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INTERACTION STRATEGIES USED BY ENGLISH FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE TEACHERS IN THE LIBODE EDUCATION DISTRICT IN SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the classroom interaction strategies used by teachers in their English First Additional Language classrooms in two selected schools in the Libode Education District. Language teaching has come under the spotlight recently due to the role language has in the whole epistemic access debate, especially where it relates to the rural context. The study employed a qualitative approach and a case study design. Six Intermediate Phase teachers were purposefully selected for data collection purposes. Observation was used as a method to collect data. The results showed that most teachers were using interactive strategies that are in line with the traditional approaches to language learning and, as a result, their classrooms were characterised by teacher dominance and learner passiveness. The study also revealed that very few teachers were using effective interactive strategies like group and pair work in their classrooms. The findings further revealed that the interactional strategies used by most teachers in the study inhibited learners' language learning. The paper recommends that English First Additional Language teachers should use more engaging teaching and learning strategies that promote critical thinking, creativity and discovery learning.

Keywords: Classroom interaction, Teacher-centred classroom, Learner-centred classroom, Teacher training, Learning opportunity, First Additional Language.

INTRODUCTION

The introduction of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) and the new curriculum in South Africa influenced how teachers teach (Nomlomo, 2010). This paradigm shift in teaching and learning was characterized by a move away from teacher centered to learner centered classrooms. Also, important was the training of teachers to meet the demands of the new curriculum. According to Sibanda (2017), teacher training is deemed important when a new curriculum is introduced as teachers are, in many ways, the most important educational resource and they determine whether the new curriculum succeeds or not. This sentiment is echoed by Torto (2017) who argues that the implementation of a new curriculum ultimately rests upon adequately prepared teachers, prepared to teach and supported in their work. It is against this background that teachers were at the heart of the implementation of the new curriculum and as such were expected to shift focus from teaching to learning and by creating learning opportunities where the learner changes from being a passive recipient of knowledge into an active participant in learning and co-construction of knowledge (Sibanda, 2017).

However, although learner centered educational practices have been recommended because of the positive impact they have made on student motivation, learning, achievement and understanding, there is still a lack of substantial learner centered change in classrooms which is partially due to the resistance of teachers to learner centered pedagogy (Pang and Sharma in Zeki, 2014).

This finding is supported by Mbagga (2002) who conducted a study on teachers' classroom interaction in Tanzania. The results of his study revealed that the common pattern of classroom interaction was between teacher-student (individual student) and there was very minimal pair/group work except for two lessons out of the six he observed. The results further showed that teachers did most of the classroom activities such as demonstrations, explanations, questioning and in some instances where students could not comprehend the teacher's question, it was the teacher who answered the question. Other studies of teacher discourse indicated that teacher talk was often managerial rather than conversational in nature (Neil, 2015). The above findings are of interest in the South African context where the new National Curriculum Statement (NCS) recommends learner centered classrooms due to their benefits as far as learning is concerned. It is against this background that the current study sought to explore the classroom interaction strategies used by English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers in the Libode Education District of the Eastern Cape. The study emanated from the researchers' curiosity to determine, after twenty-two years of the implementation of OBE in South Africa, if teachers, especially in the rural areas play the role of mediator and facilitator of learning through classroom interaction as stipulated in the new curriculum.

The purpose of this study was to explore the classroom interaction strategies used by EFAL teachers in their classrooms how the interaction strategies impact on the learners' language learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of classroom interaction

Literature on classroom discourse has revealed that teachers play an important role in the classroom. As such, in order for them to successfully fulfil their roles, ESL teachers are required to possess a number of qualities, which include interaction strategies (Nomlomo, 2010). Many scholars have attempted to define classroom interaction and, as a result, there are as many definitions of classroom interaction as there are schools of thought. Mazur (1997) defines classroom interaction as the verbal exchanges between student and teacher. This definition's weakness is that it narrows classroom interaction to teacher-learner rapport. Similarly, Hake (1998) defines classroom interaction as communication between student and teacher. This definition appears to be specific in terms of the essence of the communication process. It is just the teacher communicating with the learners. According to Mazur (1997), this definition is deficient because classroom interaction is not only confined to learner to teacher interaction, but also learner to learner interaction. Chi (2009) defines classroom interaction as a process of passing information from the professional teacher, who has undergone a rigorous training, to the learner. This definition contains elements of the traditional mode of interaction, which bore the assumption that the teacher is the fountain of knowledge and should fill the learners' minds with information. For the purpose of this study, classroom interaction is taken as the communication or rapport between teacher and

learner, learner and learner and learner and content that promotes the learning of English as a second language.

Objectives of classroom interaction

Gosh (2010) postulates that the fundamental objectives of classroom interaction are that, firstly, classroom interaction must aim at helping the learners to identify their own appropriate learning mode. Secondly, the interaction should guide the learners to communicate with their peers easily and give them an exposure to the genres of language learning. Thirdly, classroom interaction should aim at probing into the learners' prior learning abilities and his or her way of conceptualizing facts and ideas (Gosh, 2010). Chisikwa (1999) reiterates that learner-centred teaching enhances classroom interaction. He also adds that teaching and learning of English Second Language occurs because of the interaction between the educator, the learner and the instructional media materials or learning-teaching aids. He concludes by stating that the nature of this interaction determines the educational outcomes. Interaction thus involves joint and collaborative activities involving two or more people, ranging from pair to whole group activities (Zhou and Landa, 2018).

