

## PROMOTING AN IDEAL ENGLISH FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE LESSON: A LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVE

**Kufakunesu Zano, Vimbai Mbirimi-Hungwe**

*Education systems are the outcome of societal forces, and there are telling trends in the 21<sup>st</sup> century society that include the rise of multicultural societies, a highly mobile population and the rise in information and communication technology. Thus, this study aims to investigate how to promote an ideal English First Additional Language (EFAL) lesson in a high school setting. The researchers used the conversation analysis since this was a qualitative study. Only one Head of Department, Languages, who works with other five EFAL teachers in her department in one high school in a selected district in South Africa, was selected to participate in this study. The findings indicate that an ideal EFAL classroom is one where the EFAL teacher is conscious of the fact that having learners with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds in one classroom may have an influence on the teaching-learning process in an EFAL classroom. This calls for EFAL teachers to allow learners to draw from all the dimensions of their lives to interpret any EFAL task at hand. Besides, it is imperative to measure EFAL teachers' strengths and weaknesses thus making training and career development possible, so that they know how to promote ideal EFAL lessons. It is in the school's best interest to ensure ongoing training and career development of each EFAL teacher. Even performance reviews clarify areas where training may be required, but they also explain unique motivators specific to each EFAL teacher. Each EFAL teacher is motivated by different resources, for example, for some, it may be money or payment of fees. Staff development is encouraged as it helps in formulating the learning goals, identifying the steps, involved in attaining the learning aims, establishing a healthy classroom climate, promoting cooperative learning and using technological tools, fostering learner-centred learning and keeping learners in EFAL by giving them encouraging feedback*

**Keywords:** *English first additional language, multiculturalism, multilingualism, diversity, linguistic backgrounds*

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### 1. Introduction

Human beings are inherently social beings. Most of the activities involve interaction with other individuals or are connected in the context of one or another group. The ability to communicate is essential in our daily existence. It is the social glue that keeps people together [1], so intuitively we know what it means to say that people communicate.

This study took place in an English first additional language (EFAL) setting in a high school in South Africa. Language not only expresses and embodies but also symbolises cultural reality [2]. Through language, people get to know one another, such as their different attitudes, behaviours, values, beliefs, worldviews, customs, traditions, lifestyles, art, music and achievements, to mention a few. Due to the political and socio-economic changes in the current globalised world, various opportunities open up for today's global citizens and learners as well. As a result, not only different languages but also various cultures can co-exist in today's educational settings [3].

Besides, [4] laments that most parents adjudge English as a gateway to better education. English is also

regarded as a means to access social goods, such as jobs and international opportunities. Besides, the English language being regarded as the major economic, social and educational language, it has also become a source of struggles against apartheid and liberation [5].

Education systems are the outcome of societal forces, and there are telling trends in 21<sup>st</sup> century society that include the rise of multicultural societies, a highly mobile population and the rise in information and communication technology. The rise in mobile technology affects the future and gives us access to global information.

One out of every 33 people in the world today is an international migrant (that is, born in a country other than the one they are currently living in) [6], compared with one out of every 35, which was the case in the year 2000 [7]. The number of international migrants in the world has increased from 79 million in 1960 to 175 million in 2000 [7] to 214 million in 2012 [6]. This mobile world populace has led to the replacement of the longstanding idea of one officially sanctioned culture within the borders of any country, and birthed multicul-

turalism and multilingualism. Now we are mandated to accept the existence of cultural diversity within the borders of any country [8].

South Africa, like the rest of the world, experiences multilingualism in its classrooms, and this has become a great challenge in the education system. Learners come from elsewhere in South Africa and other countries with their different languages, behaviours and cultures [9]. This meshing of languages in a multicultural South African classroom presents a challenge as to how best to incorporate the knowledge of various languages into the teaching and learning environment [10].

## 2. Literature Review

The literature review covers various factors, attributed to contributing to ideal teaching and learning in most teaching and learning environments, and one of them concerns technology in education. There is a growing belief that educational technologies improve flexible teaching and learning, which provides many flexibilities to both learners and teachers as stakeholders in education [11]. Flexible pedagogy is a learner-centred technique that allows learners to choose a variety of options about where, when and how they learn [12]. Using educational technologies may promote the delivery of teaching, learning and evaluation that can be enabled by technology towards meeting the lifelong educational needs of the modern generation [13]. Educational technologies are ubiquitous, thus further justifying the shift towards flexible pedagogies. According to [14], academics who have only been exposed to traditional classroom settings prefer face-to-face interactions with learners and teachers, whereas the current generation of learners prefers online interactions because they are tech-savvy. This means that learners' exposure to technology influences their use of technology. Researchers may disregard the fear of pedagogical change as a deeper problem than just perception.

