



CHALLENGES TO ORAL PROFICIENCY IN AN ENGLISH FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

Foreign language teaching has moved from an approach focusing on analysing a language, like Grammar Translation Method, to an approach focusing on using language, such as Communicative Language Teaching. However, arguably, the teaching of oral skills in language classrooms does not seem to have an important role because of the higher status of written language and a lack of knowledge of how to teach speaking. Besides, the current scenario is that the teaching of oral skills is more pronounced in the earliest grades to Grade 6, perhaps because the emphasis and the weighting for listening and speaking from Grades 7 onwards are lower than those of the writing skills in South Africa. Debatably, not much research has been conducted to find out why learners in the Further Education and Training (FET) phase in South Africa battle with oral tasks, particularly speaking skills, which are also mandatory in an English first additional language (EFAL) context. This qualitative study, which involved 6 teachers in the FET phase in South Africa, that is, Grades 10-12 EFAL teachers, aimed to explore the challenges to teaching speaking skills in EFAL classrooms in the FET phase in South Africa and to identify solutions to the challenges to teaching speaking skills in an EFAL classroom in the FET phase in South Africa. Telephonic interviews were conducted to collect data. The findings revealed that if oral production is excluded from tests, EFAL teachers in the FET phase in South Africa might not want to use their precious class time for oral production but instead teach to the test and prioritise other language skills and aspects such as writing and comprehension and visual literacy. Moreover, the EFAL teacher might not be well-informed about the strategies that can be used to teach speaking skills to EFAL learners in the FET phase.

Keywords: *Speaking skills; English first additional language; translanguaging; multilingualism; communicative approach; cultural diversity*

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's globalised world, it is increasingly important to consciously consider the terminology used when referencing others. The language used in identifiers and definitions has a profound impact on human relationships, identity, and academic success. With an understanding that language and terminology are not neutral, it is evermore necessary for professionals to be conscious about and attentive to the underlying messages they communicate. In this study, English first additional language refers to the learning of English by learners whose Home Language is not English but could be any of the 12 official languages in South, including Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi (Sesotho sa Leboa), Sesotho, Setswana, Siswati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, and Sign Language. This implies that even learners in the FET phase who are learning English Home Language, but English is not their home become English first additional language learners. This is commonplace in most South African private schools where most of the learners are not Home Language speakers of English but study English Home Language. The Department of Basic Education (DBE) (2011) defines English first additional language as a language that learners do not necessarily have any knowledge of when they arrive at school. The focus in the first few years of school is on developing learners' ability to understand and speak the language – basic interpersonal communication skills. In Grades 2 and 3, learners start to build literacy on this oral foundation. They also apply the literacy skills they have already learnt in their Home Language. Webster and Lu (2012) propounded an alternative term: Learner of English as an Additional Language (LEAL). Rather than utilising the language learning aspect as a defining characteristic,

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LEAL is a politically and culturally appropriate and respectful term that utilises the person's first language while also acknowledging existing language competencies. Regardless, this paper used English first additional language, which is commonplace in South African linguistic circles.

Furthermore, DBE (2011) defines English Home Language as the language first acquired by learners. However, many South African schools do not offer the home languages of some or all of the enrolled learners but rather have one or two languages offered at Home Language level. For this study, any reference to Home Language should be understood to refer to the level and not the language itself. Although some linguists have written about the 'mother tongue' as the Home Language, and they turn to the concept 'native speaker' in the same breath, primarily because of the kinship metaphor they both share, they tend to find the underlying folkloric notion of the genetic ownership of language problematic (Bonfiglio, 2010: 1). This genetic ownership is problematic because it automatically attributes authority to the speaker who has been presumably born into a particular culture and language, and who has also acquired the language in question as his or her first language.