Classroom Interaction Strategies

Classroom interaction is a broad concept and there are several approaches to interaction in the classroom a teacher can encourage and implement. These include, among others, Small Group Interaction and Whole Class Interaction as discussed below. As indicated by Wilkinson and Fung (2002, p. 425), "Grouping and mixing students by ability represent different ways teachers cope with diversity within the classroom".

Small group interaction

Homogenously grouping learners according to ability has the effect of allowing teachers to respond to the specific challenges, different learners face (Wilkinson and Fung, 2002). Ideally, it allows teachers to give proper support to specific learners. This is in line with the sociocognitive perspective of learning that views learning as hugely influenced by cognitive processes (Tierney and Rogers, 1989). Further, socioculturally learning is influenced by interaction and group activities (Vygotsky, 1978). Grouping learners by ability has positive results (Slavin and Karweit, 1985).

Whole class interaction

According to Wilkinson and Fung (2000), while small-group interaction only has a slight advantage over whole-class interaction, it is still a meaningful difference. This indicates that the smaller the groups the better the results as the teacher can pay attention to the specific needs of the different groups. However, specific factors, such as behavior patterns and ethnicity of group members, can affect specific contexts (Wilkinson, 2002). In whole class participation the shy and less confident ones become passive (Mpiti and Marongwe, 2020). However, whole-class interaction comes with some valuable advantages; for example, it allows the bringing to the interaction a wider variety of ideas.

Patterns of classroom interaction

Classroom interaction is a multi-layered phenomenon. There are different patterns of classroom interactions that may be used by the teachers in the teaching and learning process.

These patterns include learner-to-learner, teacher-to-learner, learner-to-teacher, learner-to-content and learner-to-community interactions.

Learner-to-learner interaction

This type of interaction occurs among and between learners. According to Abawi (2008), two learners may be assigned to perform a classroom task, or the teacher may decide to use small groups to enable the learners to interact among themselves. This interaction form is generally intended to promote understanding course content and stimulate critical thinking. Abawi (2008) further points out that collaborative teaching, such as pair work and small groups may reduce feelings of isolation and promotes a sense of a learning community. However, Upton (2011) is of the view that there are disadvantages in using the learner-to-learner medium of instruction. One of the disadvantages he mentioned is that the introvert or quiet learners may be dominated by the extroverts resulting in the former benefiting very little from collaborative tasks and that if the groups are not monitored, the learners may mislead one another during their discussion. However, Upton (2011) is quick to point out that there are advantages linked to learner-to-learner interaction, which are that the learners achieve cognitive development as they interact in the social context. In addition, Hammond (2006) points out that learners become active participants in social context and they construct identities that relate to those groups. Collaborative learning has also proved to have a positive effect on content retention, participation and goal achievement. Collaborative learning can enhance the learning experience (Upton, 2011).

Teacher-to-learner interaction

This classroom interaction pattern gives an allowance for the teacher and the learners to communicate in the classroom. Dale (2002) points out that the teacher directs the verbal exchanges between him and his learners, hence the need for him to develop a positive and friendly classroom climate for meaningful and effective interaction to take place. However, Dale states that the disadvantage associated with the teacher-to-learner interaction is that not all learners may participate. Some learners have a limited attention span and may disengage mentally from classroom discussions. Another disadvantage of teacher-to-learner interaction is that the teacher may be tempted to interact with only participating learners and neglect the shy ones (Dale, 2002). The teacher-to-learner interaction is known to aid the learners' cognitive, social and emotional growth, and enhances their mental well-being (Upton, 2011). The teacher-to-learner interaction pattern largely depends on how the teacher behaves towards the learners. According to Shortfall (1996), the learners may gain confidence and trust if the teacher is good, sociable, intelligent and supportive. Shortfall further states that when the teacher creates a good rapport with the learners, the above stated author impacts productively on their self-esteem and enhances enthusiasm and success.

Learner-to-teacher interaction

The learner-to-teacher interaction pattern is intended to help reinforce learner understanding of course content. Berge (2002) avers that the benefit of learner-to-teacher interaction is that the teacher can give timely feedback. According to Berge, feedback is the exchange of information between the learner and the teacher about an action, event, or process that results in enhanced student learning and that timely feedback has been observed to be an important variable in student learning. Abawi (2008) states that the learner-to-teacher interaction is influenced by the nature of the learners and the attitude of the teacher towards his learners.

He further claims that if the teacher is friendly, the learners may feel free to interact with him. He argues that for learner-to-teacher interaction to be positive, the teacher needs to show sympathy to the learners where it is due, so that the latter may open up and share with the teacher in matters relating to content and the learners' personal problems. As such, individual learners may approach the teacher to discuss their academic progress. In such a scenario, the teacher should show concern towards the learners and render help accordingly (Abawi, 2008).

