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A socially inclusive teaching strategy: A liberating pedagogy for responding to English literacy problems

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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. In this paper, the principles of a free attitude interview technique as well as the critical discourse analysis are used to generate and analyse data. A participatory action research-oriented, socially inclusive teaching strategy was followed that is underpinned by critical emancipatory research principles. The study found that the listening and speaking skills of English first additional language learners improved significantly. This paper demonstrates how a socially inclusive teaching strategy can contribute to strengthening the teaching of listening and speaking skills in English first additional language, to Grade Four learners at a public farm school. Learners' inability to listen attentively and speak fluently requires the application of an adequately responsive teaching strategy that focuses on improving learners' listening and speaking skills in early stages of learning. The purpose of implementing the strategy is to contribute towards improving learners' listening and speaking capabilities. This will in turn improve learners' chances of doing well in other subjects.

Keywords: English first additional language; listening and speaking skills; socially inclusive teaching strategy; teaching and learning

Introduction

In the Republic of South Africa, English as a first additional language (EFAL) is introduced in the intermediate phase in Grade Four, from whence it serves as the language of learning and teaching. The problems associated with transition from home language(s) to the second language, the language of learning and teaching, as in this case, is not unique to South Africa. The literature records similar instances, such as in Zambia, Mali, Sweden and Australia (Ball, 2011:17; Sawir, 2005:568), that the immediate introduction of English as a language of teaching and learning creates a bottleneck in the teaching and learning. As from the beginning of intermediate phase, which in this case is a Grade Four class, learners are expected to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of EFAL, both as a school subject and as a language of communication. This is exacerbated by the emergence and rapid growth of socio-economic practices that shifted towards inclusivity, systemic thinking, and sustainability (Sterling, 2001:1). As a result, working through multidisciplinary collaborations, partnerships, and networks is inevitable. Common language therefore serves to unify those involved in such arrangements; however, learning of the much-desired common language comes at a cost.

Many schools and institutions internationally also find learners' inability to use their second language effectively in communicating and assessing knowledge to be a big problem if the development of their home language is insufficient (Ball, 2011:2,17; Phasha, McLure & Magano, 2012:320). Therefore, their ability to collect and synthesise information, construct knowledge, solve problems and express ideas and views in English is paramount. In essence, EFAL is offered as a means of communication to learners whose mother tongues are languages other than English (Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa, 2014:8; Taylor, 2016:11). The challenges facing learners, which are traceable to this transition, are immense and may not be limited to learners' inability to listen to and discriminate between sounds. This challenge leads to a further problem, namely that of being unable to pronounce words correctly and speak fluently. This problem is serious, because it has adverse implications for learning, listening and speaking skills, which are the foundation of reading and writing development, and which learners should acquire as a fundamental skill.

In this study, the problem manifested in a very low percentage of Sesotho-speaking learners being able to adapt fully to a second language (EFAL), as was the case in many similar studies across the globe (Ball, 2011), leading to a high failure rate and creating a bottleneck in subsequent levels, like a Grade Four class (Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa, 2014:20; Kirby, Griffiths & Smith, 2014:108; Scharer, 2012:2). This problem is complex and warrants the use of a multi-layered and transformative approach to teaching and learning a second language (EFAL), i.e., the use of a strategy that is underpinned by the principles of inclusivity, systemic thinking, sustainability and complexity (Sterling, 2001:1), namely a socially inclusive teaching strategy (SITS). This paper therefore demonstrates how applying SITS may strengthen the teaching and learning of listening and speaking skills in EFAL, and afford opportunities for developing practical and meaningfully responsive interventions to improve listening and speaking skills in EFAL. SITS integrates participants' diverse knowledge and skills as components of envisioned mechanisms for addressing the challenges posed by listening and speaking.

