

Mathematics Teachers and Their Understanding of Multiplication: A Case of Two African Language-speakers in South Africa

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ABSTRACT This paper reports on data collected from African language-speakers in South Africa whose experience of mathematics teaching takes place in a language that is not their own. The work is theoretically underpinned in the social and situated perspectives of mathematics learning. Major findings from the case of two African language-speakers reported here provide a strong argument for the consideration of the role and structure of language in the teaching and learning of multiplication to African speaking learners in the multilingual classroom. The importance of paying attention to the difference that diverse language speakers attach meaning to multiplied numbers is highlighted in order to ensure that their representation is not lost in the translation. The paper also suggests alternative ways of expressing multiplied numbers in African languages in ways that will not compromise their understanding of this operation, particularly those involving algebraic terms.