Learner-to-content interaction

This type of interaction involves the learner and the course content and the content that the learner may interact with may be found in textbooks and on the internet. Berge (2002) contends that the relationship between learner interaction with content and learner success can be hypothesized. Thus, the more resources a learner studies the higher their grades are likely to be. Berge (2002) posits that the relationship between learner and content is not without disadvantages. One of the disadvantages is that the learners may have time constraints to interact effectively with content and another drawback to learner-to-content interaction is that the learners may not readily find the relevant information that they need either on the internet or in the textbooks. In addition, Kelly (2015) submits that learners may also face a difficulty of understanding the content in the textbooks or from the internet. However, one advantage of learner-to-content interaction is that the learner may read widely and get exposed to a variety of information, hence, widening the scope of resources that help them to learn (Hammond, 2006). Hammond adds that another advantage of the learner-to-content interaction is that the learners gain motivation when tasked to research on an educational aspect.

Interaction strategies used by teachers in their classrooms

In the field of second language acquisition, interaction has long been considered important in language learning (John, 2018). Many researchers have focused on the role of teacher strategies to create a conducive classroom for positive classroom interaction. To this end, a study was conducted in South Africa by Nomlomo in 2010 on turn-taking as a pedagogical strategy. Turn-taking has to do with the allocation and acquisition of turns (Hutcheby and Wooffit, in Nomlomo, 2010). The results of her study revealed four common turn-taking strategies in the two classrooms observed: questions, choral answers, teacher monologues and repetition of certain lesson concepts by learners. Based on her analysis of these strategies, Nomlomo concluded that the teachers were using traditional interactive strategies that were associated with a teacher-centered approach. A similar situation is described by Joubert, et al, (2015) who posits that the most common turn exchange in many classrooms follows the Initiate-Respond-Feedback (IRF). According to Lumadi (2016), IRF is associated with power relations and control. The results of a study conducted by Mazarin (2016) on teacher strategy showed that teachers were using modification devices in order to make their speech comprehensible to learners. Mazarin mentioned that such strategies included speaking slowly, using exaggerated intonation, giving prominence to key words, using simpler syntax and more basic set of vocabulary. As mentioned earlier, the current study sought to analyse interaction strategies used by teachers to facilitate classroom interaction in two selected schools.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researchers opted for a qualitative research approach in order to find answers to the study's research questions. The strength of a qualitative approach includes obtaining a more realistic feel of the world that may not be experienced in the numerical data collection. Qualitative research is a method of inquiry employed in many academic disciplines (Tonkis, 2004; Lieberman, 2004; Dale, 2002). In addition, McMillan and Schumacher (2008) point out that qualitative research approaches are more suitable to improve the understanding of human behaviour and experiences especially in more complex systems of integrated life processes. It is through this research approach that the researchers hoped to understand the types of classroom interaction prevalent in two selected schools in Libode. Thus, the qualitative approach was deemed relevant and helpful in understanding and exploring teachers' opinions and experiences in so far as ESL classroom interaction in two schools selected for this study is concerned. The study adopted a case study. Yin (2003, p. 13) defines a case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundary between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly defined. In this study the case was an in-depth examination of the types of classroom interactions prevalent in ESL classrooms in the selected schools.

Participants

The participants in this study were six teachers (four females and two males) teaching English Second Language in two schools in the Libode District of the Eastern Cape who were purposively selected. The researchers observed that they were more female teachers than male teachers in those schools hence having four females versus two males in the study. Specifically, the sample comprised one teacher in Grade four, one teacher in Grade five and one teacher in Grade six per school. These were selected on the strength that they were involved in the teaching and learning of ESL in their respective schools, and as such were perceived as the holders of the information required by the researchers in their bid to determine the interaction types used by ESL teachers in their classrooms. Thus, purposive sampling was used to determine the research participants. Purposive sampling is a non-probability method of selection from the population based on predetermined criteria (Dillon, 2010). In this study, the predetermined criterion was that the respondents selected were all English First Additional Language teachers, hence had rich information the researchers were looking for.

Instruments

In this study, classroom observations were used as the instrument to collect data. The main strength of observation is that it provides direct access to the social phenomenon under consideration. Instead of relying on self-report, such as asking people what they would do in a certain situation, one would actually observe and record behaviours in a given situation (Bryman, 2008). In general terms, classroom observation procedures are grouped into three categories, namely: those that focus on the educator, those that focus on the educator and learners, and those that focus on the learner (Lockheed and Harris, 1989). For the purpose of this study, the researchers opted for the three categories already mentioned. The lessons were audio-recorded with the permission of the respondents and notes were taken.

Data analysis

The recorded lessons were transcribed by the researchers and the focus was on the interactive strategies used by teachers in order to engage learners in their classrooms. A thematic frame that emerged from the data was identified and categorized accordingly through use of excerpts that were audio recorded during classroom observations.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researchers sought permission from the two schools that participated in the study. Furthermore, we explained the purpose of our study to the participants who were later asked to complete the consent forms. Two consent forms were completed by the participants (i) consent to participate in the study without being compelled (ii) consent to be audio-recorded during observation times. We honored their rights to privacy, dignity, anonymity, confidentiality and to withdraw from the study at any point they felt like without victimization. Codes were used to promote anonymity and confidentiality of the study participants.

FINDINGS

The findings are presented below using the excerpts that were audio recorded during the classroom observations made on types of classroom interaction strategies used by EFAL teachers and the impact they had on learners' language learning. Each teacher taught a different aspect and presented different scenarios. The scenarios are presented below without altering or correcting the grammatical errors that were made by some learners in class. The teachers are given codes Teacher 1 to Teacher 6.

