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Investigating physical science teachers' classroom use of language during teaching

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Investigating physical science teachers' classroom use of language during teaching

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Abstract

Studies have revealed that the teacher's science classroom language plays a critical role in learners' understanding of science concepts. The quality of the teacher's science language impacts on the quality of learning. Learners encounter difficulties with the science classroom language irrespective of whether they are first or second language speakers of the language of instruction. The difficulty of the science language is mainly due to words having different meanings in science as compared to their everyday meanings, and also the foreignness of some science words (Oyoo, 2012). The language in science is therefore distinct from everyday language. In the South African context, the strategies to improve the quality of science education in secondary schools have not included the language. This study focus on the quality of the teachers' science language in physical science classrooms. In this study data was collected by means of lesson observations of participant teachers followed by interview of one of the participant teacher. Two teachers participated in the study, and both teachers were from the same school. One teacher was teaching grade 10 physical science and the other teacher was teaching grade 11 physical science. Content analysis was used to analyse both lesson observation and interview transcripts. The findings from the lesson observation revealed that participant teachers overlooked explanation of some technical words as well as some non-technical words used in science context. The interview with one of the teachers showed an unawareness of the difficulty of the science language as he pointed that there was little difference between the science language and everyday language. The study recommends that there should be teacher development programmes dealing specifically with the language problem in science.

Key Words: South Africa; science language; everyday language:

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Declaration

I declare that this report is my own work and no part of it has been copied from another source (unless indicated as quote). All work, sentences, and paragraphs taken directly from other work have been cited and the reference recorded in the reference list.

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_____ __27 May 2016___

Signature Date

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