With SITS, critical discourse analysis (Van Dijk, 2009) is used to make sense of participants' discourses, tracing them from textual, through cognitive, to social structure levels. Doing so helps unravel the sociocultural realities of learning in relation to listening and speaking skills. The inherently messy data that is generated is organised into constructs by applying and enabling the principles of the free attitude interview technique. This technique is coupled with iterative and reflective participatory action research-oriented engagements by participants. Finally, the operationalisation of SITS is strengthened through the adoption and application of the principles of critical emancipatory research (CER), namely hope, equity, and social justice, for learners as well as the community. The significance of such an operationalisation is resident in the ability and need to level off ideological and power differential realities inherent in the principles of CER.

The Problem

Grade Four learners are perceived as being unable to listen attentively and speak fluently in English. This problem manifested itself in learners frequently making and continuing to make mistakes when they spelled and pronounced English words (Kirby et al., 2014:109). The influence of their home language – in this case, Sesotho – is arguably blamed for this difficulty. In this paper, listening is not limited to spoken words and language. It includes the ability to understand and make sense of words, statements and sentences, whether spoken or written. In the same vein, speaking is not limited to spoken (verbal) language but includes and extends to written communication. For instance, we may not say that a person reading a book silently is not pronouncing the text (words) he or she is reading. However, this paper acknowledges the importance of saying aloud the words that are being read, as that helps improve the actual pronunciation and fluency. This paper further argues that there are distractors to learning to listen attentively and to pronouncing words fluently, other than the home language, if it is indeed a genuine distractor in this case.

The inability to listen attentively and to pronounce words fluently has adverse implications for learning other subjects that are taught through the medium of English as the language of learning and teaching (Scharer, 2012:2). The subjects affected by these phenomena in Grade Four are Numeracy/Mathematics, Natural Science and Technology. Thus, responding to how to use a socially inclusive teaching strategy to help learners improve their listening and speaking capabilities, the paper provides a theoretical and conceptual basis on which the acts and concepts of listening and speaking skills can be conceived.

Socially Inclusive Teaching Strategy

SITS is couched in CER as a theoretical framework. Thus, SITS is inherently and insistently reflective in its conceptualisation and operationalisation, in this case, the teaching of listening and speaking skills. The conceptualisation and operationalisation of SITS are guided by the analytical, interpretive and educative steps of CER (Tracey & Morrow, 2012:112). These steps inform the processes of design and implementation of SITS for listening and speaking EFAL. SITS is conscious and considerate of inherent powerful differential realities, and draws strength from this to ensure the accommodation of and enriching the diverse backgrounds and experiences of participants. Thus, SITS guides the participants' communicative actions and practices, from conceptual analytical, through interpretive, to educative stages of problem-solving-directed engagements. The appropriateness of SITS as couched in CER, is resident in, among others, the complementarity of both SITS and the epistemological and ontological stances of CER. The fact that SITS, as is the case with CER, thematises issues of power, and leans towards the emancipation of oppressed and subjugated groups (Nkoane, 2014:699), tends to augment the need to accommodate the diverse backgrounds and knowledge of the co-researchers in the design of mechanisms to respond to the research question. Furthermore, SITS subscribes to the advancement of principles and values of social justice, namely respect, equity, freedom, peace, and hope (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2010:142–143).

Through the critical analytical phase, the co-researchers engage and interrogate text in order to derive meanings through a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis to strategise the priorities, activities and responsibilities involved in gearing the intervention process. The reason for the critical analytical phase is to facilitate and ease interpretation of the same text in other contexts, thereby synthesising the interpretations into the most logical, evidence-based, educative and meaningful higher-order meanings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:ix-xvi; Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000:9). By doing so, equal and equitable consideration is given to the voices of all participants and, consequently, the co-researchers, who include marginalised and dominated groups, such as the learners. SITS advocates for inclusion and empowerment of subjugated and marginalised groups. The notion that is developed is that solutions for enhancing the teaching of listening skills requires intervention; and that the total physical response (TPR) approach is best suited for this task.

