

Polysemy and Context: Decoding Rural Teachers' Experiences and Perceptions of the Non-Technical Language of Physical Science Usage

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CAMPBELL - Renewing Indigenous Languages

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Everyday English words cease to be mere English words when used in a science context. These words are polysemous in nature and have to be understood within their context of use, especially when used to explain scientific concepts. Even though teachers use these words but the paucity of science education research in rural schools has not offered teachers' perceptions and experiences of the usage of everyday English words in science (EWS) lessons. Therefore, this study involves rural schools in the science classroom language revival because building bridges between learners' everyday culture including community culture, and science culture is important in the understanding and usage of EWS. In an attempt to unearth the complexity, dynamics and idiosyncrasies involved in using EWS, this study aimed at exploring teachers' experiences and perceptions of their usage of 'everyday English words in physical science' lessons and finally to expose factors influencing teachers' perceptions and experiences. The study observed ten physical science lessons and interviewed four teachers from a total of four rural high schools. This paper used only the interview data which was analysed using Fairclough's critical discourse analysis. The findings show complexity in teachers' experiences and perceptions of using everyday English words in science, as they all reservedly recognised the importance of explicitly explaining the meanings of EWS. While some teachers did not know much about EWS or their importance, others did not pay attention to the EWS they used while teaching and others perceived EWS as supposedly self-taught.