Types of classroom interaction strategies used by EFAL teachers in their classrooms

This study looked deeper into classroom practices to understand how educators facilitated learning. The study established that the educators were using the lecture, small groups, pair work and whole group, posing questions, repetition of certain concepts and choral answer as classroom-interaction types. It was clear from the observed classrooms that the teachers demonstrated their power over learners. They were in control and dictating everything taking place in the classroom. Learners were passive and only contributed by responding to the teachers' questions and teachers dictated as to who must speak and when.

The focus was on the frequency of interaction between the teacher and the learners and among the learners. Specifically, particular attention in the observation was given to teacher-learner interaction, learner-teacher interaction and learner-learner interaction. Below are the examples of lessons that reflect what took place in the classroom regarding classroom interaction strategies.

EXCERPT ONE (Teacher 1)

TOPIC: HOW TO MAKE AN EGG SANDWICH (WRITING SKILL)

GRADE 4: CLASS SIZE-48 LEARNERS

1. Teacher: Today we want to learn about how to make a good breakfast. I know that you know how to make tea as we have already discussed this in our previous lesson. Today I want us to describe how to make an egg sandwich. By the way what is an egg sandwich?
2. Malizo: I know teacher! It is bread with eggs.

3. Teacher: Yes, who wants to add to what Malizo has just said?
4. Liso: Eggs are put in the bread.
5. Teacher: Good! That is an egg sandwich. When you make the sandwich, you warm the cooking oil in the pan, then crack an egg and pour the contents in the pan and fry it. What is the next step?
6. Amahle: Put the egg in two pieces of bread and eat.
7. Teacher: Why do we need to warm the oil before we pour the egg into the pan?
(The whole class is quiet).
8. Teacher: Let the girls help us with this. Don't you make egg sandwiches at home?
(Chorus answer) We cook them.
9. Teacher: Say something Nomalanga!

10. Nomalanga: So that the egg does not stick to the pan and burn.
11. Teacher: That is correct. Now let us write the stages down together. We must number our points.

From the Excerpt One above, it is evident that the teacher was dominating the lesson to the extent of explaining by herself how to make an egg sandwich, something that was supposed to be done by the learners themselves.

The teacher leads the learners in writing the list on the chalkboard. (Whole class interaction).

1. We pour oil in the pan
2. We warm the oil
3. We crack the egg and pour it in the pan
4. We fry the egg
5. We remove the pan from the stove and allow it to cool a little bit before we put in between the slices
6. We serve the egg sandwich to people.

After writing down the stages then the teacher rubbed off some of the words in the stages and asked the learners to complete the exercise.

In this lesson the teacher used questions as a strategy to interact with the learners and a lecture strategy which made her to appear dominating the lesson. Points 8, 9 and 10 above indicate that the teacher decided who speaks about what as she states that the question is for girls and fingers one student to speak, in the process limiting participation of others. Learners were only involved by responding to the teacher's questions using short sentences. The teacher paid attention to whole class interaction. This interactive strategy could be disadvantageous for the shy and slow learners as the teacher would only focus on the brilliant learners and assumes that all learners understand. It is, therefore, clear that this strategy does not facilitate learning for most learners. When the teacher dominates the interaction, certain learners are excluded and the depth of the participation is reduced. For example, the teacher-dominated discussion above has no room for other ways of preparing egg salad.

EXCERPT TWO (Teacher 2)

TOPIC: ADVERTISING (VISUAL LITERACY)

GRADE 4: CLASS SIZE 58

12. Teacher: The media has so many adverts. On television which adverts have you watched?

13. Samkelo: Yes, there is this advert about Omo washing powder.
14. Teacher: Yes, who else please?
15. Mangiwe: An advert about FNB bank.
16. Cenga: The advert about having money from PEP store.
17. Teacher: Oh! You mean a loan?
18. Cenga: Yes, a loan.
19. Teacher: Very good. Where else are we informed about the products being sold?
(The class is quiet for a while).
20. Mandisa: From magazines and newspapers.
21. Teacher: Yes, you are right. What products have you seen in newspapers which are for sale?
22. Thembeke: Televisions, cell phones and radios.
23. Teacher: That's good. Today our topic is advertising. When advertising a product, there are techniques that are used. First, the words may not be of the same size. The size of the letters we call that the font size okay? What is the font size?
(Learners are quiet).
24. Teacher: I have just said that the size of the letters is the font size. What is the size of the letter?
(All learners) Font size.
25. Teacher: Good. The font size in an advert is varied to show emphasis. Let us look at this advert. *(Teacher raises a newspaper photograph of an advert of a cell phone).*
26. Teacher: Why do you think the price is written in bold letters?
27. Bafana: It's because people will buy.
28. Teacher: Yes, so that people are attracted to buy the product. Why is the 24 months guarantee in block capitals?
29. Siphellele: Because people want guarantee.
30. Teacher: Good. An advert must appeal to the market, that is, the people who may buy the product. It must generate interest when you look at the advert, it must also give you the desire to want to own it and it must make you to take action and buy the product. This is called the AIDA principle (an acronym from attention, interest desire and action). Let us look at page 16 of your textbook. What is being advertised?
31. Nqonqo: Margarine.
32. Teacher: Yes. Good. How does it make you to want to buy margarine?
33. Bhebheza: It says one bite you know you are right.
34. Teacher: Yes, what else?
35. Themba: It is cheap, only R6.
36. Teacher: Good. It is affordable. Now I want you to list five things from this advert of a fridge that will make someone to buy it. *(The teacher issues out a photocopy of a magazine page with an advert on a fridge).*

