dealing with the corpus of knowledge which can allow for an understanding of the multiplicity of conceptions of African 'world senses' and ideas about humanity. Therefore, proverbs constitute knowledge not only for African peoples but knowledge for the global public sphere (Dei 2014: 50). In the next section the nature of proverbs will be discussed.

The Nature of Proverbs

In general, proverbs are developed in various ways. Some are natural apophthegms, platitudes, phrases and sentences ordinarily used in a particular special situation elevated to proverbial dignity (Biyela 2003; Amate 2011). Other proverbs arise from the figurative or metaphoric use of an occurrence, while some emulate already existing proverbs and some originate from narratives (Biyela 2003). Proverbs, especially those that originated prior to the era of writing, do not often indicate the sources on which they draw because many of them have been orally transferred from generation to generation with minor deviations in the wording. Some of the proverbs found in isiZulu are found common in many indigenous African languages, such as the proverb *Ukuzala ukuzelula* (isiZulu); *Ukuzala kukuzolula* (isiXhosa). Another proverb that is common among different African languages is the one that says *Izimfene zihlekana iziphongo* (meaning the baboons laugh at each other's foreheads). All baboons have protruding foreheads. A baboon which laughs at the forehead of another baboon would do so because it is unaware that its own forehead is the same or because it thinks that its own forehead is better than that of the other one. This proverb therefore applies for example, when a person laughs at another, forgetting that he himself or she herself can also be laughed at for the same reason. It is worth noting that in fact, proverbs are still being created today as ready-made formulas to express new human and social insights. As such, proverbs are useful guideposts based on a multitude of experiences and observations

that are part of everyday life in the family, the workplace, business and any form of human exchange (Wolfgang 2009).

Not only were proverbs taught during the old days, some parents and teachers in today's language classrooms teach proverbs to the youth. One way of teaching children any aspect of a language, is by using authentic texts to enhance understanding. Homolova (2010) highlights the use of proverbs as authentic texts in the classroom. Below are some of the implications for using proverbs in a lesson:

- meaning has priority over correct grammar.
- it brings a sense of reality and culture into the classroom.

This study is based on the following two key research questions:

1. What content can be taught through the use of proverbs in class?
2. How do isiZulu teachers teach proverbs?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed qualitative case study methods. The sample consisted of five teachers who teach isiZulu Home Language at Grade 12 classes in one Durban district high school. The teachers were selected through the use of convenience sampling technique as they were easily accessible. The school was a short distance from my residence and this increased convenience opportunities especially regarding distance and time to access the research site.

The data were collected over a period of two weeks. Semi-structured interviews were used and the semi-structured interview schedule with open-ended questions was developed as a data collection instrument. Furthermore, lesson observations with each teacher were conducted in order to understand how teachers teach proverbs in the classroom. An observation guide was used to observe the lessons before, during and after the lesson. The observation guide was also used to record the nature of the classroom, class size, mood of the class, materials used, time available for these lessons, sitting arrangements, learners' age ranges, gender distribution, teachers' actions as well as learners' actions. With regard to the interviews, semi-structured interview questions were composed in the medium of isiZulu and English, to allow teachers to respond in the language of their choice. A voice recorder was used during the interview process.

Ethical procedures were observed throughout the research. These included obtaining informed consent from each participant. In addition, participants' names were not to be used during the research, instead, pseudonyms were used. It also included observing participant's rights to contribute or not to contribute in the study without negative consequences. For the purposes of anonymity, teachers were given pseudonyms. Qualitative data analysis methods were used in the research. Therefore, interview and observation data were transcribed, and the transcriptions were analysed using thematic analysis. During the analysis, categories were developed. The researcher then sent the results and conclusions to the participants for them to verify if the interpretation of the results was consistent with their original opinions. All the interview transcriptions and analysis of texts served as the foundation for the final interpretative work.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses results of the findings, based on the key research questions:

1. What content can be taught through the use of proverbs?
2. How do isiZulu teachers teach proverbs?

Examples of proverbs dealt with in this paper were those contained in some of the comprehension texts that were taught in the classrooms. For instance, the teacher would select a written text that contained certain proverbs and these would become part of the discussion in class. Others were examples obtained through learners' interpretation of audio-visual materials and pictures, for instance, when they were asked to derive a proverb that matches the text.