Total Physical Response

The TPR is a language teaching method that is based

on the principle of coordination of language and physical movement (Ashes, 1966:79; De Lima Botelho, 2003; Holleny, 2012) with the purpose of ensuring that the listener understands and knows the speaker's intentions about the object of his/her communication. Language refers to verbal (textual and spoken) and non-verbal (gestures/cues) communication, while physical movement refers to the resultant corresponding and/or even alternative actions (concrete and/or cognitive). Nadel, Samsonovich, Ryan and Moscovitch (2000) regarded this as the information that is encoded into cognitive units, the strength of which increases with practice. Thus, the ontological stance (Mertens, 2001), of the TPR of coordination of language and physical movement facilitates the understanding that effective communication (speaking fluently and listening with understanding) eases knowledge development through teaching and learning (of EFAL in this case). Holleny (2012) evinced that the TPR enhances language development in young children through the interactions that combine both their verbal and physical aspects. In the same vein, Johnson (2017) averred that the TPR has been widely used to address listening- and speaking-related challenges of second language users. It is for these reasons that TPR was considered as a conceptual theory to facilitate comprehension of English (EFAL) literacy challenges and the possible responses. For the purpose of this study, the TPR learners' metacognitive functioning was strengthened through repetitive practice while learners fulfil the primary roles of listeners and performers. Learners listened attentively, responded physically to commands given by the instructor, and were required to respond both individually and collectively.

Related Literature

The improved teaching process was attained through the use of various strategies to help develop learners' listening and speaking skills, including engaging them in a reflective conversation about their own writing, and encouraging self-talk when they attempted reading and writing. In doing so, their teaching and learning capacities are strengthened, and all stakeholders involved can collaborate to achieve their full potential, which means that teachers not only meet delineated teaching standards, but also provide learners with the time and support they need to grow into skilful listeners and fluent speakers. Listening and speaking skills enable learners to describe the word and their world (Freire & Macedo, 1987:157), make sense of life's experiences, and get things done. If children hear English spoken around them, they will learn to discriminate among those sounds that affect meaning as a tool for thinking – collectively and alone – through phonemic awareness.

A phoneme is one of the units of sound that distinguishes one word from another in a particular language (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013:17-19; Hillman & Williams, 2015:3; Rogers, 2013:3). Therefore, recognising printed words depends on the ability to map speech sounds to letter symbols and recognise letter sequences accurately. Phonemes differ from one another, and substituting phonemes give different words. For instance, exchanging the phoneme /l/ for the phoneme /s/ changes the word *kill* to *kiss*. Haynes (2008:1) postulated that an important role of the teacher is helping and guiding learners to hear and distinguish sound and helping them see the correspondence between the sounds (phonemes) and their written forms (graphemes). At this stage, Grade Four learners come across a variety of words, therefore, they exercise their knowledge of rhymes and letter sounds in words to recognise the words. They do this to compare and bring about different words by matching them to common letter-sound patterns in already-known words. Teaching by scaffolding, involves children in listening and speaking and moving from simple to complex learning material (Myhill, Jones & Hopper, 2006:7-8; Richards & Rogers, 2014:5). Mainly reciting letters and sounds, enables learners to memorise simple dialogue that is used daily, which is useful for a casual conversation.

Using both the structured and unstructured curriculum, together with a variety of formal and informal teaching methods, is an effective way of teaching grammar and usage (Dada, Dipholo, Hoadley, Khembo, Muller & Volmink, 2009:1-2). Using games and social activities, with enough time allocated to prepare the ground for the intended learning focus to become a skill, creates a conducive and sustained learning environment. In this regard, holistic, interactive and collaborative teaching of listening through storytelling, music, sound, vocabulary and phrases promote listening and speaking skills (Karten, 2013:46). This collaborative teaching improves fluency of speech and promotes using words to form sentences and patterns of sentences. Moreover, the use of questioning makes each activity interactive, thereby making learners feel valued and empowered. This type of collaborative teaching in this context has been referred to as SITS.