Like in the previous lesson, the teacher relied on the questions and focused on the whole group. He also used repetition when the whole group fails to respond. For example, 24; “I have just said that the size of the letters is the font size. What is the size of the letter”? The teacher in this lesson has managed to correct the student by providing an appropriate word, for example, a loan instead of having money. Although the teacher did not put the learners in groups, at least ten different learners were able to communicate with the teacher. The lesson could have been more interesting if the teacher had divided the learners into small groups and

used different adverts for each group. The learners would have learned from each other as each group would have presented its findings to the rest of the class. The use of the pictorial teaching aid was thoughtful of the teacher. It was relevant and appropriate to the lesson under discussion. Teaching aids reinforce what is said by the teacher and summarises the teacher's points, they often result in rapid initial understanding and promote increased retention (Roach, 2009).

The teacher used whole group interaction in his lesson where ten out of fifty-eight learners shared in the lesson. The forty-eight learners were thus passive throughout the lesson. Group work or pair work would have involved the learners as much as possible. Cooperative learning is good in classroom interaction as it involves having students work together to maximize their mastery of the subject (Johnson and Johnson, 1991). The teacher's use of whole group interaction is in the realm of the traditionalists' classroom interaction practice. The following lesson focused on countable and uncountable nouns.

EXCERPT THREE (Teacher 3)

TOPIC: BUSI'S EGG WIRE CUP HOLDERS (reading comprehension).

GRADE 5: CLASS SIZE 52

37. Teacher: Today we shall do reading and viewing. But before we start reading, is there any one here who has made something which is used or was used by any of the family members?

(There was silence in the classroom).

38. Teacher: Anything learners!

39. Andiswa: I made a mat from cheap wood.

40. Teacher: Anyone else please?

(The class is silent again).

41. Teacher: Boys?

42. Bheki: It is not me who made a shoe rack but we are still using it today.

43. Teacher: Okay boys and girls today we shall learn about Busi's egg wire holder. *(Teacher distributes papers containing the story).* What do you see on this page?

44. Amaza: I see a girl smiling.

45. Teacher: What else?

46. Asanga: The girl is holding wire.

47. Teacher: Nothemba, what do you see in the picture?

48. Nothemba: Happy girl.

49. Teacher: Why do you say she is happy?

50. Nothemba: Because she is laughing.

51. Teacher: You mean smiling?

52. Nothemba: Yes.

53. Teacher: Read the story silently then. *(Gives learners five minutes to read the story before he reads it aloud to the class).* What is the name of the girl in the story? *(More than half the class raise their hands wanting to respond).* Lizeka!

54. Lizeka: Busisiwe.

55. Teacher: Good, what did she make for her mother?

56. Asavela: Egg holder.

57. Teacher: Yes, what made Busisiwe to decide to sell the egg holders to the market?

58. Asive: His mother told her to sell to market.

59. Teacher: Her mother, not his mother. She is right! Why did her mother ask her to sell at the market?
60. Inga: Because many people loved the egg holder she has made for her mother.
61. Teacher: They loved the egg holder she had made for her mother. Why did Busisiwe make the holder for her mother?
62. Liso: Because it was a gift for mothers' day.

Teacher: Good. Now let us list the difficult words on the chalkboard (*The teacher wrote the following words and phrases on the chalkboard: commercial, industrious, business acumen, profit, decorated and helping hand. The teacher then asked the learners to find the meaning of the words from the dictionary. The meanings were written on the chalkboard so that the learners could copy them in their vocabulary books*).

From the Excerpt Three, the learners only participated by responding to the teacher's questions. When they do not know the correct answer, they would keep quiet, and the teacher would intervene. The learners had problems with the past tense and the personal pronouns 'he and she'. In each case where grammatical errors were committed; the teacher quickly corrected the learners by uttering the correct sentence. However, the activity on the new words was done out of context. These new words were taught in isolation. No effort was made by learners to guess at the meaning of unfamiliar words in context which is the current method of teaching new vocabulary.

EXCERPT FOUR (Teacher 4)

TOPIC: HOW I SPENT MY CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY (writing).

GRADE 5: CLASS SIZE 54

Teacher: Today we will talk about how you spent your holidays in December. Bandile, tell us what you were doing during the holiday!

