USING POETRY TO TEACH LANGUAGE AND GRAMMAR IN ISIZULU L1

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ABSTRACT

The shortage of teaching resources such as textbooks in language education is becoming a trend in South Africa. Government funding is not enough to provide language teachers with teaching resources. There is still a gap between funding of schools in rural areas and urban areas. The funding of English departments in South African schools is much higher compared to the funding of Indigenous African languages departments. The shortage of grammar books in African languages is a challenge for teachers of African languages. Most government schools rely primarily on state funding. This study critically investigates the challenges experienced by language teachers due to the lack of grammar books in schools. The study argues that in cases where IsiZulu grammar books are not available, poetry can play a huge role in the teaching of IsiZulu language and/or grammar.

Key terms: *Poetry, language aspects (Literature, grammar), isiZulu language, communicative approach.*
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1. Introduction

Poetry plays a pivotal role in the development of a language and its grammar. Poetry is also a useful tool to teach and learn a language. Students can easily learn a language through poetry because in a poem, one can find language structures that can be used to teach grammar. Poetry helps us understand language better because when analysing poetry, we critically analyse words used and their poetic effect, figures of speech and idioms. Poetry makes students think critically and helps them to analyse things critically. As Perfect (1999: 728) puts it poetry "nurtures a love and appreciation for the sound and power of language. Poetry can help us see differently, understand ourselves and others, and validate our human experience. Poetry easily finds a home in all areas of the curriculum, enhances thinking skills, and promotes personal connections to content area subjects."

The decline in the provision of teaching resources for the teaching of African languages in South Africa, particularly isiZulu language resources, has affected the capacity of isiZulu teachers to teach isiZulu language and grammar effectively. The current curriculum, the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) stipulates that grammar should not be taught directly in the classrooms, rather language teachers should infuse grammar in all activities. For instance, if a teacher is teaching students a novel, he or she is expected to select a passage from the novel and use it to teach grammar rather than teach grammatical rules from a grammar book. Students can be asked to identify nouns, verbs, idioms and proverbs in a passage/ paragraph. The current curriculum discourages teachers from taking a grammar book and teaching students as it is, instead they are encouraged to use passages or texts to teach students grammar and to identify language aspects in the passage or text.

Language teachers are now trained to infuse grammar in what they teach. This is a good practice because students easily learn grammar when they identify grammatical features on their own. This enables students to correct their own mistakes. If students see an idiom in a line of a poem, it is easy for them to understand the meaning of that idiom, and they also learn how it must be used. When students are taught grammar from a grammar textbook, they do not master its meaning and proper usage. It can also be argued that some language teachers are still reluctant to adapt this

approach because they want to teach grammar traditionally. On the other hand, students are not eager to learn grammar, especially from a grammar book because they easily get bored. However, if grammar can be taught using poetry, students easily acquire and master a language (CAPS Document, Department of Basic Education, 2011).

Every year, the Department of Basic Education provides funding to schools. From that funding, schools are expected to buy textbooks for both students and teachers. However, African languages teachers are not always satisfied because they normally need three sets of textbooks, viz. a grammar textbook, a novel and a play which are usually expensive for the schools to provide. As a result, language teachers normally work with insufficient teaching resources. Some resort to leaving out particular aspects and teaching aspects that have resources. In some cases, they concentrate on teaching literature. Unfortunately, when examinations arrive, students are faced with grammar questions, for which they were not fully prepared.

2. Purpose of the study

The aim of this paper is to show how poetry can be used by isiZulu teachers to teach language and grammar. The paper argues that poetry can be used as a vehicle to teach language and grammar, thus alleviating the problem of grammar book shortages in schools.

Language in this study refers to isiZulu language while grammar refers to the rules of isiZulu language that determine sentence structure (syntax), morphology, phonetics and phonology. Pullum and Huddleston (2002:3) state that "a grammar of a language describes the principles or rules governing the form and meaning of words, phrases, clause, and sentences. As such, it interacts with other components of a complete description: the phonology (covering the sound system), the graphology (the writing system: spelling and punctuation), the dictionary or lexicon and the semantics". This paper therefore critically investigates how isiZulu grammar can be taught through isiZulu poetry.

3. Research question

•   What grammatical elements can be taught through poetry?
•   How do grammatical and stylistic elements communicate meaning in poetry?
•   How can isiZulu L1 teachers use poetry to teach language and grammar?