Content Taught Through the Use of Proverbs

The following is a discussion based on the categories that emerged from the research results in addressing the first research question: 'What content can be taught through the use of isiZulu proverbs?' The categories under this section were generated from the interview and observation data. During the interviews, the teachers pointed out that different content, for example, *ubuntu*, can be taught through the use of proverbs, and below is a discussion based on the use of proverbs to teach *ubuntu*:

Teaching Ubuntu (humanness) through the Use of Proverbs

Under this category, it emerged that most of the proverbs can assist in teaching learners about *ubuntu* (humanness). *Ubuntu* is one of several African approaches to a comprehensive understanding of the process of cultivating cohesion and positive human interaction with one another and with creation in daily life (Manda 2009). With this understanding, *ubuntu* picks out the idea that human beings are radically interdependent, and that this interdependence entails a morally normative pressure toward generosity, hospitality, friendliness, compassion, forgiveness, reconciliation, consensus, and positive group-identification (van Niekerk 2013). Therefore, learners' exposure to certain proverbs can help in developing *ubuntu* in them. This can be seen through their behaviour, for example, respecting and treating one other with dignity and love. Such proverbs include "Izandla ziyagezana" (Hands wash one another) and "Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu." (A person is a person through other persons). Below are some of the quotations by teachers:

'... I value to teach different proverbs, depending on what I want them [the learners] to learn in a particular lesson... Some proverbs deal with humanness (*ubuntu*); some with honesty and dishonesty (*ukwethembeka nokungethembeki*); some with friendship and enmity (*ubuhlobo nobutha*). Some proverbs are very tricky, so it is very important that a teacher understands the proverbs well, before they can teach to the learners. There is much contained in proverbs.' (Teacher Nozipho)

'I can use a proverb *Izandla ziyagezana* (Hands wash one another), which means there should be mutual help. As the proverb says, a hand cannot wash itself but it requires the help of the other..., it is very important that children learn this so that they can be of help to others...and what impresses me is that since we started the proverbs section, they do demonstrate qualities of *ubuntu*, and I believe their exposure to such proverbs is of significance.' (Teacher Nontombi)

'...My learners do actually demonstrate *ubuntu* values, and I think the truths contained in the proverbs impact on them positively... there is a lot contained in proverbs that I teach to my learners.' (Teacher Mbali)

The above examples indicate that teachers are convinced that some proverbs can teach different lessons to the learners, particularly to develop the concept of *ubuntu* within themselves. Teacher Ntokozo gave an example of an expression that says 'I am what I am because of who we all are'. According to him, the Zulus would say, '*Umuntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu*,' which means that a person is a person through other persons. He further mentioned that the proverb suggests that we are interdependent in the struggle for our self-realisation. In essence, *ubuntu* is a traditional African philosophy that offers us an understanding of ourselves in relation with the world, and that we affirm our humanity when we acknowledge that of others.

Evident was that teachers valued to teach isiZulu proverbs, perhaps due to the concern about moral uprightness of the youth they teach. For instance, these children live in a part of Durban characterised by urbanisation and the dominant use of English, which seems to neglect the use of indigenous languages, since English is viewed by many as the language of 'status' and the '*measuring stick of intelligence*' (Mngadi 2014). Moreover, peer influence is one of the things which impact negatively on children's use of African indigenous languages, especially the use of proverbs, as most of urban children speak English quite often, even in informal settings. This is unlike in the rural areas, where one normally finds frequent use of African indigenous languages, usually by adults and some of the youth. Furthermore, most of the children in places like Durban live with working parents/guardians who have little time to spend with them. Therefore, the existence of teachers who assist in teaching children about proverbs needs to be appreciated as proverbs contain messages that need to be taught to the youth. For instance, it might be a challenge for these learners to develop adequate knowledge and use of proverbs as well as the content contained in them, if they have less or no exposure in them.