63. Bandile: I was went to Mthatha to bought new clothes for Christmas and rice and chicken.
64. Teacher: Tell us more Bandile.
65. Bandile: On Christmas day we go to church, mother give me money to buy chips at spaza shops.
66. Teacher: Let us hear your account Mlindeli!
67. Mlindeli: (*Just smiles and utters no word*).
68. Teacher: Say it in IsiXhosa then!
69. Mlindeli: (in isiXhosa, "Khangendiyendawo, bendisekhaya") I did not go anywhere, I was at home.
70. Teacher: Even if you were at home you can still tell us how you spent the holiday!
71. Mlindeli: I eat rice and chicken.
72. Teacher: Siviwe: Please tell us what you were doing.
73. Siviwe: We go to Port Saint Johns and we swim in the Ocean.
74. Teacher: Good. We are going to discuss the narrative type of composition. In this type of writing, there are rules that you must obey if you want your work to score better marks. When writing a composition, you must obey the four stages of the writing process, and these are: the planning stage. At this stage, you must brainstorm the topic. In our case, we are focusing on how we spent our holiday. Write everything that comes to your mind like going to Mthatha to buy groceries, then the preparations you

made for Christmas, then, the Christmas day itself then what happened after Christmas. After writing down the points what do you need to do?

75. Themba: You arrange the points correctly.

76. Teacher: Excellent! You then arrange the points in the correct order. This is what is called 'chronological order. The second stage of the writing process is called the writing stage. You write the first draft using the points listed in chronological order. After you have written the first draft what should you do next?

77. Vulamanzi: Write the second draft.

78. Teacher: Is he right?

79. Yolisa: No. first revise and check for mistakes.

80. Teacher: Very good. This stage is known as the editing stage. All errors and mistakes are taken care of at this stage. The fourth stage is the writing and presenting stage. This is when you write the final draft and present it to the teacher for marking. Let us now

start by brainstorming the topic. Now let us write the first draft of our composition using the points we listed above. (*The teacher writes a three paragraphed composition on the chalkboard and asks the learners to edit it.*) I would like you to write your own composition about how you spent the holidays and bring the compositions tomorrow.

Just like the other teachers above, the teacher in this lesson talked most of the time, a characteristic feature of the traditionalist classroom interaction mode (Erton, 2006). The teacher did not attempt to repair broken language. This scenario is debatable because some scholars argue that the learner must be allowed to make as many mistakes as they can to learn the language. The teacher could have used group work and allowed the learners to brainstorm the topic on how they spent their Christmas holiday. Group work increases the level of participation and the learning output of the learners (Hidis, 1990). The positive elements of the lesson observed were that the teacher allowed the learners to speak in their home language to help them to express their ideas and that the teacher praised the learners when they gave correct responses, hence, motivating them. Generally, there is no guarantee that learning has taken place in this lesson because the teacher is doing everything for the learners, including essay writing. The teacher believes in learning by imitation. He hopes that by providing learners with a sample essay, they will be able to imitate and develop their own essays. This is a traditional approach to the learning process.

EXCERPT FIVE (Teacher 5)

TOPIC: ZIZAMA THE DOG (SUMMARY WRITING).

GRADE 6: CLASS SIZE-53

81. Teacher: There are two types of summary writing. The first one is the prose summary. When writing the prose summary, you first read the story or passage that you have been asked to summarise. Read the question of the summary and identify the key points in the passage that answer the summary question. After writing the main points of the summary, then write the summary in one paragraph. The second type of summary is the point form summary. You must identify the points that answer the summary question, then construct a sentence for each point identified. The sentences should be numbered. If there were seven points identified, there would be seven

sentences. Let us read the story about Zizama the dog. (*Learners read it silently first before the teacher reads it aloud*) What is the passage about?

82. Zoleka: Zizama the dog.

83. Teacher: Was Zizama fat or thin?

84. Khanya: He was a fat dog.

85. Teacher: Yes, what made Zizama a proud dog?

86. Nolitha: Because he don't look for food.

87. Teacher: Because he did not have to look for food like the wild animals did. In other words, he was fed by his master. What did Zizama dislike most?

88. Thamsanqa: He did not like being tied to a post the whole day as the chain injured his neck

89. Teacher: Good. Now list the three good things that Zizama liked in pairs. (*The learners work in pairs and they produce the list. The learners' list identified the three things as being fed by the master, being washed by the master's children and the safety from wild animals. Learners were then asked to construct three sentences using the three good things Zizama liked which they had identified. This exercise was done as homework since the period was over*).

The introduction to the lesson was not good as the teacher spoke most of the time. Nomlomo (2010) in her study observed that although the teachers' explanation is appropriate and scaffolds learners in making sense of the lesson content, it makes their turn longer and it limits the learners' participation in the lesson as it triggers brief answers from the learners. The teacher could have brought to class two different types of summaries, the prose summary and the verse type of summary so that the learners identify the differences themselves. The positive aspects of the lesson were that the educator used the question-and-answer technique to arouse the learners' mental faculties. At the end of the lesson, the learners were given a pair task. Pair work and small groups promote social and communication skills and an exchange of ideas. The act of praising a learner in this lesson was also good as it reinforced behaviour.

EXCERPT SIX (Teacher 6)

TOPIC: INTRODUCTION TO POETRY (Literature).

GRADE 6: CLASS SIZE- 51 LEARNERS

90. Teacher: Literature can be divided into prose, drama and verse. Prose literature is found in novels where you read a story organized in chapters. Drama literature is found in books that portray people acting on stage. The verse type literature is found in poems and songs that we sing in church. What is a poem class?

91. Mangiwe: It is written like a song.

92. Teacher: Yes, you are partly right. A poem is a verse type of literature which is written in a few paragraphs called stanzas. Where else have you heard of stanzas?