SITS is a component of a balanced and efficient English literacy teaching method that is driven by an effective learner assessment and which differentiates instructions by level, and interest is supplied by various experts with various expertise from various backgrounds (Karten, 2013:47; Malebese, 2016:73). This teaching strategy uses a step-by-step approach, teaching in small bites, with much practice and repetition in reinforcing abstract concepts with concrete examples. SITS ensures that the subtle skills of active listening and reasoned

speaking develop simply through children's involvement in whole-class and small-group dialogue through hands-on practice (Karten, 2013:47). These skills are all exercised with consideration of the principles of solidarity, creativity, critical thinking, deeper, active participation and cooperation, promotion of unity and emancipation for all, marginalisation of individualistic tendencies, and instilling values for community building. Promotion of these principles will lead to equity, equality, social justice, freedom, peace, hope and fairness (Nkoane, 2014:699).

SITS also involves stakeholders who possess diverse expertise, and who use a variety of teaching approaches to interact collectively and situate academic study in the immediate context of learners, and in the larger context of society (Freire, 1970:109). Mahlomaholo (2014:2) and Malebese (2016:80–81) revised Freire's ideas about how SITS can be used to ease transition and promote a conducive and sustainable learning environment that requires learners and teachers to talk to one another about real-life situations, and in which language serves the purpose of communicating real ideas and solutions to real-life problems. Thus, through democratic dialogue in the classroom, a curriculum situated in the learners' reality, participatory teaching formats and critical literacy, SITS demonstrates the use of generative themes and words (Freire, 1973:48–138; Freire & Macedo, 1987:157). The next section briefly explores the relevance of the research method and the design guiding this study.

Methodology

This was a unique case of a one-teacher public primary farm school, where the only teacher is responsible for management and leadership of the school, as well as the actual teaching of six subjects per grade in Grades Four, Five and Six, over and above the subjects she had to teach in Grades One, Two and Three. In this school, community members had little or no role to play in support of the teaching of listening and speaking skills in particular. This posed a serious challenge and threat in respect of the task on time issues, when the teacher was absent from duty due to personal reasons and work-related matters. Evidently, the state of affairs at this school demanded unique and compatible approaches that were well-synergised and sufficiently coordinated (Thomson, Hall & Jones, 2013).

In an attempt to respond to the question posed in this paper, and in pursuance of the need for deeper understanding of the context, I advisedly worked with a team of relevant and willing persons from the community where the school was situated (Burnes & Cooke, 2013:411; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). The team comprised of the teacher, two unemployed young persons who had just completed their matric, as well as a representative of the owner of the farm.

These team members gave their consent to participate, following my engagement with them, during which I disclosed ethical issues and considerations. These included that their participation was voluntary, the information they provide would not be used for any other purposes but the study, that they might withdraw their participation at any time they felt to do so (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004:213). Our collaborative participation in the study was clarified further when we shared the labour among ourselves. We clarified our roles in the study and aligned them with our respective interests, capabilities and knowledge.

We aligned our efforts and support to the teaching of listening and speaking to the day-to-day running of the teaching and learning programme. We served as teacher aides. My main function was to coordinate the study and keep records of data generated, as well as analysing data which I subsequently confirmed with the team. We interrogated our activities and actions during our iterative critical reflective sessions (Foster, 2005:8; Kassam & Tettey, 2003:156; Kindon & Elwood, 2009:20), which took place after school and sometimes immediately after the lesson or teaching and learning activity. In view of the fact that our data was qualitative, and based on the observations as expressed by our respective views, the critical discourse analysis of Van Dijk (2009:256) was employed to analyse the data. In order to follow issues and realities through to their logical conclusion, we used the principles of free the attitude interview technique (Meulenberg-Buskens, 1996) to seek clarity, to ask follow-up questions, and to summarise our joint contributions. We were relatively robust in our engagements, and sought logical arguments that were supported by convincing evidence.

Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

The data were organised into two constructs (Mukwambo, Ngcoza & Chikunda, 2015), namely the teaching of listening and the teaching of speaking of EFAL to learners in the transitioning phase, namely the Grade Four learners in this case. For each of these constructs, we developed and identified priorities as we subjected data from our engagements through the critical discourse analysis technique:

Teaching of Listening of EFAL to Learners in the Transitioning Grade

Listening involves an active process of deciphering and constructing meaning from both verbal (spoken and written) and non-verbal messages (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011; Rost, 2013). It is critical to note that deciphering and constructing meaning may be sensual and/or as they invoke the listener's cognitive domains. Listening simultaneously engenders the listener's comprehension of meanings of words in

specific contexts, as well as ‘mastering’ of pronunciation, while enriching vocabulary and grammar. We identified words that we often pronounced the same as second language users, and those that may carry different meanings that is the same word with different meanings in different contexts. The words were identified from the Grade Four EFAL learners’ reading books and/or equivalent reading material.

Teaching of Listening through Narration

We afforded the learners an opportunity to listen first as one of us (coordinating team members) narrated a story or read from the paragraph. The learners were to listen and identify the words and their meanings in the contexts of their respective sentences. The learners’ identification of these words was solely based on the pronunciation of the reader. The teacher read the following sentences, and asked learners to listen attentively:

Sello orders his younger brother to fill a mug with hot water. The water is boiled in a pot on a fireplace outside the hut. The water spills over on to his right foot. Sello’s brother cries aloud as he feels the burning pain ...

The following conversation ensued from the learners’ listening to the reading of the above statements:

Ntswaki: Nna, I can hear ‘orders.’

Teacher: Good, what is the meaning of ‘orders’ in this case, Ntswaki?

Seutloali [laughingly, gave his view]: the food we order at our farm restaurant ...!

Ntswaki [contested]: What ‘foot’ wena [you], Seutloali? You heard ‘mos’ water burnt the ‘foot’ of Sello’s brother!

Kgalema [interjected]: Hei lona [hey you], ‘food’ is not ‘foot’. We eat food [showing with the hand to his mouth] and stand on a ‘foot’ [pointing on his right foot].

Mosiua [rebuking Kgalema]: ... it is not good to address others as if they do not have names Kgalema ... Mam [continues his response], I heard you say hut or hat am not sure ... what is it?

It is evident from the conversation above that learners were generally listening attentively, more so that four out of the six learners in Grade Four participated actively in the discussion thus far. The remaining two learners were also observed as having participated because they also nodded and/or shook their heads in agreement or disagreement with their peers. The difficulties with which they conversed in the conversation depict the following noteworthy realities: the realisation that learners may have understood and/or known the meanings of words like ‘order(s),’ ‘food,’ ‘foot’ and ‘hut.’

It was also apparent that their understanding of the meanings of these words were context-based. For instance, Mukwambo et al. (2015) assert that the concept ‘order’ was rightly understood as ‘an order of items (food) purchased at the restaurant’ by Seutloali, in which case the context appeared to have

been economic or buying and selling of goods and/or services. The teacher, supported by the team members, persuaded learners to listen to the sentence repeatedly so as to establish if the meaning given by Seutloali was indeed correct. The agreement was that the meaning of ‘orders’ was not correct in the context of the sentence given. The learners navigated their way through to the alternative words (synonyms) for the word ‘orders,’ and ‘ask’ and ‘tell’ were suggested by Mpuse and Sehloho, respectively.

Our iterative critical reflection sessions considered the quality of lessons (strengths and weaknesses), and sought to find the best possible remedial actions and to confirm our previous and current observations, and content of our engagements. Thus, we established that it was incomprehensible to divorce learners’ contribution towards understanding and suggesting the meanings of the concept ‘order’ from their thinking (cognitive) domains. This view may be supported by critical considerations of Mosiuoa’s question “What is it?,” referring to the ‘hut.’ Upon follow-up of the issue, the team did not respond to Mosiuoa’s question, but asked him what came to his mind when the word ‘hut’ was read out? Mosiuoa then said: “I became confused because I could only think about ‘*pelo* [heart].” The teacher further asked to establish how he knew and associated the word ‘hut’ with *pelo* [heart]. Before he could answer, Ntswaki sang a song from Sunday school: “my heart is full and running over.” It thus became clearer and a ‘pleasant surprise’ to the two teacher aides, who were team members, that by listening, the listener’s mind is triggered or activated.