Learner-centred teaching education generally involves methods of teaching that move the focus of instruction from the teacher to the learner [15]. The "learner-centred" label is subsequently attached to teaching strategies, learning events, classroom layouts and learning programmes [15]. Aspects, such as active learning, learner commitment and the construction of own knowledge, are among the principles of learner-centred teaching. Worldwide, the thorough training of teachers is crucial, and it needs to emphasise on learner-centred teaching. Every institution preparing teachers should establish whether they offer suitable qualifications that empower language teachers to cope with the abundant difficulties of the teaching occupation, including learner-centred teaching [15].

Every lesson that is prepared should be an experience [16] and part of a bigger picture that the teacher can use to create an environment for effective learning. We believe that one of the biggest challenges in the classroom today is that learning should be experienced, not just taught, as many of us would recall, thinking back to our own experiences of school. The aims of the lesson should be clear and should describe the learning that the teacher hopes learners will develop. It is a way of pinning down the focus of exactly what the lesson aims to achieve. In content-driven curricula like the Curriculum

and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), it is the teacher who must decide on the aims of each lesson, so that learners can attain the stated skills, knowledge and attitudes.

Besides, whatever the form, incentives can be a powerful tool to encourage learners to work together and learn from each other. Confirming this finding, [17] found that motivation promotes collaborative learning, improves communication skills, and promotes higher-order thinking.

According to [18], employees value feedback from their co-workers and supervisors. Providing sufficient performance feedback to employees helps bolster positive attitudes towards the institution and helps prevent early intentions to leave the organisation.

Classroom climate is the tone that the class experiences in its normal daily life. The relational dynamic is central to how positive the class as a whole will be and how positive each of its members will feel about belonging to this group [19]. This is underscored by [20] who describes classroom climate as the collective perception by learners of what it feels like to be a learner in a particular teacher's classroom. Because a class is a group of learners, engaged in learning, growing up in a social direction and building a sense of identity and purpose, the teacher must seek out ways, in which the class can enjoy a more positive learning and social environment.

Diversity encapsulates any kind of variety in humankind, such as personality, aptitude, appearance, sexual orientation, disability, learning preference, nationality, educational level, age, marital status and so forth, as is the nature of all mono- and multicultural contexts [21]. Intercultural communicative competence is an indispensable and unavoidable concept of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This concept highlights the need for understanding diversity and calls for the kind of skills to be able to negotiate and re-negotiate with others for meaning, recognition and acknowledgement.

[22] define cooperative learning as a team approach to learning where each member of the group is dependent on the other members to accomplish a specific task or assignment. Each member takes responsibility for a specific part of the task, which will contribute to the overall success of the group. Besides, the group's success is dependent on each member learning all parts of the task. As with cooperative learning, which promotes learner-centred learning, [23] identifies self-assessment as another learner-centred approach towards transforming traditional practices and building self-directed learners. Likewise, [24] claims that classroom interactions are at the heart of pedagogy, therefore, any effort to reflect on these interactions is important in improving education instruction.

## 3. The aim and objectives of the study

The aim of the study was to investigate how to promote an ideal English First Additional Language (EFAL) lesson in a high school setting.

To accomplish the aim, the following tasks have been set:

1. We engaged in a conversation analysis with the participant.

2. We audio-recorded the conversation.
3. We asked the participant open-ended questions.

#### 4. Materials and Methods

The study used a strategic conversation analysis approach to collect data. Since this study aims to investigate how to promote an ideal EFAL lesson in a high school setting, it is necessary to gather empirical evidence through conversation analysis, an analytic tool, commonly used by researchers in second language learning [25]. Besides, we believe that this tool, conversation analysis, enables the use of fine-grained transcriptions of classroom and behaviours; it is well-positioned to investigate different dynamics of classroom talk-in-interaction and shed light on teaching and learning practices.

Only one Head of Department, Languages, who works with other five EFAL teachers in her department in one high school in a selected district in South Africa was selected to participate in this study. This high school was purposively selected based on its offering of EFAL, its proximity to one of the researchers' workplace for convenience during the data-collection phase and the HOD's willingness to participate in the study. The HOD who shared with us what she deemed an ideal EFAL lesson conducts class visits, provides effective communication and guidance to staff, leads and coordinates the professional development needs of the department and contributes to the implementation of the curriculum and quality assurance system by the teachers, to mention a few. Besides, heading specific subject teams, HODs may undertake the following [26]: subject meetings, interpretation of the syllabi, subject area policies, subject files, subject control and class observations.

#### 4. Results

As indicated earlier, results from the conversation analysis were decoded into themes that will be presented in this results section.