The idea of being a 'native speaker' of a language and as a logical consequence, having the language as one's 'mother tongue' implies at least five things, and I quote Rampton (1995: 336–337) in Tan (2014) at length here: 1. A particular language is inherited, either through genetic endowment or through birth into the social group stereotypically associated with it. 2. Inheriting a language means being able to speak it well. 3. People either are or are not native /mother-tongue speakers. 4. Being a native speaker involves a comprehensive grasp of a language. 5. Just as people are usually citizens of one country, people are native speakers of one mother tongue. The South African Department of Basic Education values oral development among the learners in Grades 10–12. For example, according to the DBE (2011), Grades 10–12 learners who are learning English Home Language, although most of them are second-language speakers of English, and those who are learning English first additional language convert oral mark (Paper 4) to 12,5%. Thus, teaching oral skills is important in this phase of learning.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Language is a complex skill involving four sub-skills, which are as follows: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing, and may be further classified into two parts, namely productive skills (active skills) and receptive skills (passive skills) (Husain, 2015). Speaking and writing are called productive skills because while using these skills, a learner/user is not only active but also produces sounds in speaking and symbols (letters, etc.) in writing; on the other hand, listening and reading are considered receptive skills because here a learner is generally passive and receives information either through listening or reading (Husain, 2015). Due to the scope of this study, I briefly discussed listening skills and then speaking skills at length because these two skills are central to learning in all subjects, as both fall under aural/oral skills as reading and writing are both graphic-motor skills.

Listening is the cognitive process whereby we attach meanings to aural signals. It is the active intellectual of decoding, understanding, interpreting and evaluating messages. It is a particular way of communication just as important as the others like speaking, reading, and writing (Wah, 2019). Today's world is changing into a global village and where communication is highly developed, the need to improve our listening power is high. If learners can understand what they hear, they will not have problems speaking. However, if learners do not comprehend the input they receive, which in most South African schools is English first additional language, the learning process simply cannot begin. Listening is a demanding skill, a skill that makes the heaviest processing demands because learners must store information in short-term memory at the same time as they are working to understand the information. This implies that if a learner in the FET phase, Grades 10–12, can understand what they hear, which is English first additional language, they will not have many problems with speaking.



Besides, the mastery of speaking skills in English today is a priority for most foreign language learners. As a result of this, learners often evaluate their success in language learning as well as the effectiveness of their English course based on how much they feel they have improved in their spoken language proficiency (Sayin, 2015). Moreover, communication skills emerge as one of the most important, if not the most important, qualities that employers require of graduates. Possessing good communication skills is often seen by employers as an indicator of potential success. Since this study is about speaking skills, it is crucial to share what defines them. Language is primarily speech. A very large number of languages in the world are only spoken with no written script. Most languages, even with writing scripts, use their spoken forms more often than the written ones. It is an agreed fact that language is learnt by speaking it first after a lot of listening to the sounds, words, phrases and sentences from the surroundings (Anuradha, Raman & Hemamalini, 2014). Speaking is a fundamental skill, and if only the foundation is firm, the edifice built on it will be durable. In the Home Language, children get a very natural opportunity of listening and speaking in their surroundings. Thereafter, they are sent to school to mainly learn reading and writing skills. But, in the case of communication in the classroom, there is a dire need for a paradigm shift in teaching and learning speaking skills through focus deviation towards oral orientation, training the teachers, and developing a suitable curriculum (Hussain, 2017).

Speaking, performed via vocabulary, grammar rules, rhythm and intonation, indicates the students' linguistic competence, pragmatic competence and the ability to use these two kinds of competence quickly and appropriately under some pressure. Most language experts emphasise that speaking skills and listening skills are intertwined (Becker-Mrotzek, 2008). Listening is more difficult than reading because you can have a chance to read the text a few more times, but the person who does not understand what you are saying has no chance of listening again. Genç (2000, p. 101) in Darancik (2018) has expressed his views on speaking ability by thinking together with his speech and understanding ability as follows: "The ability to speak and understand a language is the ability of the student to master certain situations in possible speaking situations and react appropriately with the perception of the cultures of the foreign language he learns as well as his own cultures and his effort to understand. It is the ability to communicate with a communicative approach, a foreign language teaching method, and in an appropriate environment to meet the need for language communication. This ability can only be formed with self and foreign culture, society, etc., and a change of perspective. Communicative competence, with its linguistic competence, achieves language acquisition."

