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Collaborative summative assessment: A missing link in assessing the oral skills of Grade 12 isiZulu learners in South African schools

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Abstract
The lack of collaborative summative oral assessment tasks in Paper 4 of the Grade 12 isiZulu curriculum is problematic and counterproductive because it denies learners an opportunity to learn from each other to maximise their full academic performances. In this article we report on the application of the collaborative learning theory to promote the principles of learners working together to achieve a common goal. The group-reporting approach was used to generate data during a workshop for isiZulu home and second language teachers presented by the isiZulu Education Sub-Discipline at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Engagement with teachers during the workshop highlighted the misalignment between the isiZulu curriculum and summative oral assessment in Grade 12 in public schools. Both groups of isiZulu teachers reported that the spirit of shared responsibility, which forms the everyday existence of African people, must be infused in isiZulu oral summative assessment for education to uphold the communal cosmological and philosophical convictions of Zulu societies. Tripolar education, which advocates for collaboration among learners, teachers and the community, also dominated the discussions.

Keywords: assessment; collaborative learning; curriculum; learner confidence and zeal; tripolar education

Introduction
To become global citizens, learners in the 21st century need to acquire collaboration as soft skill. Research shows that collaboration in different spheres of life, including education, academia and politics, yields good productivity because the responsibilities of implementing successful projects are becoming too complex for individualised effort (Alamah, AlSoussy & Fakih, 2023; Lusha, 2024). Therefore, it is troubling that although the Grade 12 isiZulu curriculum provides for individual and collaborative assessment, collaborative summative assessment tasks are not included in the school-based assessment (SBA) for Paper 4 of the isiZulu home and second language curriculum. Currently the school-based assessment comprises purely orals (Department of Basic Education [DBE], Republic of South Africa [RSA], 2011a, 2011b). This exclusion signifies a misalignment between curriculum and summative assessment, denying learners an opportunity to learn from each other or to work collaboratively in achieving a common goal.

The Further Education and Training (FET) curriculum and Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for isiZulu home language indicates that the Grade 12 formative assessment comprises individual and collaborative assessment tasks, whereas summative assessment comprises only individual assessment tasks (DBE, RSA, 2011b). According to the isiZulu home language CAPS, the required formative assessment tasks are "*ukulalela ngokuqondisisa* [listening for comprehension]; *inkulumo elungiselelwe/engalungiselelwe* [prepared/unprepared speech]; *ingxoxo/inkulumompendulwano* [dialogue/debate]; *inkulumompendulwano/i-inthavyu* [dialogue/interview]; *inkulumompikiswano/ingxoxo yenkundla/ingxoxo yamaqembu/ingxoxo yesigungu/ingxoxo/ukuxoxisana okungamiselwe migomo* [debate/forum/group/panel discussion]; *ingxoxo/kuxoxisana okungabekelwe migomo* [informal discussions/conversation]; *ukwethula isikhulumi/amazwi okubonga* [introducing the speaker/vote of thanks]" (DBE, RSA, 2011b:71–82).

IsiZulu home language summative oral assessment tasks only include individual oral tasks, comprising of "*isivivinyo sokulalelela ngokuqondisisa* [listening comprehension]; *inkulumo engalungiselelwe* [unprepared speech]; *inkulumo elungiselelwe* [prepared speech]; *ukufunda uphimise okungalungiselelwe* [unprepared reading aloud]" (DBE, RSA, 2011b:71–82).

Likewise, the same misalignment between formative and summative oral assessment applies to the Grade 12 isiZulu second language (L2) curriculum. Formative oral assessment tasks in isiZulu L2 are "*ingxoxo yamaqembu* [group discussion]; *ukulalela ngokuqondisisa* [listening comprehension]; *ukwethula isikhulumi* [introducing a speaker]; *inkulumo ecwaningiwe emiselwe imigomo* [formal researched speech]; *ukulingiswa kwezingxoxo ezingamiselwe migomo* [role plays]; *ingxoxo engabekelwe migomo yamaqembu* [panel discussion]; *ukufunda okulungiselelwe/okungalungiselelwe* [prepared/unprepared reading]" (DBE, RSA, 2011a:84–94). Summative oral assessment tasks, on the other hand, are "*isivivinyo sokulalelela ngokuqondisisa* [listening comprehension]; *ukufunda okulungiselelwe/okungalungiselelwe* [prepared or unprepared reading]; inkulumo elungiselelwe [prepared speech]" (DBE, RSA, 2011a:84–94).