4. Literature Review

In a study entitled "teaching grammar with playful poems", Susikaran (2013: 18) used framing questions to show that students can be taught grammar in the classroom using poetry. Susikaran identified subject, verbs, nouns, and adjectives as grammatical aspects that can be taught using poetry. : In his study, Susikaran developed questions that led students to master grammar on their own. Susikaran's (2013: 20) conclusion was that "by using these methods of framing questions students can get a clear knowledge of the poem and the grammatical terms used in it". This study also aims to show how teachers can use poetry to teach isiZulu language and grammar.

Hussein (2004: 1-2) identified three methods of teaching grammar. The first one is the grammar translation method which requires students to translate sentences based on grammatical rules. The method was criticised for being too methodical and arithmetic- like. The second method is the communicative approach. This approach focuses on meaning rather than form. The third method is Integrative Grammar Teaching which integrates both form and meaning. This method is regarded as important for second language students because it helps them to learn both the communication techniques and the rules of a language (Hussein, 2004:1-2).

Hussein (2004:3) states that "poetry is an effective way of learning and reinforcing the sounds and structures of a first and second language". When students are given a chance to write their own

poems, it enhances their creativity and helps them master the structure of a language and the writing system of a language (Hussein, 2004:3).

In his study, Hussein (2004:3), gave students a platform to write their own poems. The poems were classified into different categories, namely, acrostic poems, adjective poems, adjective placement poems, alphabet poems, adverb poems and preposition poems. In each case, students were given items to look for in their poems (teaching points) such as spelling, vocabulary, dictionary usage, simple present/ past tense, adverbs, adjectives and nouns. Hussein found that the exercise enhanced students' knowledge of language and grammar. The study concluded that the module was successful for most students including foreign and weak students because the exercise assisted students in their writing skills. Students were also able to identify their own grammar mistakes (Hussein, 2004:13). Mittal (2014: 21) posits that "poetry offers many opportunities for language teaching and practice. It gives a wide chance of learning vocabulary and structure". Poetry enhances students' understanding of grammar and spelling. Poetry can help the foreign students master a language or learn a language because poetry makes language acquisition and development possible.

5. Theoretical Framework

Over the years, scholars have proposed different approaches to language teaching. However, this paper adopted the communicative approach of language teaching which came into existence in the mid- 1970s. Functional linguists view "language as an instrument of communication" (Celce-Murcia, 1991:461).

Richards and Rodgers (2014:20) argue that in the nineteenth century linguists and language experts sought to improve the quality of language teaching by emphasising the approach and method of language teaching. The early applied linguists emphasised the principles and language theories to design language teaching programs. This study is premised on two approaches viz. the communicative and functional approaches.

6. Functional Approach

Wilkins (1979:83) posits that "language always occurs in a social context, which suggests that it is possible for people to concentrate learning upon the forms of language that are most appropriate to their needs. This creates the possibility of a learner- based syllabus to replace the subject- based grammatical syllabus". The functional approach emphasises the notion of a learner- based syllabus in language learning and teaching. Students are encouraged to learn language by identifying grammatical features on their own. The functional approach views language as a means of communication in a particular society. Therefore, students learn how to use the language in context rather than memorise the rules of the language.

Richards and Rodgers (2014:24) state that "functional approaches emphasise the semantic and communicative dimension rather than merely the grammatical characteristics of language, and lead to a specification and organisation of language teaching by categories of meaning and function rather than by elements of structure and grammar". This suggests that the functional approach mainly focuses on the functionality of language in society. According to Rezeau (2001:135), this approach is more about social norms than linguistic norms.

7. Communicative Approach

The communicative approach to language teaching was first proposed by Roberts (1982, 1983) who viewed language as a social tool. This suggests that language should be seen as an instrument of communication and social behaviour. Kelly (1969:396) identified three aims of language teaching, viz, the social, the artistic and the philosophical. The artistic function aims to stimulate creativity while the philosophical one aims to develop analytical skills among students. Through this approach, students learn a language in order to communicate with other people.

Celce- Murcia (1991:461-462) argues that "those who have applied this philosophy to language teaching claim that communication is the goal of second or foreign language instruction and that the syllabus of a language course should not be organised around grammar but around subject matter, tasks/projects, or semantic notions and/ or pragmatic functions". This suggests that language teaching should be content- based, meaningful, and contextualised and discourse- based. However, there are also debates as to when and how teachers should correct grammatical errors of students in the classroom. In the communicative approach, the teachers' role in the classroom is to facilitate language use and communication, and so, the correction of students' errors is a secondary issue. It is also argued that communicative language classrooms produce better language students than the traditional classroom. Although there is no satisfactory conclusion as when and how to teach grammar, teachers are encouraged not to dismiss grammar teaching altogether because there is no evidence that if they do so they will produce better results.