There are some challenges noted that contribute to the challenges encountered when teaching speaking skills to the EFAL in the FET phase. One reason may be that the teaching methods and materials emphasise written language and grammatical correctness as learning goals (Pakula, 2019). Even if the approach is "advertised" as communicative (Communicative Language Teaching), as is the case with the EFAL Grades 10-12 CAPS document, it may be that oral language is rarely used in the classroom, or even if there are interaction activities and simulations, it may be that the type of oral production does not promote learning as defined as a psycholinguistic or sociocultural process (Corbett, 2003). Desai (2018) adds that when the language used for learning is not a language familiar to the pupils, it becomes a barrier to learning. This barrier becomes more impenetrable when the teacher too is not adequately proficient in the language of instruction, thus making the teacher's input even more incomprehensible. In such situations, teachers often resort to using the pupils' Home Languages (which they have in common with the learners) in spoken communication in order to make themselves understood. However, all written communication and formal assessment in such contexts is expected to be in the unfamiliar language, English in this case.

Despite the Language in Education Policy (Department of Education, 1997) in South Africa aiming at redressing the malpractices of the past apartheid education system and giving equal status to 11 languages, parents, including these learners, opt for English EFAL in South African schools. For most learners in these schools, English is a second language (L2), and they are often taught by teachers who are L2 speakers of English themselves. Thus, code-switching has

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become a communication strategy for teachers and their learners as they attempt to express themselves. However, despite a progressive Language in Education Policy, studies indicate that even where teachers feel that they are justified in using code-switching for classroom interaction to scaffold the learning process, they feel that they are breaching not only the official language policy but also what is presented to them as best classroom practice by curriculum specialists or the Department of Basic Education (DBE) (Kretzer, 2019).

The curriculum policy on additive bilingualism in South Africa is based on functional theories and recommends using the Total Physical Response and communicative methods (DBE, 2011:11), which are currently regarded as the most suitable methods. It is advisable for teachers, therefore, to use these methods to develop children's communicative skills and, at the same time, teach concepts that will prepare children to engage with subject matter presented in English in Grade 4 (DBE, 2011:18). It means that children must be exposed to a lot of spoken language for developing listening skills and must be provided with many opportunities to use the language to develop speaking skills (DBE, 2011:10-11). Besides, socially inclusive strategies encourage empowering, progressive and sustainable responses to social challenges and needs (Malebese, 2019). These strategies are made possible through inclusion and equitable consideration of diverse contributions of those affected by the problems and who feel obliged to find solutions to the problems. Using the same strategy, Malebese's (2019) study found that the listening and speaking skills of English first additional language learners improved significantly when a socially inclusive teaching strategy was used. This will in turn, improve learners' chances of doing well in other subjects.

3. IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

This qualitative study involved teachers in the FET phase in South Africa, that is, 6 Grades 10-12 EFAL teachers. Telephonic interviews were conducted to collect data. The researcher believed that this number of respondents would make it possible for them to provide rich data. A small number of respondents characterises qualitative research. These EFAL teachers were purposively selected from one education district in South Africa and were stationed at three high schools. Before the respondents took part in telephonic interviews, they were informed of the general aims of the study: To explore the challenges to teaching speaking skills in EFAL classrooms in the FET phase in South Africa and to identify solutions to the challenges to teaching speaking skills in an EFAL classroom in the FET phase in South Africa.

The participants were referred to as either A to F to ascertain anonymity and confidentiality. In the telephonic interview session, the motivation that kick-started the session was the enquiries that were based on the subject matter devised from the aims of this qualitative study. During that time, the researcher audio-recorded and wrote some notes. As the interviews progressed, the researcher was able to comprehend the interpretation behind the analysis and views articulated by the participants. The qualitative data for this study were analysed using the content analysis method, which reduced the volume of information and identified significant patterns. The researcher analysed the participants' responses to the telephonic interview questions closely, finding links and similarities in the responses and coded them appropriately. Then, the researcher abridged and positioned the results into themes. In this research, the course of categorising and theme formulation was pursued by a grouping of themes entrenched in the aims of the study and telephonic interview questions that were used to gather data.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

The results of this study were divided into two themes: Challenges to teaching speaking skills in EFAL classrooms in the FET phase in South Africa and solutions to the challenges to teaching speaking skills in EFAL classrooms in the FET phase in South Africa.