Collaborative summative oral assessment, compared with individual assessment, provides a "higher achievement level for learners" (Salma, 2020:57). This is the case because collaborative learning is designed to provide "a learning environment in which learners try to construct meaning" (Salma, 2020:57). When constructing meaning is done in small groups, everyone in the group may grow and achieve their full potential

(Rakhshan & Fathi, 2023). The idea is that learners should be allowed to co-exist with fellow learners and share in the reservoir of the communal knowledge system to become critical and independent thinkers.

This article is based on the following research question: How would the inclusion of collaborative summative oral assessment tasks instil confidence and zeal to succeed in Grade 12 isiZulu learners? To answer this question, we employed collaborative learning theory as the framework from which the argument was drawn while unpacking different themes emanating from data generated from isiZulu teachers during the workshop at the School of Education of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. This article is significant for local and international scholars as we used it to identify gaps in implementing the isiZulu curriculum, which impede the progress made in realising the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal 4, which promotes inclusive quality education (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2017).

International scholars, who collaborate with many researchers and academics globally and in South Africa must be made aware of the issues emanating from developing countries so that they know what to expect when collaborative research projects are envisioned. A lack of understanding of the context can make collaboration challenging (Lusha, 2024). Therefore, although this article is contextualised in South Africa, and specifically in the isiZulu classroom, its significance spans the narrow confines of the South African educational context because collaboration is a global phenomenon.

Literature Review

Collaborative summative oral assessment cannot be divorced from the communal philosophical thinking of the Zulu people, whose language, isiZulu, is the context of this article. Therefore, the literature reviewed for this article was divided into two groups: collaborative, summative, oral assessment in a language classroom and understanding the philosophy of communal existence.

Collaborative, summative, oral assessment in a language classroom

Collaborative, summative, oral assessment is integral in a language classroom because it is the conduit through which learners showcase their thinking and communication skills (Suaco, Mangaliag & Gadgad, 2023). Therefore, learners are "encouraged to cooperate and take part in group activities, such as skill demonstration, role play, and multimedia presentations, as part of collaborative assessment" (Suaco et al., 2023:119).

The merits of collaborative, summative, oral assessment are immense, as they include acquiring basic survival skills, such as social co-existence, communication, production of novel ideas, sharing of resources and resolution of conflict and disputes (Irzawati, 2023). These attributes are critical in developing a society which is more responsive to communal needs than individualistic concerns.

Learners acquire other crucial skills when collaborative, oral assessment tasks are administered, including debating, empathetic, social and leadership skills (Chowdhury, 2021). Collaborative, summative, oral assessment is needed in 21st-century education because it fosters good relationships among learners, improving their care for one another while addressing all kinds of divide or barriers, including race and class (Chowdhury, 2021). The learning process, which involves collaboration, gives learners an opportunity to participate fully in the process of learning and teaching, thus enhancing their academic performance or success (Pandey, 2022).

Collaborative assessment is significant in a language classroom because it teaches learners the value of working together to achieve a common goal. Instead of fostering individualistic competitiveness, it cultivates a sense of togetherness and social responsibility in constructing new knowledge (Rakhshan & Fathi, 2023). Togetherness and social responsibility are paramount in the language classroom because learners become the owners of their learning as they learn more from each other than by relying on the teacher (Rakhshan & Fathi, 2023). One of the disadvantages of collaborative learning is that some learners, due to their limited understanding or ability tend to rely on other team members and do not properly contribute to the group (Irzawati, 2023:9). Another disadvantage is that some learners become easily distracted when working in groups and they end up engaging in small talk or irrelevant conversations (Irzawati, 2023:9). It is, therefore, critically important that the teacher always moves around in class to facilitate the process of learning and teaching when learners work in groups.

In the collaborative learning approach, the teacher is not regarded as the only provider of information nor the learners as mere recipients or consumers of knowledge. The teacher becomes the facilitator of the teaching and learning process because learners still need guidance or scaffolding to understand what to do. However, scaffolding should not minimise learners' autonomy to think creatively, logically and critically as they collaboratively try to navigate their way through the assessment (Ismail, Rahul, Patra & Rezvani, 2022).