Celce-Murcia (1985) proposed a strategy to assist teachers in teaching grammar in their classrooms.
She posits that students learn in different ways. Some have analytical skills and learn better when "formulating and testing hypothesis or rules". Others learn better when experiencing things. She further argues that young learners learn differently as compared to adult learners, so age becomes a variable because teachers can decide whether to focus on form rather than meaning. The proficiency of students is also a variable in language teaching. Language beginners tend to focus on the new object holistically before focusing on the meaningful units of that object. Educational background is also important because if students are illiterate it is meaningless for a teacher to focus on form, but if they are literate, they may become frustrated if a teacher does not teach the formal aspects of language.

Celce- Murcia (1991:464) argues that the need for a teacher to focus on form changes based on the objectives of the lesson, for instance, when a teacher is teaching passive skills (listening and reading skills), it is irrelevant to emphasise grammar because these skills require competency in word recognition and semantic processing. However, if a teacher is dealing with speaking and writing skills, form is important because students need to know the grammatical rules in a language.
Celce-Murcia (1991:466) states that in the communicative language teaching approach, "Grammar is a tool or resource to be used in the comprehension and creation of oral and written discourse rather than something to be learned as an end in itself". This suggests that grammar should not be taught as a separate subject, but must be learnt in order to enhance spoken and written communication. Furthermore, she points out that communicative competence comprises of four components, that is, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, linguistic competence and strategic competence. Sociolinguistic competence implies that the speaker or writer knows how to convey a message and the purpose of communication. Discourse competence refers to the selection, sequence and arrangement of words in order to convey the writer's intended message effectively. Linguistic competence refers to accuracy in terms of forms, inflections and sequences used to express the message in a grammatically correct manner.

The communicative and functional approaches replace the subject- based grammatical syllabus. These approaches emphasise a learner- based syllabus where students learn language through using it in context.

Students are encouraged to learn, not only the grammatical rules of a language but also the semantic and communicative dimensions. Language, as envisaged by these two approaches, is located in society, therefore students learn better when they use language for specific purposes in given contexts.

The communicative approach is relevant to this study because it recognises the social function of language.

First, students were not taught grammatical rules in the traditional way, Students studied poems to read and analyse on their own. By the end of the lessons, students had attained the social, artistic and philosophical skills because they were engaged in activities that enhanced their artistic skills such as writing their own poems.

Poems taught in an isiZulu literature class
ZULT1524 is an introductory module for first year students at the University of the Free State. In teaching this module, a number of poems are analysed and language and grammatical aspects such as punctuation marks, idioms, figures of speech and word images are identified. Students engage in activities, assignments and tests that require them to identify and explain how language is used in the poems. Students also explain the manner in which poets chose words and establish whether the words are poetic or not.

In this section of the study, there are five isiZulu poems which will be explored. These poems were written by different poets and I taught them in my isiZulu classes. The first poem entitled "Umshado Wanamuhla" (Today's marriage) was written by Gcwalisile Zulu- Kabanyane, the second one entitled "Ithemba Lami" (My hope) by Fanele Ncube , the third entitled "Lafa Elihle Kakhulu" (Died the impeccable land)   by S.A. Mpungose. The fourth poem entitled "Wawungazi" (You didn't know) was written by B.P. Dlamini while the fifth poem "Ngingumnqobi" (I am a winner/ victor) was written by N.L. Luthuli.

These poems are narrative, descriptive, elegic, lyric and educational. They also address different themes that range from women abuse/ abusive marriages, education, pride, love and culture. Ncube's 'Ithemba Lami' (My hope) is an elegy that laments the devastating effects of death. The poet laments the untimely death of her child, Ntokozo, translated as 'happiness'. The fact that death has taken away Ntokozo metaphorically implies that the persona has been robbed of her source of happiness. On the other hand, Mpungose's "Lafa Elihle Kakhulu" is a lyric poem that expresses discontent with how the youths of today have deviated from the cultural values of yesterday. The poet feels that the youths should follow isiZulu cultural norms and values. Boys should be shepherds, like Zulu boys of yesteryear while girls should wake up in the morning and do household chores rather than sleep until sunrise. Luthuli's Ngingumnqobi (I am a winner) is an educational poem that conceives championship as the ability to conjure problems. The persona conquered his problems through education that he received from highly educated people. Gcwalisile Zulu- Kabanyane's Umshado Wanamuhla (Today's marriage) is a descriptive poem that describes a woman's feelings in an abusive marriage. Dlamini's Wawungazi is a descriptive poem that depicts the persona's conduct and behaviour in the community. The persona is so self-conceited and egocentric that he takes other people for granted.