This is clear from the following remarks. Thuso confided: “I never thought listening was this critical to learning.” Nkhopotse, the second teacher aide also exclaimed: “so it means by coming to read to learners, I will be contributing to their learning!” In the same vein, the EFAL teacher regretted that “I have contributed to ... [paused; and continued in awe!] this means I also contributed to the production of learners who could not listen and therefore read!”

This information and data further elucidated the emergent discursive practice and social structure, namely the production of ‘learners who could not listen’ attentively, and because of which they could not read. The data also suggest that even the members of the team learned from the socially inclusive teaching strategy. In particular, the support given by Ellain, a first language English user and representative of the property owner, who was a team member during the reflective session, helped pronounce the words such that one could hear (identify) the differences between them. For instance, by listening to the correct articulation of the words ‘hut,’ ‘hard’ and ‘heart,’ learners and the team members alike, were able to differentiate between them, and as such, spell them correctly.

Thus, we found that listening solicits actions (concrete and abstract) that confirm what Yavuz, Degirmenci, Akyuz, Yılmaz and Celik (2015) aptly considered as reciprocal skills. In this case, the listeners' acts of differentiation of sounds that were more of mental constructs and therefore abstract, as well as their practical spelling of words, the concrete aspect, were noteworthy. Evidently, listening could not be completely divorced from speaking, or spoken words and sounds that are to be listened to.

Teaching of Listening Through Play

The Grade Four learners' contextual realities associated with their developmental stages (Vygotsky, 1978), necessitated the use of play to attract and gain their interest and attention. A game we refer to as *ka lejweng-ka-thupeng* (jumping on the side of the stone and on the side of the stick) was preferred over two similar games from other contexts (urban and affluent), namely the river-bank and the traditional Christmas song. The basis of our decision was learners' familiarity and the lower level of complexity of the game.

The game sponsor, in this case one of the team members, gave the background and moral of the game (story). The purpose was to make learners visualise themselves (individually) entirely dependent on the instruction (verbal and/or non-verbal communication) given to them by another person, who wants to rescue them. The listener was required to react immediately, for his/her safety. The narration is a concise and rich version of the scenario that enables and coerces learners to listen attentively, and virtually find themselves in danger. The narrator continued:

Mohau is in danger! [with a low emphatic tone]. *A stone is about to fall on his head and injure him. I see the stone and I shout, "Stick!"* [or silently with an earnest face with expression of danger, order Mohau to jump over to the side where the stick was lying]. *Mohau jumps without hesitation. I immediately saw another serious danger where Mohau jumped, and I shouted again, "Stone!" Mohau desperately jumped back to where he was before. I saw the stone moving slightly and I shouted again while looking at the stone, "Stick!"*

In the same way as with the initial narration, learners' activities that ensued from this narration ensured their understanding of how the game was played, as well as the communicative messages that were involved. When asked what they would have done if they were in the situation of Mohau, Ntswaki responded anxiously:

I would have acted in the same way as Mohau.

The other four learners also felt the same way, except for Kgalema, who had other view(s). It was interesting to observe the anxiety on learners' faces as one of them enquired:

Sello: Hantle-ntle [actually], *what happened to Mohau in the end?*

Before anyone could give an answer, Sello empathised with Mohau and said:

Kgalema: I pity Mohau. What was he doing in the veld?

This tended to explain Kgalema's view about why he did not 'agree' that he would have acted in the same way as Mohau. He seemed to have been deep in thought about finding more information about what was actually happening, in order for him to find an alternative solution than merely jumping on either side. When asked for further information about his concerns, Kgalema expressed the view that Mohau must have been one of those naughty boys who do not listen when they are told not to play in the veld. He added that the second danger that the narrator saw must have been a dangerous reptile, or something that could kill him. That was amazing to the rest of the team and class, because the narrator did not disclose the second danger. Seutloali, on the other hand, was more concerned about why Mohau was not running away in neither the stick nor the stone directions. The activity climaxed with the team attempting to understand what the learners understood by the words or instructions 'stick and stone.' The richness of their conversation pointed to the realisation that both were essentially statements that ordered Mohau to act in a way he did each time they were said.