Understanding the philosophy of communal existence

A Zulu proverb, *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, means that an individual exists because of others (Zondi, 2013). This proverb is derived from the general philosophy of the African people which is deeply rooted in communal existence (Metz, 2020). The concept of communal existence is encapsulated in the following assertion:

> The sense of community or communality refers to the awareness which identifies an individual not as an isolated ego, but as an entity whose being and survival is consequent upon its union with other human beings within an identified locality. In traditional Africa for instance, it meant that a person is known and identified in, by and through his community. Individual lives move from and revolve around the community. (Ogbujah, 2014:209)

This philosophy of oneness, harmony and togetherness is further congruent with the African philosophy of *ubuntu* (humanity). According to Ngubane and Makua (2021), *ubuntu*, if embraced in the academic space in Africa, can foster good partnerships and collaboration among learners of different cultural backgrounds, producing outstanding academic outcomes.

South African learners must not be denied an education that is decolonised and transformed, an education that takes cognisance of their indigenous knowledge systems, such as the concept of communal existence (Hlatshwayo, Shawa & Nxumalo, 2020). The philosophy of communal existence is congruent with the theory of collaboration because both advocate for the ideals of working together to achieve a common goal. Therefore, Hlatshwayo et al. (2020) believe that a transformed and decolonised curriculum should follow a bottom-up approach open to epistemological diversity that embraces all knowledges, including Afrocentric ones.

The philosophy of communal existence works well with the principles of tripolar education, where all voices are heard in the construction of new knowledge, including, most importantly, the voices of learners and communities and not only of the voices of teachers, who are unwittingly considered as the only custodians of information (Ngubane & Makua, 2021). Therefore, incorporating the philosophy of communal existence challenges the socio-political injustices of the past by fostering equality, justice and solidarity (Nxumalo & Mncube, 2019).

Theoretical Framework

The collaborative learning theory was deemed fit as basis for this article because it is congruent with the argument that learners learn effectively if allowed to work together for a common goal (Irzawati, 2023). The collaborative learning theory as advocated in this article is rooted in the idea that learners need support from those with more developed knowledge, who can either be teachers, fellow learners or community members, including parents (Adebola & Tsotetsi, 2022). This idea is called tripolar education, of which the principles are rooted in the social constructivism of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (1978). In a classroom environment, collaborative learning means that learners are inclined to work cooperatively and rely on one another to fulfil the requirements of an assessment task assigned to them by the teacher. Globally, research reveals that collaborative learning is crucial in developing learners' critical thinking and analytical, organisational, verbal, listening, leadership, self-actualisation and research skills (Le, Janssen & Wubbels, 2018; Omodan & Addam, 2022).

Therefore, according to the collaborative learning theory, learners share prior knowledge which they draw from indigenous knowledge systems they inherit from their communities or parents (Vygotsky, 1978). Indigenous knowledge systems should not be considered obsolete in the modern isiZulu classroom. Learning spaces that accommodate different voices can create isiZulu learners who are not stoic to the plurality of ideas. We idealise this type of classroom as the transformed 21st-century creative space where each isiZulu learner may thrive, especially in Grade 12, where learners are on the verge of being exposed to tertiary education or work environments. Therefore, against this background, the collaborative learning theory was found suitable for this study.

Methodology

Data were generated using the group-reporting approach of a workshop attended by Grade 12 isiZulu home and second language teachers from the Pinetown and Umlazi districts of the KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa. The workshop, which was held at the Edgewood Campus, was arranged by the isiZulu Education Sub-Discipline of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). The aim with the workshop was to disseminate best pedagogical practices for isiZulu teachers on how to teach oral skills, provide support and guidance, offer theoretical and practical knowledge on assessment strategies, offer research-based and capacity development knowledge on using technology, and develop teaching materials that spark learners' interest and sharpen their oral skills. Furthermore, the marginalisation of indigenous African languages in South Africa's post-apartheid education system was addressed. The principles of the participatory action research methodology were adopted for the workshop, where in-service teachers discussed what worked and what did not by reflecting on their day-to-day encounters with learners in their isiZulu classrooms. They provided a critical analysis of how interactive teaching

methods and strategies could be used in an authentic classroom environment.