According to *ubuntu*, there exists a common bond between us all and it is through this bond, through our interaction with our fellow human beings, that we discover our own human qualities. For example, the South African Nobel Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu cited in Flipping (2012) stated that you might have much of the world's riches and you might hold a portion of authority, but if you have no *ubuntu*, you do

not amount to much; and that a person with *ubuntu* is welcoming, hospitable, warm and generous, willing to share. Such people are open and available to others, willing to be vulnerable and affirming of others.

It was interesting that the participating teachers themselves agreed that the learners they teach have qualities of *ubuntu*, which they believe are strengthened by the use of proverbs in the lessons they teach. For example, such learners are respectful to others and their teachers as well as the society, they are generous, helpful to one another in and outside the classroom, and they protect and support each other, which means that they care about each other (teacher Dumisani and teacher Ntokozo). Malunga et al. (2004: 11) remark that "the climax of *ubuntu* is a selfless spirit of living for the betterment of a person's environment using all talents at his or her disposal and not resting easy knowing that another is in need."

Therefore, exposing learners to various proverbs, may contribute in shaping them with good qualities of *ubuntu*. Muzvidziwa et al. (2015) observe that *ubuntu* values can play a critical role in terms of effective and efficient management of teaching and learning in schools. Cruz et al. (1996) argue that working with proverbs in the classroom can improve students' learning experiences, their language skills, and their understanding of themselves and the world.

Discouraging Cruelty and Blame-shifting Through the Use of Proverbs

Usually, parents and teachers teach children to be loyal citizens. A good parent or teacher will not teach his/her children to be dishonest or lie about something. This section discusses data obtained through interviews and observing lessons. All the five teachers mentioned that some proverbs can teach the learners about cruelty and blame-shifting and that these need to be discouraged from learners as early as when they enter school. Not only does this mean that teachers are the only people to teach children, but parents at home also need to teach their children through proverbs.

One teacher gave an example of such proverbs, the one that says: *Insimba yesulela ngegqumusha* (The genet puts the blame on the bush-shrike). It has been suggested that the origin of this proverb is based upon the fact that

these two are companions of the thicket, and for that reason, when the hunters are hunting, and they give chase to a genet, the bush-shrike may arise, and the hunters then follow it and allow the genet to go. Therefore, such proverbs aim to discourage cruelty and blame-shifting against each other.

Using Proverbs to Teach Vocabulary

Some of the responses by teachers indicated that proverbs can be useful to teach vocabulary. This is because some proverbs contain words that are not frequently used by young people, but which exist and are normally known to the older generation. In this way proverbs can be a useful tool to preserve the language. Below are examples of some of the teachers' interview excerpts:

"I have used proverbs several times to teach vocabulary and my learners become good users of isiZulu language when exposed to them. Really, so much is contained in the proverbs, which means the richness of a language is contained in them." (Ntokozo)

"Most proverbs contain words which are not familiar, particularly to the learners." (Mbali)

"I try to select proverbs which contain difficult words, especially when I know they are part of the vocabulary contained in the text to be dealt with later, and this helps because as they come across them in a text, for example, a comprehension passage, at least they have an idea." (Nozipho)

"Teaching proverbs provides learners with opportunities to acquire new and frequently-used vocabulary items and to learn various word meanings, and that is why I use proverbs to teach vocabulary." (Siphiwe)

From the statements cited above it is evident that teachers participating in the study feel that proverbs are useful when teaching vocabulary. IsiZulu has many words that are rarely used in societies, and because of this, it is likely that they can disappear in the language. Therefore, the use of proverbs which contain such words, can contribute in revitalising isiZulu language, mainly because urban communities are to a large extent affected by the hegemony of English.