Challenges to teaching speaking skills in EFAL classrooms in the FET phase

Speaking is an important skill in language learning, but it is a difficult skill to learn or teach. There are several reasons why oral skills are not taught in language classrooms. One of the cited reasons is that if oral production is excluded from tests, EFAL teachers in the FET phase in South Africa might not want to use their precious class time for oral production but instead teach to the test and prioritise other language skills and aspects such as writing and comprehension and visual literacy. This is shared in the following excerpts:

I value reading skills so much, but my priority is teaching other aspects of the subject that include summary writing and essay writing as in longer and shorter transactional texts. B

I am handling a Grade 12 class, and I know Paper 4 constitutes only 12,5 of the whole mark. This implies that I am mainly focused on the aspects that contribute to the bulk of the percentage of the mark. This includes comprehension and essays. D

It is also possible that the teacher feels uncertain about her/his spoken language proficiency and avoids speaking EFAL in class and provides a few opportunities for the learners to practise speaking in class as part of their oral development. Even Desai (2018) reports that this barrier becomes more impenetrable when the teacher too is inadequately proficient in the language of instruction, thus making the teacher's input even more incomprehensible. This resonates with the following assertions:

English is not my Home Language, but I am teaching it to Grades 10 and 11 classes. I am sure you can pretty tell the problems with my ability to speak the English language, which also affects how my learners handle speaking or oral tasks in class. F

The truth is that I am not 100% sure how good I am at English. I am not English thus, my expertise in teaching speaking skills may be lacking. F

Moreover, the EFAL teacher might not be well-informed about the strategies that can be used to teach speaking skills to EFAL learners in the FET phase. Arguably, research about teaching speaking skills mostly focuses on the Foundation Phase, and in line with this claim, the participants stated that:

The challenge I have is that, at university, I hardly remember doing much about how to teach speaking skills to learners in the FET phase. Therefore, apart from what is suggested in the CAPS document, I can't think of any approaches. C

My assumption is that the teaching of speaking skills is more pronounced in the Foundation Phase than in the other phases of learning. That's why those learners have many speaking opportunities to sharpen their speaking skills. Unfortunately, we have some learners in the FET phase who could have missed that rich foundational content in their early grades. A

The same applies to students, who may be afraid of making mistakes and being criticised. They will be lacking confidence in oral communication. Being active participants who are in dialogue with the subject under discussion can only happen if learners have basic knowledge of the language used, which is not the case in the South African context. The situation can be worsened if their teachers are not proficient enough to assist in honing their learners' skills as O'Hallaron, Palincsar and Schleppegrell (2015) maintained that teachers are responsible for helping learners acquire critical language awareness while learners are expected to understand the text as active participants. The participants had this to say:

Often, when learners are doing their formal oral tasks, they hardly volunteer to ascend the stage and make their presentations. They don't have confidence in their speaking abilities. F

I think most of the learners know that their vocabulary is not as expected of a Grade 11 learner in an EFAL setting. Therefore, presenting a prepared speech before a class becomes a mere reading activity as they are in doubt about their speaking skills. E

Another challenge is that the use of learners' Home Languages has been systematically prevented in most EFAL contexts in the FET phase in South Africa, based upon the premise that the classroom should reproduce the target language context, English, so learners ultimately learn to communicate in that context (Yuzlu & Dikilitas, 2022). Similarly, as reported by Shinga and Pillay (2021), these learners opt for EFAL in South African schools, and for most learners in these

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schools, English is a second language (L2), and they are often taught by teachers who are L2 speakers of English themselves. This finding is summed up as thus:

Although I know that my learners struggle to speak English, I always encourage them to use it more often and use their Home Languages occasionally when they can't find a certain word's equivalence. B

I think I have failed to ensure that my learners stick to English when they are orally presenting something to the classroom. The use of their Home Languages just happens naturally like they think in their Home Language and the spoken word is in English but diluted with the vernacular. C

The use of the Home Languages outside and inside of the classroom can't be avoided because EFAL learners use codeswitching as an escape route when they run out of vocabulary to explain or describe something in class. A

The Department of Education suggests a lot of time for oral communication in the English home language, compared to EFAL, Grades 10-12 (Maseko, 2016). It is almost double the time suggested for EFAL. Ironically, the EFAL curriculum states that learners should have a great deal of exposure, oral communication, to the target language and that they should get as many opportunities as possible to practise the language. However, limitations in tuition time for EFAL in the FET phase imply the internal inconsistencies of the CAPS for English. These learners need more practice time to perfect their speaking skills. Similarly, the participants indicated that:

The way I teach EFAL to my Grades 10-12 classes is determined by the official policy, CAPS. I don't teach outside of the curriculum. I know that not much time has been allocated to develop the learners' speaking skills, perhaps because the oral mark doesn't contribute a lot to the final mark. D