93. Odwa: When we sing in the school choir.

94. Teacher: Yes. Stanzas are not only found in songs but in poems. A person who writes a poem is known as a poet. Today we shall study the two devices used by poets, and these are assonance and alliteration. Let us start with assonance. (*The teacher writes the letters of the alphabet from A to Z and then asks learners to identify the vowels in the poem he provided them with.*) Now look at the poem entitled 'Monsoon Rain' I

want you to write down all the lines which contain alliteration and assonance in your books.

95. Thokozile: Vowels are abcde

96. Teacher: No, someone else please!

97. Bobo: a e i o u are vowels.

98. Teacher: Yes, these are vowel sounds (*Teacher underlines the vowels*). What do we call the rest of the letters of the alphabet? (*The class is quiet until the teacher tells them the answer.*) They are called consonants. You forget what we covered last year so easily. When the same vowel sound is repeated in a line of poetry that is called assonance. What did I say?

(Whole class: When the same sound is repeated..... (*Learners fail to complete the sentence*).

99. Teacher: The same vowel sound in a line of poetry is called assonance.

Whole class: (*The learners say the correct thing this time*).

100. Teacher: Good. A good example is, “the umbrella was upon our heads” which two words begin with the same vowel sound?

101. Gcina: Umbrella and upon.

102. Teacher: Which vowel sound has been repeated?

103. Asavela: The vowel ‘U’

104. Teacher: Yes, this is called assonance. (*The teacher gives three more examples before explaining the device of alliteration*) Alliteration is the repeat of the same consonant in a line of poetry. For example, ‘the song sang on Thursday was sweet.’ Which three words begin with the same consonant?

105. Liziwe: Song sang and sweet because they begin with ‘s’ sound.

106. Teacher: Good girl (*Teacher gives the learners three more examples and asks learners in groups to identify the words that begin with the same consonant on the job cards provided by the teacher. After group work, the representative of the groups shared with the rest of the class what they identified. This prompted class discussion as learners agreed with some presentations and disagreed with others. The teacher read the poem entitled Monsoon aloud and explains difficult words. The class reads aloud the poem, then the teacher asks the learners to identify lines that have assonance and alliteration in the poem after an extensive discussion of the poem. They write these in their class work books*).

This was a literature lesson which sought to prepare the learners for higher learning. Seemingly, this was a new lesson to the learners as the teacher gave a detailed account of the types of literature that are studied. This lesson was however, located in the use of the letters of alphabet. The prior knowledge that the learners had was that the vowels formed part of the alphabet, but they had forgotten the consonants until they were reminded by the teacher. The teacher employed group work to increase the level of classroom interaction. The learners’ involvement in class discussions promoted learning. It is through class discussions that learners are motivated and master the subject matter. The teacher allowed the learners to complete the sentences. When they failed to complete the sentences, the teacher would intervene. The teacher’s use of small groups was a good move as this encourages even those learners who are generally introverts to share in social interactions, thereby increasing the probability of subject mastery (Green, 2002).

From all the excerpts presented above, it can be concluded that Teacher 1 to Teacher 6 were using similar strategies in their approaches in class. The teachers dominated in lessons and made learners to be passive recipients of knowledge in the learning of EFAL.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study revealed seven interaction strategies ESL teachers used in their classrooms. These are questions, choral answers, teacher lectures, small groups, pair work, whole group and repetition of certain concepts.

It emerged from the study that learners were limited to think critically because of the nature of the questions asked by teachers. While teachers did try to engage learners by asking questions, the answers demanded tended to be limited to one word or one sentence answers. This even limits the interaction between learner and learner as most of the time teachers were the ones asking questions to learners. This barred, learners from initiating conversations an approach that promotes free expression of ideas leading to the mastery of ESL by learners. The implication is that learners would see teachers as the custodian of knowledge and learners cannot learn without the teacher taking the lead. Learners become docile and passive just waiting for the teacher to spoon feed them and the lesson becomes teacher centred. This situation does not engage learners fully so as to develop their language proficiency the same way narrations or discussions would as established also by Mpiti and Marongwe (2020). This finding is supported by Nomlomo (2010) who observed that situations that limit learners' response to one word or short sentences are a true reflection of teacher dominance of the classroom talk and therefore limit the learners in expressing their ideas and create difficulty for the teacher in collecting evidence of strengths and weaknesses in learner understanding. This finding is also consistent with the findings of a study conducted by Cazden (1988), who acknowledged that questioning is an important tool, however, learners also need opportunity for dialogue if they are to learn. Like in the current study, Cazden observed that most questions used an initiate-respond-evaluate cycle in which teachers initiate a question, a learner responds, and then the teacher evaluates the answer. In this way teachers only use questions to check understanding rather than develop thinking.

The results of the current study further revealed that the most type of questions asked by teachers focused on the correct answer or rote repetition. This finding contradicts the results of a study conducted by Cohen (2011) in Israel. In his study Cohen observed that most questions asked by teachers aimed at prompting thinking processes and endeavoured to increase the learners' strategic thinking. The findings of this study on the quality of teacher questions are supported by Alexander (2005). In his study he concluded that the initiation-response-feedback (IRF) remains dominant in British primary schools. He argued that in situations where the IRF dominates, children may not learn as quickly or as effectively as they might. He also mentioned that children may not sufficiently develop the narrative, explanatory and questioning powers necessary to demonstrate to their teachers what they know and understand and to engage in decisions about how and what they should learn. Alexander (2005) further points out that teachers in such situations may remain ill-informed about learners' current understanding, and therefore lose the diagnostic element which is essential if their teaching is to be productive as also established by this current study.