Examples of vocabulary words that were found when proverbs were taught as given in Table 1.

Table 1: Vocabulary words found in proverbs

<i>Examples of vocabulary words</i>	<i>Examples of proverbs taught</i>
<i>Umvundla</i>	Umvundla ziyowunqanda phambili (They [the dogs] will cut off the hare ahead). Umvundla is another word for unogwaja (the hare).
<i>Ummango</i>	Akummango ungenaliba (There is no hill without a grave). Ummango is another word for igquma (the hill).
<i>Umbethe</i>	Akumbethe waphika nelanga (No dew ever competed with the sun). Umbethe (the dew) is another word for amazolo – it is rarely used.
<i>Umqokolo</i>	Woz'uthez'umqokolo, ukholwe ngameva (Some day you will gather thorny firewood and be pricked by the thorns). Umqokolo is a type of a tree with thorny leaves. The expression is used of a person who will not heed a warning, that someday he will have cause for regret.

While proverbs are useful for the teaching of vocabulary, Yorio (1980) contends that the use of proverbs can enable fluent and natural language production and therefore, teaching proverbs can help to produce language more fluently and naturally, which may increase vocabulary in the learners. Also Porto (1998), mentions that teaching proverbs can increase vocabulary and motivation. He posits that using proverbs is an important vocabulary building skill for learners to understand and use figurative extensions in a language, which can be achieved through the use of proverbs. Since proverbs are easy to learn and remember due to their form and rhythmic nature, learning one proverb can result in the acquisition of a couple of words. It was also noted during classroom observations that learners enjoy learning the proverbs, and they try as much as possible to use the words gained from proverbs during their vocabulary exercises.

Strategies of Teaching Proverbs

Effective teaching strategies help to engage students in learning, develop critical thinking skills, and keep students on task. The following discussion is based on the four categories that emerged from the findings in addressing the second research question: How do isiZulu teachers

teach proverbs? The four categories are: (1) the use of pictures and videos, (2) storytelling, (3) role play, and (4) arguing for or against the proverb. Data used to answer this research question were generated through interviews and classroom observations. In some instances, the teacher would provide a proverb for a lesson discussion, while in some cases learners had to provide a proverb extracted from a written text, video or story told, as highlighted in the methodology section.

The Use of Pictures and Videos

Visual learning is a learning strategy in which ideas, concepts, data and other information are associated with images and techniques (Boundless 2015). The use of pictures and videos was found to be a useful tool to all the five teachers who participated in the study – to create a live classroom discussion and to gain learners' active participation. During the interviews, all the participating teachers stated that they use pictures and videos when teaching proverbs. According to the teachers, learners improve their communicative skills, vocabulary and the use of grammar if pictures and videos are used to teach proverbs.

Pictures and videos were used by all the five teachers in the lessons that were observed. Most of the videos and pictures that were used in the classrooms were about the xenophobic attacks that happened in South Africa in 2015, where many foreigners were attacked and some brutally killed. According to the teachers, the use of such videos and pictures portraying such cruelty was done to warn learners that they should not ill-treat foreigners, instead, they should understand that there could be hardships that brought them to South Africa and that not every foreigner is in South Africa for bad reasons, like involvement in criminal activities.

After the video was watched (same video) in one classes (Ntokozo's class), the teacher asked the learners to say in one sentence the content of the video. One learner stated that the video was about how we should treat foreigners and that it is wrong to ill-treat them. Another girl mentioned that it is not good to discriminate against a person, even if you do not know them. The same video, was also used in the other class by teacher Mbali, and after the learners had watched it, the teacher asked them to give a prov-

erb that suits the message contained in the video (according to their interpretations). Some of the learners responded in chorus and said '*unyawo alunampumulo*' (The foot has no rest), while others were still battling to figure out what proverb could match the video they had just seen. The teacher agreed with the response '*unyawo alunampumulo*' because such an interpretation of the video was relevant. He then warned them about the importance of treating foreign people with respect and dignity. He stated that one of the reasons for discouraging bad treatment of foreigners was that, if in future one happens to be in a country of the foreigners he ill-treated, the same thing could happen to him/her.

