

IRN Final Synthesis Report
Mongillo/Vaknin-Nusbaum WERA-IRN Progress report
April 2021

**Effective Teachers' Communicative Strategies When Working with
Linguistically Diverse Learners**

Members of the IRN: Dr. Randa Abbas (Israel), Dr. Dorothy Feola (United States),
Dr. Carrie Hong (United States), Dr. Geraldine Mongillo (United States), Dr. Vered
Vaknin-Nusbaum (Israel), and Dr. Funke Omidire (South Africa)

Status of IRN:

In 2019 we completed a survey that Israel, South Africa and the US participated in and presented the results in at the 2019 WERA Focal Meeting in Tokyo, Japan. We extended this work in each country and we will present our findings at 2020/2021 WERA focal meeting in July, 2021.

In 2017-2018, we added a new partner to our research network, Dr. Funke Omidire from the University of Pretoria, Cape Town, South Africa, bringing our network to three (3) countries: Israel, United States and South Africa. In August, 2019, we participated in two symposiums at the 2019 WERA Focal Meeting in Tokyo, Japan:

- *Using an International Lens to Understand Teachers' Awareness, Preparation and Teaching Strategies When Instructing Linguistically Diverse Learners (Accepted Symposium)*
- International Research Network (IRN): Effective teachers' communicative strategies when working with linguistically diverse learners (Invitational Symposium)

In these meeting we presented similarities and differences in teacher's instructional strategies in various educational context (countries). Such findings can shed light on the ways in which teachers implement strategies to enhance the learning of their students. Results also open new research directions that take into account specific cultural variables that take part in the act of instruction.

We also participated in the IRN chairs' meeting. Our IRN has a successful track record of collaboration in a variety of spaces, including virtual spaces (e.g. skype, zoom), email,

conference calls, face to face at each other's institutions and at conferences where we have co-presented our work (AERA, WERA). We will continue to use a variety of venues and technologies for collaboration.

Recent Publications:

Mongillo, G., Feola, D. Kaplan, R. G. Vaknin-Nusbaum, V., & Abbas, R. (2019). Primary teachers' use of communicative strategies for linguistically diverse learners: A cross-cultural case study, *The Language and Literacy Spectrum*, 29(1) 5.

Abbas, R., Vaknin-Nusbaum, V., Neuman, A., Mongillo, G., Feola, D., & Kaplan, G.R. (2018). The use of modern standard and spoken Arabic in mathematics lessons: The case of a diglossic language. *Cultura y Educacion*, Taylor & Francis Group. Doi: 10.1080/11356405.2018

Additional related research from our IRN members

Hong, C. E., & Kim, D. (2020) A cross-cultural study of the importance of social and emotional learning and related academic & non-academic practices in Korean and American classrooms: Applying Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) for data analysis. *Chung Nam University Journal of Educational Studies*, 41(4), 319-345.

Kim, D., & Hong, C. E. (2019). Social and emotional learning in a classroom: Language arts and literacy teachers' perceptions and practices in South Korea and the United States *i.e. inquiry in education*, 11(2), Article 7. Retrieved from: <https://digitalcommons.nl.edu/ie/vol11/iss2/7>

Sefhedi, S.T, Omidire, M.F., Ebersöhn, L. Murphy, P.K. (2021). Promoting critical-analytic-thinking through teacher discourse moves and pedagogical principles: The case of a rural South African secondary school. *Journal for Language Teaching*, Volume 54, Number 2, pp. 11 – 25. 2020. ISSN 0259-9570. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/jlt.v51i1.5>

Omidire, M.F (2021) Improving learners' comprehension skills in the early years through group discussion, *Early Child Development and Care*, DOI: [10.1080/03004430.2020.1868999](https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2020.1868999)

Omidire, M. F. (2020). Derived Knowledge and Lived Experiences of Teachers Working in Resource-Constrained Multilingual Classrooms. *Teacher Education through Flexible Learning in Africa (TETFLE)*, 2(1), 156-171. <https://doi.org/10.35293/tetfle.v2i1.92>

Omidire, M. F., & Ayob, S. (2020). The utilisation of translanguaging for learning and teaching in multilingual primary classrooms, *Multilingua* (published online ahead of print 2020), 000010151520200072. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1515/multi-2020-0072>

Omidire, M.F. (2020) Experiencing language challenges in a rural school: implications for learners' life aspirations, *Early Child Development and Care*, 190 (10), pp. 1619 -1637. DOI: [10.1080/03004430.2019.1660963](https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2019.1660963)

Murphy, P.K., Ebersohn, L., Omidire, M. F, & Firetto, C. (2020) Exploring the structure and content of discourse in remote, rural South African classrooms. *South African Journal of Education* 40 (2) ppS1-11. <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v40ns2a1826>

Additional IRN Member News

Promotion

Dr Funke Omidire was promoted to Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Psychology with effect from 1 January 2021.

Professor Randa Khair Abbas

Dr Randa Khair Abbas was promoted to Academic Head & Rector of the Arab Academic College for Education – Haifa, ISRAEL. Recently published work on the Druze community:

Randa Khair Abbas & Deborah Court (2021). *The Israeli Druze Community in Transition: Between Tradition and Modernity*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

<https://www.cambridgescholars.com/product/978-1-5275-6672-9>

In Progress

We have proposed an edited book with Springer Publishers based on our past and current research on literacy and content instruction with a preliminary title of "Literacy and content instruction in diverse, multicultural settings". We have potential contributors within our IRN to produce a 10 chapter book.

Synthesis of IRN Research 2018-2020

At the 2018 WERA World Congress in Cape Town, we shared policies and practices on teaching learners from linguistically diverse backgrounds in Israel, South Korea and the United States. We also summarized our classroom-based research on communicative strategies of effective teachers' when working with linguistically diverse learners from the three countries. From our own research and a review of the literature we concluded that teachers are struggling to find ways to accommodate new and ever rising numbers of learners entering their classrooms with diverse home language experiences. Additionally, teachers are not prepared in their regular education programs to help diverse language learners and certified world language teachers are limited (Wong, Indiatsi, & Wong, 2016). Finally, we found that enhancing teachers' instructional skills needs to take place within a school improvement framework that extends to all school staff, family and community (e.g., Cummins, 2000; Krashen, & Terrell, 1983; Sleeter, 2002).

We developed a survey study and piloted it in 2019 for teachers of linguistically diverse students in three countries. The purpose of this pilot study was to examine primary/elementary grade teachers' awareness, preparation and teaching strategies when instructing linguistically diverse learners. The three countries represented include Israel, South Africa, and the United States. Teachers in these countries are faced with similar challenges that include the education of learners for whom the language of instruction is not their home or first language. The survey was distributed to teachers of elementary grade students. Findings from all three countries were shared and discussed with symposium participants at the 2019 WERA Focal Meeting in Tokyo, Japan.

New IRN Research in 2020 to be presented at WERA Focal Meeting July 7-9, 2021

Building on the results of our cross-national research and feedback received at our conference presentations, we expanded our cross-cultural research to include an inquiry on content teachers' use of instructional strategies with linguistically diverse learners, collecting data from focus group in-person interviews with open-ended questions. We gathered and analyzed data from the focus group of content teachers who teach math and science across three countries. We will present new research that discusses commonalities and differences found in content teachers' strategies to work with diverse learners at the 2020/2021 WERA Focal Meeting in July. We continue to look for interested researchers from other countries to expand our investigation in other cultural contexts. Ultimately, we hope to increase the knowledge base and dissemination of on best practices on teaching linguistically diverse learner.