The current study also established that most lessons were dominated by teachers through teacher exposition. The teacher talk time (TTT) was too much and was common across the teachers who participated in the study. Advocates for ESL encourage teachers to lower their TTT and allow learners to talk more for them to master the language. This implies that the ESL learners' fear of conversing in the second language cannot easily disappear since the classroom situation does not promote them to talk more and become proficient. In the same line, Mbagga (2002) is of the view that learners should talk more as this promotes classroom interactions using the target language is very important so that learners experience real communicative situations in which they learn how to express their own views and develop oral fluency and accuracy which are very important in second language communication. This finding of TTT is echoed by Joubert (2015) who observed that the teachers accounted for about 60% of the classroom talk on average and talked about 17 times a minute, which is 4.5 times more than the learner talk. This finding is also supported by Mbagga (2002) who noticed that ESL classrooms were dominated by teacher talk involving demonstrations, explanations and short questions and answers. Nomlomo (2010) also observed teacher classroom domination in her study. She defined this situation as teacher monologues and observed that teachers talked alone without involving the learners and as a result the lessons turned out to be teacher-centred than learner-centred.

It stemmed from the study's findings that in some instances, teachers resorted to the use of the learners' mother tongue to facilitate interaction in the whole classroom. This was the trend in all the six classes observed and was very easy for teachers to switch code because they were also speakers of the same language as that of the learners. This current study is aware of the ongoing debate among scholars of whether it is permissible to teach English Second language in the learner's home language. However, greater part of the literature reviewed concurred that instruction in the learner's first language produces positive results since learners tend to comprehend concepts better when the mother tongue is used (Gibbons, 2000). In addition, some studies have established that first language literacy development is strongly related to successful second language learning and academic achievement, and that literacy skills developed in the native language transfer to the second language (Rivera, 1999). This finding is confirmed by Nomlomo (2010) who observed that teachers switch to the learners' mother tongue as a way of assuring that everyone in the class understands the lesson by making use of language known by all learners. The same sentiment is shared by Krashen (2004) who posits that the English second language students in international schools learn English more quickly and effectively if they maintain and develop their proficiency in the mother tongue.

The results of the study further revealed that very few teachers used engaging interacting learner-to-learner strategies that promote free expression of ideas without fearing the teacher or being felt intimidated by a large class of fellow learners. The observational data collected for the study revealed that group and pair work methods were not highly engaged in the teachers' classrooms despite their importance in learning and teaching context. These methods promote sharing of ideas, creation of ideas, discovering new information and engaging learners. That is on its own excites learners especially when the task is clear and has good instructions that are easy to follow. Motivation guides and maintains behaviour (Green, 2002). It also helps to shape and build a good rapport between learners that subsequently leads to the creation of a conducive learning environment. In line with that Kelly (2015) is of

the view that group and pair work can be an effective strategy to motivate learners, encourage active learning and develop key critical-thinking, communication and decision-making. The importance of group and pair work is acknowledged by Mazarin, (2016) who observed that group and pair work create autonomous learners who work collaboratively for their own learning. Thus, effective use of group and pair work in a language class can provide a valuable learning experience to learners and give them the opportunity to practically experience the ideas presented and strengthen their learning (Raja, 2012). The positive benefit of group and pair work is supported by Torto (2017) who conducted a study on the use of group work to optimize learning opportunities for Grade 1 and 2 English language learners in the classroom. The findings of that study revealed that the benefits of working in a group are immense as it allows both high and low academic learners to learn from each other, as well as listen and compare different perspectives, ideas, and thoughts as also established by Hanifan (2019). Furthermore, a narration by the teacher may not be as effective as using a self-discovery approach where the learners discover knowledge by themselves (Palmer, 2001; Shulman, 2018). Pair work and small groups promote social and communication skills and an exchange of ideas (Sibanda, 2017). Also, it is through class discussions that learners are motivated and master the subject matter (Johnson and Johnson, 1991).

CONCLUSION

In an attempt to understand the interaction strategies employed by English First Additional Language in the Libode District of the Eastern Cape, the findings revealed that the majority of teachers were using interaction strategies that are linked to the traditional approaches to language learning. Such interactional strategies are characterised by teacher dominance of the classroom and learner passiveness. The study further revealed that there was no learner-to-learner interaction and learner-to-teacher interaction was also nonexistent. It is also noteworthy that very few teachers used group and pair work strategies. The literature reviewed in this study has shown how these strategies are important regarding creating learning opportunities among the students. Therefore, the teachers' failure to use effective interactional strategies in their classrooms allows one to conclude that the interactional strategies used by teachers in the study inhibited learners' language learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings of the current study, the paper recommends that English First Additional Language teachers should use more engaging teaching and learning strategies that promote critical thinking, creativity and discovery learning. Language teachers should be advocates of progressive strategies that encourage learners to be expressive and reduce teacher talk time. Lastly, teachers are urged to transit or migrate to use of newer approaches to language teaching and learning than to remain using the traditional methods that view learners as docile.

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