In this article we present data from group reports from Group A (Grade 12 teachers of IsiZulu home language) and Group B (Grade 12 teachers of IsiZulu second language) on assessing oral skills. In South African schools the term "isiZulu First Additional Language", is used to refer to isiZulu as a second language. In this article we use the term "second language" as it is recognised globally as such.

The group-reporting approach was deemed fit for this article because "as a form of cooperative learning technique, it maximises on the diversity of the people who are part of the group to foster dynamic and creative learning" (Crisanto, 2018:75). Nineteen teachers (10 home language and nine second language) attended the workshop. It was crucial to hear the voices of both groups because group reporting allows a diversity of ideas and learner-learner, and in this case, teacher-teacher "type[s] of interaction, [and] cooperative learning is also beneficial because it combines and promotes both academic and social skills, in addition to being useful in culturally diverse classrooms" (Crisanto, 2018:74). It was crucial to determine whether both groups faced similar experiences regarding the assessment of oral skills in their classrooms.

After a lecture delivered by lecturers from the isiZulu Education Sub-Discipline about different assessment approaches to assess oral skills, breakaway sessions were held. Both groups deliberated about which teaching practices worked and which did not work in their respective classrooms regarding the assessment of oral skills. After rigorous engagement, each group was asked to verbally report back on what they had deliberated on and wrote on the presentation charts. To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of this study, data from the group presentations are quoted verbatim here, and the handwritten charts were stored safely for future verification. After each presentation, time was allowed for questions and constructive feedback was given by both groups of teachers and lecturers from the isiZulu Education Sub-Discipline. During these engaging sessions, educators shared their first-hand experiences on the teaching and assessing of oral skills in their classrooms. Group reporting, as a form of collaborative learning, gave teachers a feeling of what it was like to learn from each other so that they could use the technique to assess Grade 12 isiZulu learners in authentic classroom contexts. This learning is crucial because collaborative learning "maximises on the diversity of the people who are part of the group to foster dynamic and creative learning" (Crisanto, 2018:75).

The thematic analysis approach was used to analyse data from both groups of isiZulu teachers. In this article we present a narrative description of the data identified, analysed and presented in the patterns of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The descriptive nature of the thematic analysis approach allowed us to decode, encode and dovetail the data from isiZulu teachers during the workshop (Braun & Clarke, 2021). In the following section we present and discuss the findings of the study.

Results and Discussion

The themes presented in this section emanated from data, not the other way around. The analysis was aimed at answering the following research question: How would the inclusion of collaborative summative oral assessment tasks instil confidence and zeal to succeed in Grade 12 isiZulu learners? Data are presented verbatim as presented verbally and in writing on the charts by speakers for each group during the workshops. The isiZulu has been translated into English using the adaptation and equivalence translation methods.

Instilling Confidence and Zeal in Learners Through Formative Assessment

Drawing on the reflection about what worked regarding the assessment of Grade 12 oral skills, teachers indicated the following:

> Group A: *Othisha basebenzisa indlela eyodwa yokuhlola*. (Teachers are using the same method of assessing.)
>
> Group B: *Akulinganiswa ukuhlolwa kwamakhono kanti futhi abanye othisha bagcina icala nje, bagcine ngokugxila emisebenzini edingakalayo ukuqoqa amamaki abafundi*. (Some oral skills are underassessed, and some teachers are just ticking the box because they only concentrate on summative assessment tasks and ignore formative assessment.)

By mentioning that teachers were using the same methods of assessing, the first group touched on the research question of this study, which is about instilling confidence and zeal in Grade 12 isiZulu learners for them to succeed. Confidence is defined as "an intrinsic belief in one's ability to navigate this world regardless of the situation at hand" (Mukwana & Connie, 2024:42). The learners' confidence to succeed cannot be released if teachers use the same teaching methods, especially methods that do not include "group work, debates and discussion groups as the final aspects of pedagogical application" (Mukwana & Connie, 2024:44). On the other hand, zeal is defined as a "passion in learning" new knowledge (Ugwu, 2019:39). The repercussions for teachers opting to use the same methods of assessing is that learners will lose a strong academic foundation and they will "become confused and end up not having the zeal for their studies" (Ugwu, 2019:37).