Umshado Wanamuhla (Today's marriage)
The title of this poem implies that today's marriages are different from marriages in the past. This claim implies that the poet has existing knowledge about marriages in the past. The speaker/persona is complaining about the way she is treated by her husband. The woman feels that she is beaten without any valid reason. In her bitterness, she wants to know why her husband beats her every day.

In stanza one line five, the poet uses an idiom: Kazi kwakhala nyonini? (I wonder what kind of a bird cried). This idiom implies that the wife does not understand why she is being treated badly. There is a belief among the Zulus that certain birds do not just cry for nothing. If that bird cries over someone' house, it is considered a bad omen or evidence of bad luck following that household. In this poem, the wife is surprised because she is never warned about what she has done wrong. Everything comes as a surprise to her.

In line four of stanza two, the poet uses an idiom: Ibhodwe laqhubeka lingishisa (the pot kept on to burning me). The woman is not literally burning in a pot but she feels as if she is burning. One can speculate that she did not expect this situation in her marriage. In her schemata, she knew how married people lived but what she is experiencing is beyond what she imagined.

In line one of stanza three, the poet uses a rhetoric question to mock her husband: Kazi sifundo sini lesi (What kind of a lesson is this?). In her opinion, if a person is always beaten, there has to be a lesson he or she is being taught. Unfortunately, on her part, she does not know what lesson her husband wants her to learn. She knows that she has done nothing wrong, hence she mocks her husband's abusive behaviour.

In line one of stanza four, the poet uses another idiom: Yini lo mshophi ongehlelayo? (What kind of bad luck has come upon me?). Although the woman blames bad luck for her situation, she does not understand what bad luck she has. In Zulu culture, it is believed that some bad lucks are caused by our doings, so the woman is not sure what she has done to deserve this bad luck.

The following punctuation marks are used in the poem: question mark, comma, full stop and exclamation mark. Linguistically, a question mark is used when we need answers. The wife is questioning her husband's behaviour. She does not understand why her husband beats her. The way commas are used in this poem affects the rhythm of the poem. A comma is used when counting or listing items. Hence the reader is expected to take a short break each time a comma is used. The fact that few full stops are used in this poem suggests that the woman is so overwhelmed by her experiences that she pours out her heart in a stream of consciousness. An exclamation mark is normally used to express shock or bewilderment. The last line of the poem has an exclamation mark to show that the wife is shocked by what her husband does to her. A husband is expected to love and care for his wife but the way this husband behaves is contrary to tradition.

Ithemba Lami (My hope)
This poem is about a mother who mourns the death of her child Ntokozo, (joy/happiness). The mother tried to help her child but unfortunately the child could not recover. Long after the child's death, the mother is still haunted by the child's voice. In line one, she says "Ngisalizwa lelo phimbo lakhe" (I still hear her voice).

The title of the poem suggests that the mother had hope that her child would live and that one day she would bring happiness and joy into her home. The name 'Ntokozo' (joy) suggests that the mother, and perhaps the poet too believes that a child brings joy. The mother had hope that the child would grow up and look after her or change her life. For instance, in line one of stanza four, the poet says: "Bengicabanga ngengomuso lakh' elihle" (I thought of her great future).
In stanza one, a poet uses flash backs by bringing back the image of the child who is no longer alive. Ntokozo is no more but the mother has deep thoughts about the sickness and the eventual passing of her child.

The persona says "Ngisalizwa iphimbo lakhe" (I can still hear her voice), "Ngisawabona lawo mehlwana akhe" (I can still see those tiny eyes of her) to imply that she can still see her child in her mind's eye/imagination. In these lines, the poet invokes the senses to make the reader visualise her experience and that of her departed child. The word "Ngisawabona" evokes the sense of sight while the word "Ngisalizwa" evokes the sense of hearing. All these thoughts bring back hurtful feelings and regret that she could not help her child survive.