In another class, the teacher (Nontombi) was observed pasting a picture showing a woman washing her hands, then asked her learners to derive a proverb that can match the picture. One boy said *Izandla ziyagezana* (with the meaning that people assist one another reciprocally). However, so many interpretations came out from other learners, for example, that one has to help others when in need because we depend on one another. The teacher then remarked that when one is in trouble, one needs others for help because in future, the people you helped may be the ones to help you, which suggests that there must be mutual help. It was interesting to observe at the end of the lesson two learners assisting their classmate who was slightly physically handicapped, by carrying his bag while they were moving into another class for the next lesson, and they quickly went to the teacher's desk and said: "*Izandla ziyagezana*", and one of them explained that they were helping him because he is also helpful to them especially with Mathematics, and English, and the whole class heard and was so excited. This showed that the two learners understood the proverb and the teachings it contains. Therefore, teaching children about proverbs can contribute to instilling in them good social behaviour. It is therefore significant that language teachers should use pictures and videos as strategies to teach proverbs.

Story Telling

Story telling when teaching proverbs was observed to be an important tool in teaching learners about proverbs and the messages con-

tained in them. For example, one teacher stated that using a narrative as a teaching strategy helps learners to understand the proverb and the meaning it contains. That teacher added that it is vital to know the origins of a proverb and that she had found a story telling technique useful when teaching the proverbs in her class. She explained that, 'Even if it was a proverb not known to my learners, they will be able to find the meaning once the story is told.'

Four of the teachers mentioned that they use storytelling to teach some proverbs, especially those that originate from narratives, but emphasised that story-telling is also useful when teaching proverbs even those [the proverbs] that do not originate from narratives. Yang (2011) states that story-telling creates a lot of excitement among all listeners, and it awakens their imagination. Some of the teachers mentioned that they use storytelling to teach learners about honesty, respect or kindness, and cited an example of a reputable female story teller, Gcina Mhlophe, as one of the best story tellers in South Africa. They view using story telling as a method to evoke interest in the learners so that they listen and participate in the lesson interestingly, and they believe that this makes a vibrant lesson.

For example, teacher Ntokozo explained how the proverb "*Impunzi iyathakatha ngokukhame-la icimbi ethuvini beqhina*" came about, and told the narrative where this proverb comes from. According to the narrative, there was a tree which was forbidden to all animals. It was green and bore green fruit. Any animal found guilty of interfering with the tree was punished by death. For quite a long time this order was respected, but the fruit was also tempting. At last the duiker could not control itself. At dead of night, it got up and stealthily went to the forbidden tree where it helped itself to the fruit. The duiker realised, however, that the theft would be discovered, and that it might get into serious trouble. It took a large green caterpillar and squeezed it onto the faeces of a steenbok thus colouring it green. In the morning when the other animals awoke, the discovery was made immediately that someone had disobeyed the agreement, by eating the fruit during the night. Nobody had seen the culprit. It was then that the duiker came forward with a 'brilliant' idea. Since the tree was green, it should colour green the faeces of the one who ate it. He then ordered other animals that they should search for the one whose faec-

es was green. The animals started to look around, and came upon green faeces which belonged to the steenbok. So, the steenbok was killed. The Zulu regard as a wizard anyone who harms another, even if such harm is not brought about by medicinal potions or charms. The fact that the harm is intended, and deliberate, places the individual in the same category as a wizard. Thus, this saying is used when one harms an innocent person by shifting blame onto him.