When isiZulu teachers choose to concentrate primarily on the prescribed assessment tasks for progression of learners to the next grade, the second group indicated that teachers chose to concentrate on summative assessment and ignore

formative assessment. We have indicated that summative assessment in isiZulu only allows for individual tasks and collaborative tasks are not done. Collaborative tasks are only allowed when formative assessment is administered. Consequently, isiZulu learners who are exposed to this practice may have fewer structured opportunities to receive development feedback, since the summative oral tasks described are primarily used for grading rather than for ongoing support and improvement (Ismail et al., 2022). This suggests that some isiZulu learners may not be adequately prepared to demonstrate their oral competence in summative assessment contexts. Prior engagement in formative activities can support learners' readiness for summative assessment by allowing them to practise, receive feedback and refine their skills before formal grading occurs (Ismail et al., 2022).

Formative assessment plays a pivotal role in blending assessment with teaching so that learners are academically ready for summative assessment of content knowledge and other required skills (Ozan & Kincal, 2018). Therefore, isiZulu teachers who use one assessment method and who jump straight to summative oral assessment are denying their learners an opportunity to excel academically and denying them access to knowledge and quality education. The above is not in line with the ideals set out in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal No. 4, namely, to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (UNESCO, 2017). Inclusive and equitable quality education includes the empowering of learners with fundamental global life skills such as collaboration. These soft skills are crucial and prepare learners for real-life situations. The world expects global citizens who can network and perform tasks that will contribute to humanity, not only to individuals. Therefore, collaboration starts in the classroom and then extends nationally and globally (Lusha, 2024). Collaboration is valuable for the personal and professional development of learners locally and internationally because "national and international collaboration play a vital role in fostering economic development by leveraging resources, facilitating knowledge transfer, expanding market access, promoting infrastructure development, coordinating policies, and building capacity" (Lusha, 2024:76). Therefore, if isiZulu learners are denied an opportunity to work collaboratively in their oral summative assessment, they are denied an opportunity to grow and become global citizens.

Instilling Confidence and Zeal in Learners Through Tripolar Education

The teachers responded as follows on how learners' confidence and zeal are harnessed by involving learners, peers, teachers and communities (parents), in tripolar education:

> Group A: *Inkinga ukuthi nakuba abafundi benikezwa imisebenzi yomuntu ngamunye efana nokwethula izinkulumo ezihleliwe kuba nezingqinamba zokuthi othisha abavumi ukuba le misebenzi abafundi baqale bayixoxe nontanta nokuthi abafundi bayixoxe nabazali ngoba bathi lokho kwenza imaki umfundi alitholayo libe phezulu*. (The problem is that teachers do not allow learners to discuss their individual prepared speeches with peers and parents first because they think this will make learners benefit unfairly by getting good marks.)
>
> Group B: *Imisebenzi yama-oral enikezwa abafundi kumele bazenzele bona yona, bangalekelelwa ngontanga nabazali. Imaki ngelomfundi ngamunye hhayi ontanga nabazali.* (Oral tasks are supposed to be done by learners individually, not with peers or parents. The mark belongs to the individual learner, not peers or parents.)

Both groups reported that learners were not afforded an opportunity to learn from their peers or parents. The responses from both groups seemed to be on the assessment of learning rather than assessment for learning. The emphasis is on the mark or grading, rather than on the skills, knowledge, attitudes and values (SKAVs) that can be developed through sustained preparation, feedback, peer interaction and classroom engagement in formative activities before a summative assessment is administered. The fact that parents seem to be removed completely from the learning and teaching process is worrisome, especially if the construction of knowledge is supposed to be a communal practice, as advocated by the African philosophy of oneness or co-existence (Hlatshwayo et al., 2020). It is crucial to note that quality education will not be attainable if parents do not play a role in their children's growth. Learners acquire knowledge at home first where parents are the primary teachers. Gaining knowledge is then continued in schools where teachers should accommodate learners' prior knowledge in their classrooms (Boeren, 2019). Collaboration in the classroom means collaboration between learners and among learners, teachers and parents – tripolar education. Tripolar education is crucial in educating learners who will one day use the skills learned in the classroom to collaborate with colleagues in workplaces and become global citizens. Boeren (2019:282) observes that "[p]arents, children, young adults and adult learners are key players at the micro level in education because they are the ones who appear in participation statistics, they are the most relevant actors in a policy discourse underpinned by benchmarks and indicators, and they are expected to obtain a high level of knowledge and skills to operate within the global economy." Parents and learners are fundamental in generating new

knowledge, so they should not be excluded from teachers' endeavours to attain quality education.

