

Learners' Voices on the Issues of Language Use in Learning Mathematics

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ABSTRACT Despite the fact that South Africa is a democratic, multilingual, and multicultural country with eleven official languages, the majority of its learners learn mathematics in English, which is a second or foreign language. The study reported in this article sought to explore the learners' perceptions of use of language (both language spoken at home and language of learning and teaching) in the teaching and learning of mathematics. Data collection strategies included classroom observation schedule and semi-structured interviews. The sample consisted of grade 9 learners from four schools. The data gathered via interviews revealed that learners used isiXhosa to solve word problems in their groups. They primarily used their home language and then translated their solution statements into verbal and written English when they presented their solutions to the entire classroom, and in their notebooks respectively. Analysis of lessons observed in the sampled schools showed that English emerged as the language of teaching, and thus the language of mathematics and of assessment.