It was therefore evident that the participating teachers use story telling when they teach proverbs. Adeyemi (2012) contends that story-telling is an effective teaching strategy for teaching traditional values, besides being the form of enjoyment in the learners. Hamilton and Weiss (2007) remark that a good storyteller will always attract an audience that is ready to listen to him/her and enjoy his/her storytelling. Teacher Nozipho stated that a good teacher should act like a good storyteller, and further stated that when a teacher tells a story, he/she is expected to use his/her voice, imitating gestures and accents as if he was a story teller. According to Hamilton and Weiss (2007), this includes chipping in jokes, and sometimes he adds a song to enliven, enhance and invigorate the class. It was observed that the teachers succeeded in using this strategy as their classes got more and lively as learners got more and more enthusiastic.

Role Play

Another strategy that the teachers mentioned they find useful when teaching proverbs was role play. This was evidenced in the responses when they were asked what strategies they use to teach the proverbs in class, as cited below:

'Sometimes I use narration, role-play or guessing techniques, depending on what I want to teach.' (Mbali)

'In some cases, I use role-play to teach proverbs ... Learners enjoy role play very much ..., and it helps them to understand the proverbs, their meanings and how they can be used. Ja, I'm OK with it.' (Nontombi)

'Children learn very well by doing. I find role-play a very important technique, especially those that are unfamiliar.' (Siphiwe)

As seen in the above statements, teachers find role-play a useful strategy in teaching the

proverbs. Every language teacher wants his/her students to be able to communicate and eventually get fluent in the language, and proverbs and their content are part of language learning (Ebong 2004). Fluency comes with being enthusiastic about learning the language and by practising the use of the language. This enthusiasm may not only come from within the student, but can also be found from trying to use the language in authentic situations created through role-play (Ebong 2004). Ebong further remarks that role-play helps to motivate students to be personally involved in class activities, to be bold and to take on roles which help them to represent other people and even their speeches. This also is what was observed in the classrooms of some of the teachers when they were teaching.

During the classroom observations, one teacher requested a group of five learners to dramatize the proverb *Izandla ziyagezana* (Hands wash one another). This proverb is used to teach a child about the importance of helping another person, as explained above. Even the reciprocal formative -an- in *ziyagezana*, suggests this mutual help between two parties. Factually, one would agree that a hand cannot wash itself, it requires the other to wash it. During the role play lesson, each one of the learners had a role to play as they performed in front of the class in groups of tens. The children were so excited that each group wanted to do something interesting to showcase to the class that they understand the proverb and they value it. For example, one group dramatized this proverb and the storyline was as follows: One role player (girl) had lost her pen and she asked a classmate to lend her a spare one. The other role player (girl) in the group offered her a pen, and that was the end of the problem. On the next day, the girl who offered help to a friend the previous day had no transport to get home. The other girl [one who was helped on the previous day] offered her a lift, and the girl's desperation ceased. She was happy in such a way that she cried. The whole group then said in chorus, "*Izandla ziyagezana*." After this presentation, the teacher gave them a narrative essay topic where they had to write a one page story about how they had offered assistance to a person who helped them previously. The teacher indicated that the essay should be well organised and end with a conclusion where the author would emphasize the im-

portance of being helpful to others. The essay was to be submitted on the next day. I recorded this as an after lesson activity. Based on this discussion, it is evident that helping a person is important, and she/he might be the one to help you in the future.

Arguing for or Against a Proverb

Arguing for or against a proverb was one of the strategies used by teachers during the lesson observations. All five teachers used this strategy as a reinforcement to develop the skill of arguing in the learners. In all the classes observed the teachers picked up a proverb from the text read, and asked learners if they regard it as truthful or not, and substantiate. Others were tasked to argue for while others argue against it.