Learners' and parents' socio-economic status frequently hampers tripolar education in developing countries such as South Africa. Learners from low- or middle-income families are bound to have less access to quality education because of limited or non-existent collaboration between teachers, learners and parents, and mainly because most parents are illiterate (UNESCO, 2017). It is even worse when the confidence and zeal for learners to learn new SKAVs through tripolar education is blocked by teachers themselves. Therefore, isiZulu teachers must be aware that "evidence – mainly from the Western world – teaches us that participation in education and high levels of educational attainment correlate with a wide range of indicators concerning good health, well-being, active citizenship, and employment" (Boeren, 2019:289). The knowledge of context is crucial for all education scholars, locally and internationally, so that interventional measures are executed to address the causes, not only the symptoms of a particular academic shortfall or defect.

The following responses by isiZulu teachers during the workshop show that some learners experienced personal challenges, such as a lack of confidence.

> Group A: *Abanye abafundi baba nokungazethembi ngenxa yezingqinamba eziningi, okungaba ukungingiza*. (Some learners lack confidence due to several reasons, including stuttering.)
>
> Group B: *Abafundi abazethembi*. (Learners lack confidence.)

Evidence from the data shows that teachers do not use different formative assessment tasks to instil confidence and zeal for isiZulu learners to succeed academically. The above responses show that learners lack confidence due to different reasons, which include physical deficiencies such as stuttering. If their teachers ignore formative assessment and concentrate only on summative assessment, it is highly unlikely that these learners will ever reach their maximum potential. The damage could be irreparable because some learners, unable to express themselves in oral assessment, might feel like failures. During formative assessment, teachers can prepare learners using different assessment tasks, which are beneficial to learners and teachers because teachers can identify pedagogies that work for learners' different learning styles and abilities. Learners may gain confidence, content knowledge and different life skills (Ozan & Kincal, 2018). The merits of using formative assessment before administering summative assessment are expanded in the following assertion:

> Formative assessment gives the teacher the ability to provide continuous feedback to their students. This allows the students to be part of the learning environment and to improve self-assessment strategies that will help with the understanding of their own thinking processes. All in all, providing frequent feedback during the learning process is regarded as an efficient technique for motivating and encouraging students to learn a language more successfully. Indeed, by assessing students during the lesson, the teachers can aid them to improve their skills and examine if they are progressing or not. (Ismail et al., 2022:20)

IsiZulu teachers must be encouraged to use different assessment methods in their classrooms. They should refrain from jumping straight to summative assessment without preparing their learners through formative assessment, which is meant as assessing for learning. IsiZulu teachers are encouraged to research global assessment trends and ensure that they use them in a way that equips learners with collaboration skills. These trends are critical because the world needs partnerships, collaboration and leaders who are team players in all sectors of life. Collaboration starts from a small-scale setup, such as a classroom, and expands internationally. "International collaboration entails the contribution of multiple individuals with diverse experiences and backgrounds, resulting in more scrutinised and detailed research" (Alamah et al., 2023:10). Diverse knowledge plays an integral part in transforming a classroom. In the following section we elaborate on how collaboration can transform the isiZulu classroom.

How Collaboration can Transform the isiZulu Classroom

Learners' interaction in small groups has proven to produce good oral skills and self-confidence for learners, who in a traditional language setup, might feel intimidated to express themselves (Salma, 2020). This means that learners deserve an opportunity to learn from one another and share their prior knowledge, which they draw from the reservoir of their communities' indigenous knowledge systems. Learners may also do peer assessment and critique each other in small groups.