Eventually, the team and learners played the game. They placed a stone on one side, and the stick besides it. The learners were to go according to what they heard (the voice), rather than what they saw. The challenge was that both the verbal and non-verbal message(s) would be communicated, indicating the course of action that the listeners were to take. These messages would either be soliciting the same or opposing actions. It was thus important for learners to pay strict attention to the instruction of the game, and act accordingly as they differentiated contradicting messages from the instructor. The person who would act according to the non-verbal against the verbal instruction would lose a mark or a point, and stand aside while the one who would be the last, is declared the winner. The purpose of the game was to train and/or teach learners to listen attentively to the spoken and non-spoken communication and to act accordingly. The learners enjoyed the game(s) so much that they continued with them on their own. The difference that struck our attention was the learners' variations of the game, as well as their awareness that the games were more speaking and listening learning-oriented. For instance, they introduced more than two directions and objects, towards which to jump as a modification of the stone-stick game. The team used these learners' initiatives to develop EFAL learners' activities to teach pronunciation, sentence construction, using the words of their choice (speaking), and listening.

Findings

The findings of this study are discussed as follows under the headings teaching of listening through narration, and teaching of listening through play.

Teaching of Listening through Narration

Listening solicits concrete and abstract or cognitive actions in listeners (learners)

This can be traced from learners' responses to spoken or non-spoken messages. Learners' responses may not be entirely limited to the information they derive from the specific communication at the time. For instance, the word 'order' had different meanings that depended on the different contexts that learners were familiar with.

The actions so solicited are reciprocal to their respective and corresponding messages

Essentially, the resultant action from a given message has the capacity to solicit further communication and/or instruction, depending on whether the action corresponds or is inconsistent with the initial intention. For instance, listeners may be confused, as was the case with the word 'hut,' where the learner confused it with 'heart.' Understandably, the context given by a sentence in which the word is used, helps listeners to differentiate and determine the most probable or exact meaning. In the instances under consideration, further clarity-seeking questions/statements helped to influence the desired action from the listener (learner).

Teaching of Listening through Play

Teaching listening through play promotes learning that extends beyond academic bounds. It motivates learners to learn through and from their peers. It also promotes social and relational skills. In this instance, learners seemed to have learned to respect and value the views expressed by their peers and to accommodate their diverse but creative thinking. For instance, the adaptations that learners made on the games they played pointed to this possibility.

It could not, however, be said that there was no teaching of speaking involved in these cases.

Conclusion

The teaching of listening may not be completely divorced from the teaching of speaking, in the same way as the act of listening may not be divorced from the act of speaking, irrespective of their respective resultant actions. Teaching of both listening and speaking should therefore be considered together, especially in rural settings, where one teacher teaches all subjects, and all grades. Integration of learning content and inclusion of key stakeholders who can contribute to teaching and learning of EFAL are pivotal.

Recommendations

Based on the above findings and conclusion, the study recommends the following: the teaching of listening and speaking of second language users (for example, EFAL), who are taught the second language for the first time in the transitioning phase (Grade Four in South Africa), and whose situation is worsened by limitation of resources, as in the multi-grade, one-teacher school in this case, should consider the following:

- Involve other stakeholders who can support teaching of EFAL with their knowledge and skills.
- Use teaching strategies that are amenable to practical accommodation and inclusive of the learners' contextual and cultural realities. Teaching strategies, such as storytelling (narration), and play, can be very helpful. They should, however, be implemented with circumspection to circumvent their inherent hindrances to teaching and learning.
- Earnestly base their teaching approaches on the tried and tested principle that learning is eased when you teach from the 'concrete (known) to the abstract (unknown).'

Notes

- i. Published under a Creative Commons Attribution Licence.
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