The poet appeals to the sensual and the sensuous by using words that invoke certain feelings and create images in the reader's mind. In stanza two, we are made to relive Ntokozo's feelings when she was sick. When the person say says "Izinhlung' abekuzo bezingifikisela ngezinyembezi" (the pains she suffered brought tears to me), we are made to feel empathy and share in the mother's sorrows. In the line, "Ngingaz' izinhlungu zihlasele ngaphi" (I did not know what part of the body to attend), the poet makes us feel pain in our own bodies. In line four of stanza two, the poet uses exaggeration ("Ngibona ngemvula yezinyembezi nje kuphela" (I only see the rain of tears) to emphasise that the child cried every time she felt pain.

The line "Namuhla enhliziyweni nginenkamba beyibuza" (Today I have a perennial wound in my heart) is also hyperbolic. The mother does not have a literal wound in her heart but the pain she feels is metaphorically represented as a wound. A wound in the heart suggests heart-felt pain that will never end.

The poet uses words such as "ashabalele" (gone), and "anyamalele" (disappeared) to emphasise a sense of permanent loss. All her hopes and wishes about Ntokozo will never be accomplished. Such words also highlight the finality of death, which makes the mother feel useless because she can do nothing to reverse the situation.

Lafa Elihle Kakhulu (Died the impeccable land)
The title of the poem 'Lafa elihle kakhulu' (The impeccable land died) suggests today's youth no longer value isiZulu cultural practices and norms. The manner in which things are done today is different from the way things were done in the past. In line one of stanza one, the poet says "Bashonaphi ochibidolo bezinkomo zobaba?" (Where are the shepherds of our forefathers' cattle?). The poet uses a question mark to show that he needs to understand why things have changed. Youths of today no longer look after cattle. They live a different life which according to the persona is unacceptable. In stanza two the poet says "Zashonaphi leziya zintombi ezazivuka kusempondozankomo" (where are the young girls who used to wake up early in the morning). By asking for the women of yesterday who used to wake up in the morning to do house chores, the persona implies that the young women of today are lazy. And the persona believes that young girls should wake up early in the morning every day, beat the dew and sing on the way to the fountain. The poem laments negative social changes and advocates a return to traditional cultural ethos.

In stanza four, line one, the 'death of the land' symbolises the decimation of isiZulu cultural norms and values such as respect for elders and the spirit of Ubuntu. The exclamation mark indicates loss of hope. The poet also invokes names of legendary heroes of the Zulu people such as Phunga and Mageba (Zulu Warriors/ Kings) to suggest that the behaviour of young people insults the memory of these heroes.

In stanza five, the poet used a metaphor by saying: "Izinsizwa sezaphenduka ibhola lotshwala" (young men have become victims of alcohol abuse). Translated literally, this line say that young men are now "balls of alchohol" which means they have lost their sense of agency and are controlled by alcohol.

Wawungazi (You didn't know)

This poem is about a person who thought he was better than other people but now the circumstances of life have taught him a lesson. The theme of this poem is pride. The title of the poem which can be translated as "you didn't know that life will knock you down" highlights the consequences of selfish behaviour and underscores the need to embrace Ubuntu.

In line one of stanza one, the poet says "Usazigqaja (when you were too proud), utetemuka (walking with pride), uzithwele (full of yourself), amalangabi (flames), wadilika (you fell), ulothile (you are nothing), and uthithibele (subservient). These demonstrate the gradual decline of a person from a position of pride and self-conceitedness to a position of shame and embarrassment. The poet chose and used poetic words to highlight the gradual fall of a proud and selfish man. In stanza one, the poet talks about how this person used to conduct himself among others. He was proud of himself going wherever he wanted at any time and not listening to elderly advice. Stanza two indicates that this person used to look down upon others and take them for granted but at the end, he fell. The word "Wawungazi" (You didn't know) implies both literal lack of wisdom and ignorance.

In stanza three, the poet uses mockery to question this person. The poet says:"Baph' owawungumshungu nabo?" (Where are those you were going with?). The poet does not necessarily want an answer to this question but to show that this person had friends who have already abandoned him.