##### *Technology in education*

One of the findings is that an ideal EFAL lesson must promote technology in the teaching and learning processes. This is in line with [11–13] and [14] who report that there is a growing belief that educational technologies improve flexible teaching and learning, which provides many flexibilities to both students and lecturers as stakeholders in education. Besides, [27] maintains that utilising e-learning technologies, such as telematics, blended learning, live broadcasts, smartphones, broadband internet, and social media access, has resulted in significant advances in learning, in addition to providing equitable possibilities to all students. In support of the above, the participant had this to say:

*When teaching EFAL, I expect teachers in my department to choose user-friendly technologies, such as relevant and age-appropriate videos, Microsoft PowerPoint and the interactive whiteboard, to support quality teaching in their classrooms. We are fortunate to have interactive whiteboards and projectors as well in our school for Microsoft PowerPoint. Every time I go for class visits and the teacher uses Microsoft PowerPoint, I realise that learners develop an interest in the lesson unlike when a teacher is using an EFAL textbook. Lest we forget, these are young minds who are easily at-*

*tracted to colourful presentations if a teacher uses PowerPoint.*

*Above all, an ideal EFAL classroom offers different technologies because they (technologies) encourage learners to work at their own time and pace, for example, an EFAL learner can play a video, posted by their teacher on their smartphones way after school. It is some form of independent learning thus learner-centred learning.*

*Self-directed learning environment and not teacher-led*

Another finding is that an ideal EFAL lesson should promote self-directed learning and not teacher-led scenarios. The contemporary meaning of learner-centredness is defined by [28] as having a combined focus on: – Individual learners – their heredity, experiences, perspectives, backgrounds, talents, interests, capacities and needs – Learning – the best available knowledge about learning and how it occurs – Teaching practices – the most effective practices in promoting the highest levels of motivation, learning, and achievement for all learners. The contemporary meaning of learner-centredness is well-grounded in humanism, which emphasises the development of the whole person and the importance of the inner world of the learner rather than focusing solely on cognitive skills [29]. To humanists, people are 'free and unique, self-directed, and capable of setting goals, making choices and initiating action'; therefore, parents and teachers should accompany children on the ways to self-discovery, encouraging children's independence, creativity, self-reliance, and self-evaluation, as well as giving them responsibility for their learning and development [30]. The following sentiment resonates with the above, thus:

*I like it when teachers in my department are not the main actors in the teaching and learning processes. In an EFAL classroom, the teacher should not take the leading role; learners must not be passive receivers of information. Instead, learners should take the lead by formulating questions of their own, and these questions are shaped by the experiences. Even the wording of their questions is modelled along their home languages. They should be given the platform to debate and explain issues related to the subject, introduced by the teacher, and these debates are mostly held in their home languages as well. There is no room for the teacher to bank his/her knowledge in the learners, otherwise, they (learners) will lose interest in the lesson. Just let the learners engage under the teacher's watch, and let them exploit their home languages to explain the task at hand.*

##### *Lesson planning*

Lesson planning is one of the identified factors that contribute to an ideal EFAL lesson. Understanding how best to support learning and how to create active learning spaces feels very different in a classroom of many eager learners. Preparation is the key to not letting such feelings overwhelm the teacher. [31] describes the lesson plan as the guide for the presentation of the lesson, without which the teacher may go astray. It is the map, the direction, which allows the teacher to prepare and navigate the way through the teaching and learning experiences. Echoing the above assertions, the participant claimed, thus:

*I know that each EFAL teacher that has a lesson plan for that lesson is certainly prepared to share the lesson or new information with the learners. A lesson plan makes it easier for the teacher to use a teaching strategy that matches the formal or informal task to follow. If a teacher doesn't use a lesson plan, generally, no meaningful teaching and learning takes place; learners may lose interest in the subject and confidence in the teacher. Sometimes disciplinary issues crop up because the teacher wasn't prepared for the lesson. A lesson plan helps the teacher to make meaning of the official syllabus into worthwhile learning activities.*

#### *Assessment*

We believe that the mere fact of having lesson aims implies that some form of assessment must occur to measure whether or not the learning objectives have been met. Similarly, [32] report that the most common mistake in lesson assessment is that it is often disconnected from the stated lesson aims. Teachers should not think of assessment as an additional task to complete in the lesson plan. Rather, our take is that formative assessment is an integral part of planning and must be planned alongside lesson development. These assertions augur well with the participant's sentiments, thus:

*I believe that an ideal lesson is characterised by planned assessment activities. This helps the EFAL language teacher to tell whether or not the learners understood the taught concept. Not every lesson requires assessment, but a good teacher needs to plan for it. Also, there is a need to vary the forms of assessment, for example, EFAL learners can do pair work when writing an email, can write formal and informal tests and even do a performance, in case they are doing drama like Hamlet by Shakespeare. Above all, assessments by EFAL teachers help them to give their learners constructive feedback, which helps learners do better next time.*