Although the time allocated for oral communication and speaking skills is inadequate, I just accept it as it is. I would have loved more time allocated to teaching speaking skills, thus giving learners more interactive activities so that they become proficient speakers and users of the English Language. C

The teaching of speaking skills is also hampered by a lack of resources, which minimise learners' limited exposure to English in an EFAL context in the FET phase. Resources in teaching and learning can be either physical or non-physical. Combined, the resources may include classrooms, textbooks and technological gadgets to mention a few. The participants expressed that:

For learners' speaking skills to match their grades, they need to have reading materials, such as dictionaries, which help them master the pronunciation of words. Unfortunately, the learners hardly use a dictionary because they maintain that pronunciation and fluency are not examinable, except when they are making a formal oral presentation, which could be out of 10 marks only in total. D

Learners need exposure to how the English words are pronounced, and sadly, most of them don't even have electronic dictionaries on their phones for easier reference. Moreover, we don't advise learners to bring their phones to school or use them in class because they can be a huge distraction. A

If children do not comprehend, they might not be able to communicate in English. Children who cannot communicate often cannot read and write efficiently because speaking must develop before reading. They might also not be in a position to decode the language of English textbooks and experience learning challenges in Grade 4 onwards (Lenyai, 2011). To echo this point, the participants claimed that:

When a learner fails to understand a topic or subject under discussion, obviously, they will struggle to share some verbally concerning the matter. Learners prefer speaking about a familiar topic. This calls for learners to be wide readers to widen their understanding of most subjects under discussion in an EFAL setting. B



Many times, when I choose a topic for a learner for an oral presentation, and the learner has no clue what the matter is about, either the learner will say something off-topic or remain quiet. F

Solutions to challenges to teaching speaking skills in an EFAL classroom in the FET phase

There are a couple of solutions suggested in this study which can help minimise the challenges to teaching speaking skills in an EFAL classroom in the FET phase. One of them is the standpoint that teachers must have the skills to promote oral communication, speaking skills, in particular, if they are to develop children who are competent in EFAL (Lenyai, 2011). The point of departure here is that in order to promote speaking skills in EFAL in the FET phase in South Africa, the teachers involved need to be conscious of the theories, approaches and methods that explain how to teach speaking skills to learners who are not only in the Foundation Phase, but also those learners who are in their later years in high school in an EFAL setting. It is vital that EFAL teachers in the FET know the correct linguistic inputs to make when teaching speaking skills in EFAL in the FET phase. The participants reported that:

Teachers should be trained how to teach speaking skills in a additional language classroom. The danger of a lack of knowledge in this regard, that is could lead to teachers' choice of inappropriate content and the use of unsuitable teaching approaches. B

I suggest all language teachers should be exposed to approaches to teaching speaking skills while still at university. If exposed to these approaches, they are unlikely to ignore and never attempt to teaching speaking skills to these learners who badly need to improve on their communication skills, as each language is primarily for communication. C

Another solution is to ensure that all the schools offering EFAL in the FET phase are well-resourced. It is a reality that the teachers teaching these learners are qualified to teach English, hence the assumption that that their content mastery is debatably not in question. However, this study has revealed that subject knowledge alone is not enough to ensure effective teaching and learning of speaking skills in EFAL in the FET phase, or to improve learner performance in the absence of resources. For example, textbooks, which are crucial if effective teaching and learning are to take place, should be informative about how to handle speaking skills in an EFAL in the FET phase. Similarly, Participant E shared that:

The current scenario is that, arguably, mainly the textbooks for the learners in the Foundation Phase in South Africa are detailed about how to teach speaking skills among the learners in the phase. Instead, all learners, regardless of their phase, should be exposed to speaking skills so that they can speak English with the facility. E

Moreover, English is a preferred language of teaching and learning in South Africa, as in most of the African states. This compels the teachers of other subjects to integrate English into their subjects through the notion of English across the curriculum, as raised by Neeta and Klu (2013). However, I believe that not all teachers are language teachers. The teachers of the other subjects can hone the learners wrongly. Rather, I prefer teachers to take a leading role in moulding the learners' linguistic capabilities to the other subject teachers since, arguably, they are better placed to know what is needed in English as a subject, their area of speciality. Even Maseko (2016) bemoaned that some teachers, particularly those who do not fully understand what it means to be an EFAL language teacher, spend a lot of time trying to perfect their pronunciation or performing other cosmetic changes so that they sound native, instead of developing their language knowledge. One participant had this to say:

I propose that all the EFAL teachers in the FET phase take a leading role in modelling fluency and pronunciation, instead of putting aside their responsibilities and let their learners master as they learners across the curriculum. A

Besides, in this technological era, the use of WhatsApp and YouTube can enhance learners' speaking skills. Regarding the WhatsApp platform, apart from promoting good learner-teacher relationships and a positive classroom environment (Herskovitz, Abu Elhija & Zedan, 2019), it is a widely used social networking tool that makes it possible for users to exchange texts, images, audio, videos, documents, and voice calls; therefore, learners' speaking skills improve

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indirectly (Maja, 2023). Besides, Bonk (2009) highlighted an interesting side of YouTube, which, as a social medium, contributes to worldwide education. It also facilitates the development of speaking, listening, reading, and writing abilities, boosts vocabulary, and allows for engagement in a real-world setting (Nofrika, 2019). Learners pick up verbal and non-verbal cues that improve their language proficiency by observing speakers' interactions. Correspondingly, one participant shared the following:

I know that YouTube has real examples of everyday usage of English where the teacher can show movie clippings and facilitate dialogue, asking learners to narrate the story and complete worksheets from the watched movies. This can work so well when teaching young learners in the lower grades. D

Another way to minimise the challenges to teaching speaking skills in an EFAL classroom in the FET phase is to use the communicative approach. Simply, the communicative approach implies that teaching and learning is learner-centred, not teacher-centred (DBE, 2011). For example, in an EFAL classroom in the FET phase, the teacher may elicit the meaning of a narrative and then nominate five learners to speak. The first learner will then respond, and this is followed by other learner's responses before the teacher's feedback. This shows that the learners' speaking turns are not controlled by the teacher in an EFAL classroom in the FET phase, and such a teaching strategy is also supported by Ntombela, Ngubane and Govender (2020). It is advisable for EFAL teachers in the FET phase, therefore, to use the communicative method to develop the learners' communicative skills and, at the same time, teach concepts that will prepare children to engage with the subject matter presented in English in the FET phase. One participant shared the following:

My take is that the learners must be exposed to a lot of spoken language to develop listening skills and must be provided with many opportunities to use the language to develop speaking skills, such as group work or oral class discussions. F

DISCUSSION

The findings revealed that the EFAL learners in the FET phase believe in the equal status of languages, which is why when they are making their oral presentations, they tend to code-switch when they fail to find an English word. However, when they are 'blocked' by their EFAL teachers from using their home languages, they are made to believe that their Home Languages are inferior to the languages of instruction, the English Language. I believe that at this juncture, it is high time that EFAL teachers promote translanguaging during their lessons in schools and make it an everyday practice when honing learners' speaking skills to promote multilingualism and cultural diversity. This linguistic and cultural pluralism in an EFAL in the FET phase will motivate learners as they attempt to sharpen their speaking skills. My take is that if the EFAL teachers in the FET phase enhance translanguaging when teaching speaking skills among the learners, the learners will develop a feeling that no language is considered dominant or superior to others and the original cultures of people involved are not forcibly buried, rather they are given the chance to freely express themselves.

Furthermore, one of the findings is that some learners are not comfortable speaking before their classmates for fear of being ridiculed or labelled. They do not have confidence in their speaking capabilities because they feel that they are still lacking in pronunciation, fluency, and grammar. To counter this, the EFAL teacher in the FET phase must promote a good classroom climate as an ideal aspect of a good EFAL lesson. Even Coetzee, van Niekerk, Wydeman and Mokoena (2016) claimed that a good classroom climate gives learners a sense of belonging to a group; it gives learners a healthy feeling about what it is in a particular teacher's classroom, hence a sense of identity and purpose. Simply, the teacher needs to reprimand those learners who hardly cheer up others but only jeer at others in a bid to dampen their zeal to share their ideas orally. Since the preceding challenge is about EFAL who lack confidence in expressing themselves through the spoken word in front of their classmates, another solution to this could lie in the promotion of



cooperative learning. This is supported by Malebese (2019), who reported that socially inclusive strategies encourage empowering, progressive and sustainable responses to social challenges and needs. These strategies are made possible through inclusion and equitable consideration of diverse contributions of those affected by the problems and who feel obliged to find solutions to the problems. Even Louw and Du Toit (2010) hinted that cooperative learning is healthy as each member of the group is dependent on the other members to accomplish a specific task or assignment. For example, in an EFAL in the FET phase, the teacher may give the learners a formal group task in place of individual prepared or unprepared speeches. I believe that with the various levels of competency and individual strengths among the learners, EFAL learners in the FET can teach each other new content and hone their speaking skills without fear of being criticised, thus enabling academic success.