In stanza four, the poet uses figurative language "Namuhla ulothil' uluphele" (Today you are nobody, you are nothing), to emphasize the way the once proud man/woman has been humbled.
Ngingumnqobi (I am the winner/ victor)

This poem is about someone who has achieved his goals through education. The title of this poem "Ngingumnqobi" (I am the winner) suggests that this person has won. "Ngi" implies that the poet is talking about himself (self-praise). The poet is praising himself for accomplishing his university studies.

The use of word- images/metaphors

In stanza three, line one, the poet calls himself "Ngingumvemve" (I am the calf). This word creates the picture of a calf which implies that the persona is still young but his education has elevated him. Probably, the poet wants to motivate young boys and girls to prioritise education. In the same way that a calf suckles, the persona sucked knowledge from other educated people, such as teachers, lecturers and professors. The persona did not acquire this knowledge for his personal good but he also transferred this knowledge to other people.

In stanza two, line one, the poet calls himself "Ilanda" (Cattle Egret). Ilanda is a bird that normally spends time in the fields where cattle graze. It forages at the feet of grazing cattle, riding on their backs and picking ticks. This bird helps cattle because they cannot remove ticks on their own. The implication is that what the bird does is exactly what the persona did when he acquired his education. Education is normally perceived as a process of moving from darkness (ticks) to light (a heathy life, free from ticks). The ticks may symbolise problems that are usually caused by ignorance.

In stanza two, line one, the poet calls himself "Ingqwele" (a champion). In Zulu culture, when a cow is slaughtered boys are given lungs. However, before they can eat, they must fight for the lungs. The lungs are put on a stick outside the yard. The champion will take the lungs home cook and eat it. In Zulu the champion is called "Ingqwele". This is the kind of image that the poet wants the readers to have in his or her mind. The poet fought (studied) and won, that is why he has brought change to his community. The poet was with other students at school but he managed to progress and attain his qualifications. That is why he is calling himself a champion.

Summary of the analysed poems

Different aspects of language and culture are incorporated in these poems. Although they differ in themes, the poems communicate their message through aspects of isiZulu stylistic devices and grammar. The poem entitled "Lafa elihle kakhulu" (Died the impeccable land), emphasises that cultural norms and values should not be lost. Girls should wake up in the morning not sleep until the sunrise. Boys are expected to be shepherds, perform traditional dances and chant praise names. The poem entitled "Umshado Wanamuhla" (Today's marriage) contains aspects of language such as idioms, similes and word- images. The theme of this poem is abuse of women in marriages. The poem "Ithemba Lami" (My hope) teaches us that a mother's love cannot be measured. The manner in which the mother cries for her child shows that she loves her child unconditionally. We witness this love even after the child has passed on. The poem "Wawungazi" (You didn't know), teaches us that we should not be proud and take others for granted. We should, instead respect other people. This poem incorporates values of 'Ubuntu'. The poem "Ngingumngqobi" (I am the winner/ victor) encourages us to acquire education because it brings success. The poet calls himself a champion to show that he is prosperous through education.

The study shows that students can learn language and grammar easily when they read poems and identify language aspects on their own. This enables them to express their opinions and describe particular linguistic devices used in a poem. It is possible for isiZulu teachers to teach language and grammar using poetry. Through poetic devices such as idioms, figures of speech, and punctuation marks, language rules can be taught. Although poetry cannot replace language and grammar, it can be used to help students acquire and develop language skills. When students identify aspects of language in a poem, it becomes easy for them to understand usage and meaning thereof. The current curriculum (CAPS) encourages language teachers to infuse grammar through a text-based approach. Although lack of teaching resources is still a huge challenge in most public schools in South Africa, poetry can be used as a tool to teach grammar and language.

Recommendations

Language teachers should be encouraged to teach language and grammar through a text- based approach. All texts such as comprehension passages and poems should be used in the classroom to teach language and grammar. Language and grammar should not be taught in isolation but be infused in the curriculum. Language teachers should be trained frequently or workshopped on how to conduct grammar infusion lessons. The provision of teaching resources for African languages should be improved so that teachers can have a positive attitude towards African languages. Language and literature should be taught simultaneously in the classroom.

Conclusion

Teaching grammar through a grammar textbook makes it difficult for students to master grammar. Language teachers also find it challenging to teach grammar from a book because a book does not allow them to be flexible. In such cases, students only learn to recall information but they do not master a language. The study has shown that language and grammar can be taught through poetry in the classroom. In a poem, students can identify language aspects and learn how the language works. They can learn how to speak properly and spell words correctly. The manner in which poets use a language help students develop language skills.

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