The teachers responded as follows when reflecting on what worked regarding the assessment of Grade 12 oral skills:

> Group A: *Basebenzisa amaqoqo othisha. Babona lapho-ke uma kukhona oxegayo kubafundi*. (Teachers use group work. This helps to identify learners who are struggling.)
>
> Group B: *Abafundi bahlolana ngokwamaqembu besebenzisa irubrikhi*. (Learners use the rubric to assess each other.)

The above responses complicate the earlier discussion. Although collaborative oral tasks are not formally embedded in Grade 12 isiZulu summative assessment, some isiZulu teachers nevertheless use collaborative strategies in their classroom practice. This variation may be linked to the fact that the participating teachers came from different schools in the Umlazi and Pinetown districts in the Durban metropolitan municipality in South Africa. It is,

therefore, not surprising that the different groups held different voices or experiences. It is liberating to note that some isiZulu teachers can use collaborative learning in their classrooms. It is also encouraging to note that learners can use peer assessment to assess other groups, using a designed rubric. The above is crucial because research shows that learners take the feedback from their peers seriously because they are on the same level of understanding, and they communicate in a language they understand (Irzawati, 2023). Therefore, learners do not feel offended when they are assessed by their peers because they understand each other much better than they do their teachers. However, teachers need to be aware of the disadvantages of peer assessment as not all learners would have their peers' best interests in mind, as learners may be mean and unkind to each other. Therefore, when using peer assessment, teachers need to be mindful of the following five elements: 1. student characteristics, 2. the message, 3. the implementation, 4. the context, 5. the agents (Senden & Coertjens, 2024). To cater for all these elements, teachers need to make learners "better aware that peer feedback [is meant] for improvement i.e., assessment for learning" (Xiaomeng & Ravindran, 2024:8).

Collaborative learning also allows learners to pose more questions to the group doing the presentation, thus making learning and teaching more effective and learners' engagement less painful. The above is deduced from the following responses by the isiZulu teachers during their group reporting:

> Group A: *Amaqembu abuzana imibuzo*. (Groups can pose questions to each other.)
> Group B: *Abeqembu elehlukile baphonsa imibuzo eqenjini elethulayo*. (Those of a different group can pose questions to the presenting group.)

Therefore, collaborative learning allows learners to receive immediate feedback from teachers and peers. Research shows that immediate feedback to learners' questions is a motivating factor and is likely to boost their morale and increase their individual performance, compared to learners who do not receive immediate feedback to their questions (Xiaomeng & Ravindran, 2024). Therefore, this type of learning diversifies the approaches to questioning and is more learner-centred than teacher-centred. It encourages learners' involvement and engagement in learning and teaching because they feel that they are part of the process and will thus own it. If they own it, the output is likely to be more positive.

Collaborative learning is crucial because "not only does it offer alternative strategies to engage learners in class other than traditional participation, but it also incorporates collaborative learning strategies that encourage [learners] to build stronger connections" (Adebola & Tsotetsi, 2022:66). Therefore, when learners have good connections with one another, learning and teaching will not be clinical or mechanical, instead, it will flow naturally. Every learner will feel free to be their best and express themselves without fear of victimisation or stigmatisation. The benefits of a free-spirited classroom are captured in the following assertion:

> It promotes unity and team spirit among learners as they tackle learning problems. Unity ensures solidarity, oneness among group members. In such a learning environment, learners value one another and they cease to see one another as competitors, but see them as team members, and extensions of the other. In effective teamwork, each member is important for a successful learning experience. (Ngubane & Makua, 2021:8)

This citation emphasises the importance of brotherhood and sisterhood in a collaborative learning environment. It reinforces the principles and ideals of communal existence mentioned earlier. All of these are embedded in the Afrocentric ideas of *ubuntu* – I am who I am because of who you are and we can conquer the world together. These values of *ubuntu* and communal existence are inclined to defeat individualistic concerns because "everyone would not only acclaim the wisdom of the ancients in nurturing the values but would crave for their sustainability in the future" (Ogbujah, 2014:216). Therefore, the isiZulu teachers must recognise that isiZulu learners come from communities where indigenous knowledge systems matter. Furthermore, this knowledge might transform the learning space if integrated into the curriculum and pedagogical approaches. Research shows that in classrooms where epistemological diversity is not embraced, learners are doomed to fail (Metz, 2020).