The study has revealed a need to prioritise diversity in the classroom. In an EFAL classroom in the FET phase, the learners' performance differs. This augurs well with the findings by Wei (2017) who state that diversity means many human facets, including personality, aptitude and even mono- and multicultural contexts. In South Africa, this cultural and linguistic diversity is reflected nowhere more vividly than in our schools; the relationship between language and culture is unambiguous because cultural factors influence language use, but language also influences culture Zano (2020a; Zano 2020b; Zano, 2020c; Zano, 2020d). I state that since this study is about teaching speaking skills to EFAL learners in the FET phase, the EFAL teacher needs to provide EFAL learners with the platform to create equal educational opportunities for all learners, including those who are battling to make their oral presentations because of their poor linguistic backgrounds.

Lastly, learning is a process, not an event. This implies that although the EFAL learners in the FET phase were exposed to speaking opportunities in the early grades, they still had more exposure so that they eventually became proficient users of English. Thus, incentives like positive motivation and feedback enhance learners' willingness to participate in oral tasks. Feedback has also been highlighted earlier as one of the push factors for assessment in an EFAL lesson. It becomes important that EFAL teachers avoid using disparaging remarks when a learner fails to articulate themselves to their expectations. Even a simple remark such as 'good' or 'well-trying' makes a huge difference in an EFAL learner's attitude towards the subject or activity. The CAPS recommends teaching oral language (listening and speaking) as a foundation of developing early graders' emergent literacy in their additional language (DBE, 211:12).

Oral language is the foundation of learning a language usually acquired in a child's HL and 'consists of phonology, grammar (syntactic), morphology, vocabulary, semantics, discourse and pragmatics' (Crawford-Brooke, 2013:1; Bertram & Kimathi, 2020). The school curriculum further states that the teaching, learning and assessment of EFAL are grounded in a communicative approach. According to this approach, language acquisition is a slow, holistic process that is mostly acquired informally. In teaching, language is assumed to be a tool to understand a specific message. This means that formal teaching of grammar structures is not enough for learners to develop, practise and perfect EFAL skills. Children need to hear the language, make sense of what they hear from the teacher and interact with the environment prior to speaking the additional language to absorb the grammar and vocabulary (DBE, 2011:10).

5. CONCLUSION

In South Africa, schools and classrooms are the only places where many learners EFAL learners in the FET phase have a chance to participate in EFAL events and activities, such as speaking, and writing. Therefore, learners need exposure to the strategies that may assist them in facing the challenges of EFAL in the FET phase, as well as to develop the speaking skills that are required to succeed in school and to confidently participate in any activities beyond the classroom, especially in the world of work. There is a need for the use of a multi-layered and transformative approach to teaching and learning speaking skills, and where possible, it should be socially inclusive to cater for the learners' diverse linguistic capabilities. Inclusivity helps integrate the

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participants' diverse knowledge and skills as components of envisioned mechanisms for addressing the challenges posed by speaking as an aspect of teaching and learning in an EFAL classroom in the FET phase. This study calls for the EFAL in the FET phase to embrace the communicative approach because it values the learners' input. However, the current scenario is that most of the lessons are teacher-centred, and understandably so because this examination-focused perspective forces teachers to focus on examination-related tasks and ignore other English language skills, which may promote proper EFAL development in the FET phase, such as speaking and reading. Moreover, although other English language practices are common in South Africa, most EFAL teachers in the FET phase receive no training on techniques for tackling speaking as a skill in EFAL settings. In South Africa, in the FET phase, as in many contexts of language teaching, more knowledge is needed about how to prepare EFAL teachers in the FET phase to best serve their learners in managing oral tasks, including how to incorporate new understandings of speaking skills into instruction and assessment practices

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