For example, one teacher was observed teaching a proverb "*Iphikankani lifela enkanini*" [A stubborn heart shall fare evil at the last]. This means that he who loves danger shall perish in it. In other words, an obstinate person shall be burdened with sorrows, and even death. The proverb was contained in a five-lined paragraph, and the teacher asked her learners to pick it from the paragraph and asked them if they agreed with it or not, and justify. She separated the class into two groups, and the first group was tasked to argue for the proverb, while the other to argue against it, and this led into a hot debate among groups of students. Some learners mentioned that it is good to die for something you believe in. One boy from another group argued that if one loves his girlfriend, no matter what people (including his parents) say about her, he would rather die for her, and that he does not agree that this is stubbornness, he regards it as 'true love.' The teacher then said that one needs to listen to others' advice because if one is stubborn, he may be caught up in trouble, and people might laugh at him/her and say "*Iphikankani lifela enkanini*." What was observed was in line with the teachers' interview statements when they were asked what methods they use to teach proverbs, for example, two teachers were quoted saying:

'Among others, I use arguing for or against a proverb. This advances their debating skills. Debating about a proverb makes them develop arguing skills which are useful in their whole academic life.' (Siphiwe)

'Arguing for or against is one of the methods I use to provoke their thinking about the

proverb. I ask them if they agree with it or not. With this, I find a very interesting discussion ... Since I started to use arguing for or against strategy, my learners are becoming very good debaters now, and I can say that debating has developed their argumentative skills dramatically.'

Krieger (2005) states that arguing for or against is an excellent activity for language learning because it engages students in a variety of cognitive and linguistic ways like listening, speaking and writing. In addition to providing meaningful listening, speaking and writing practice, arguing for or against is also highly effective for developing argumentation skills for persuasive speech and writing. Krieger further states that with practice, many students show obvious progress in their ability to express and defend ideas in debate and they often quickly recognize the flaws in each other's arguments. As already highlighted above, learners develop arguing and argumentative skills when teachers use arguing for or against strategy to teach them proverbs.

CONCLUSION

This paper discussed examples of strategies teachers use to teach proverbs in the language classroom. It must be noted that any proverb contains various linguistic forms, and these can be used to preserve cultural information which needs to be communicated from generation to generation. Proverbs are a powerful tool to educate the youth, not only at home, but at school as well. It must be mentioned that for learners not to find proverbs difficult to understand, teachers should use strategies to use when teaching proverbs, like the ones discussed in this paper. It is also important that teachers should encourage the use of traditional forms of teaching, like using proverbs to teach the youth about various issues that relate to language and cultural values.

Other indigenous language scholars have mentioned that indigenous stories, songs, proverbs and folktales are indigenous ways of knowing. They are knowledges that present a philosophy of life, wise sayings used to teach youth about life, allowing them to grow mentally, spiritually, morally into adulthood. The use of proverbs as indigenous knowledge systems is valuable in the language and has a role to play in shaping the youth with the qualities of *Ubuntu*.

For example, teaching proverbs in the language classroom can be one way of building the youth with respect for others, while also vocabulary can be taught through the use of proverbs.

Ubuntu discourages selfishness and egocentrism among people, and is one of the cornerstones of democracy in an African context as it demands one to live for others. People who embrace *ubuntu* are driven by a humanist concern for treating others with fairness. Some of the implications of using proverbs, for example, assisting educators to become sensitive and empowering of themselves as well as the learners they teach, and guiding teachers to reflect on their actions. Besides acquiring the qualities of *ubuntu*, language skills develop when children are exposed to the use of proverbs. Combining good language skills with good character are virtues of being a well-educated and a well-integrated member of society. Proverbs can contribute to producing educated and well integrated members of society who can grow up with good morals and humanity values.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the teaching of proverbs needs to be emphasized as part of the school curriculum. What is required most is that the African languages need to be preserved and used in schools by teachers and learners, also, by their speakers and researchers, who should also contribute to the improvement of the status of their languages. In addition, various teaching strategies should be used when teaching proverbs to draw learners' interest and their active participation during the lessons.

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