Teachers teach learners from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. The lived experiences of teachers who teach learners with diverse experiences, knowledge and learning abilities are required in the language classroom. International communities may learn from the lived experiences of isiZulu teachers on how oral skills are taught as much as isiZulu teachers may learn from international pedagogical trends. This mutual benefit is encouraged worldwide because developed countries can also learn from developing countries and vice versa (Alamah et al., 2023:23). Therefore, international communities must become aware of the challenges that developing countries face, whether they arose from the failure to implement the curriculum correctly or because of rigid assessment policies that are not aligned with the curriculum.

Conclusions

This study has implications for changing the narrative about how isiZulu teachers conduct their lessons, especially when teaching oral skills. The narrative is changed – instead of learners being perceived as consumers of knowledges, they are in

fact active participants in producing new knowledge. This production of new knowledge should also result from a team effort rather than individualistic, self-promoting instant gratification.

With this study we challenge teachers to be agents of change in their respective classroom spaces. They can achieve this by empowering their learners to draw knowledge from the think-tank of the wisdom of their communities, revolutionising and transforming isiZulu classrooms as accepting of the diversity and plurality of ideas. The above is crucial in the 21st century because it encourages learners to be proactive citizens who are not afraid to bring solutions to the problem instead of being a problem. The traditional pedagogical approaches were designed to make them passive citizens.

The findings of this study reveal that teachers chose to concentrate on summative assessment tasks instead of starting with formative assessment before moving to summative assessment for the grading of learners. We challenge not only teachers, learners and communities to be change agents but also policymakers and the Department of Basic Education to revisit summative assessment and align it with the global trends or decolonise the curriculum if it does not conform to what is expected in the world. Therefore, isiZulu as a language and subject should not be regarded as a local entity with a regional basis in KwaZulu-Natal or Gauteng in South Africa only, but also as a global entity that brings about change in the competitive and ever-changing space.

This study is set to open the doors of learning isiZulu home and second language – to make learning isiZulu fashionable and relevant in a world where knowledge is never static. Therefore, isiZulu teachers and the Department of Basic Education must discard what does not work to create space or room for relearning. Relearning in this context means redesigning the curriculum to herald change and prepare learners who will be critical thinkers, problem solvers, philanthropists and advocates of a true and just society. An isiZulu proverb, *inkunzi isematholeni*, which is loosely translated as the bull is among the calves, means that the youth are the future; therefore, if taught well, they will bring about positive change in this world.

The confidence and zeal of learners to learn in an isiZulu context is deeply rooted in the African philosophy of *ubuntu*, which is congruent with the isiZulu proverb that *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (a person exists because of others). With this study we demonstrate how the concept of collaborative learning is essential in evoking learners' sense of belonging and togetherness in executing academic tasks. This sense of belonging cannot be achieved if collaboration is not considered in summative assessment tasks. The above is crucial because education that embraces the indigenous knowledge systems of learners' communities accepts that all knowledge, whether Afrocentric or Eurocentric, is paramount to the shaping and development of learners who will be change agents in their communities and, consequently, global citizens of note.

With this article we demonstrate that summative oral assessment cannot occur unless formative oral assessment has been administered because formative assessment allows the teacher and learner to identify gaps in attaining knowledge for interventional measures to occur timeously. We also demonstrate that collaborative learning is lacking in the Grade 12 isiZulu summative oral assessment, denoting misalignment with the existing curriculum. Therefore, it is unfair for learners of isiZulu home and second language to be denied an opportunity to work together when these tasks are administered. Research has shown that collaborative learning encourages learners to reach their maximum potential because working together forges an unbreakable bond of brotherhood and sisterhood, thus seeing themselves as team players rather than competitors.

Guided by the collaborative learning theory, we conclude that the isiZulu classroom does not allow all learners to grow. The results show that some teachers jump straight to summative assessment, thus denying their learners the opportunity to work in groups and learn from each other. We conclude that this teaching and assessment practice is regressive and counterproductive and must change.

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Authors' Contributions

Both authors contributed equally to the generation of data and the brainstorming of key points of the manuscript. Based on discussion by both authors, SZN wrote the manuscript. Both authors reviewed the final manuscript.

Notes

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