#### *Positive Motivation*

The result shows that incentives like positive motivation and feedback enhance learners' classroom participation. Feedback has also been highlighted earlier as one of the push factors for assessment in an EFAL lesson. Incentives are a great way to promote collaborative learning among learners. Learners who work together towards a common goal are more likely to be engaged and motivated [33]. Incentives can also help foster a sense of learner cooperation and teamwork. Also, incentives can take different forms, such as rewards, privileges or recognition. Thus, the participant stated, thus:

*In our school, teachers are allowed to nominate outstanding learners in their subjects and share their names with the principal. Sometimes the principal gives them a chocolate each. It seems a small gesture but that has a lasting effect on the learner because I have witnessed that an incentivised learner always strives to do better in academic performance each time the learner is in class in a bid to receive more rewards. Moreover, our pool of prefects comprises learners, incentivised by their teachers for the best achievements in their subjects. Besides, teachers are encouraged to verbally compliment learners for outstanding performances in their subjects, and EFAL is no exception.*

#### *Classroom climate*

Another finding of the study is a good classroom climate is an ideal aspect of a good EFAL lesson. Classroom climate is the tone that the class experiences in its normal daily life. The relational dynamic is central to how positive the class as a whole will be and how positive each of its members will feel about belonging to this group [19]. This is underscored by [20] who describes classroom climate as the collective perception by learners of what it feels like to be a learner in a particular teacher's classroom. Because a class is a group of learners, engaged in learning, growing up in a social direction and building a sense of identity and purpose, the teacher must seek out ways, in which the class can enjoy a more positive learning and social environment. In line with previous studies, the participant shared, thus:

*Even in our subject meetings, we always remind each other that an enabling classroom climate helps in engaging the EFAL learners, thereby creating a good rapport between the teacher and the learners. One way of enabling a good classroom climate is the teacher's undeniable knowledge of the concept under study, hence learners will have hope that they will pass English. The teacher can also promote a good classroom climate for the lesson to be the best by using teaching methodologies that charm the learners.*

#### *Prioritise diversity in the lesson*

The participant encouraged EFAL teachers to prioritise diversity in their lessons. Diversity encapsulates any kind of variety in humankind, such as personality, aptitude, appearance, sexual orientation, disability, learning preference, nationality, educational level, age, marital status and so forth, as is the nature of all mono- and multicultural contexts [21]. Intercultural communicative competence is an indispensable and unavoidable concept of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This concept highlights the need for understanding diversity and calls for the kind of skills to be able to negotiate and renegotiate with others for meaning, recognition and acknowledgement. We say this under correction, from another dimension, prioritising diversity in the EFAL lesson can be another way of promoting classroom climate in the preceding section of the study, but here we treat it as a standalone for the scope of the study. To resonate with the above, the participant had this to say, thus:

*It is common knowledge that EFAL learners feel included in the lesson if their classroom environment 'rejoices' their diverse languages and individualities, thus a learning environment that promotes belongingness among the EFAL learners. All cultures should be catered for, so that EFAL learners have equal learning opportunities. The teacher should not stick to the English-only policy but should let the learners express themselves in languages they are most comfortable with, and in most cases, these are their home languages.*

#### *Cooperative learning*

The last important finding from the study was cooperative learning. [22] define cooperative learning as a team approach to learning where each member of the group is dependent on the other members to accomplish a

specific task or assignment. Each member takes responsibility for a specific part of the task, which will contribute to the overall success of the group. Besides, the group's success is dependent on each member learning all parts of the task. Similarly, the participant advocates for cooperative learning in EFAL lessons, thus:

*When EFAL work in pairs or groups, this encourages collaboration leading to higher chances of academic success for most learners as the learners refine their answers through their engagements under the watch of the teacher who will be monitoring them as they do cooperative learning. Furthermore, it helps the learners to accept the language and 'culture' differences among learners. Besides, it engages the learners as they feel in charge of their learning because the teacher is not interfering much with their discussions.*

#### *Discussion of findings*

One of the findings is that technologies are pivotal in an EFAL lesson. This is in line with literature that encourages the formation of online study groups among students because learners feel at ease as they will be learning in groups to complete, say, group projects [34]. These students might participate in academic communities, such as the present WhatsApp groups that share research, resolve matters of concern in the academic community and support each other [34]. Besides, this finding echoes a growing belief that educational technologies improve flexible teaching and learning, which provides many flexibilities to both learners and teachers as stakeholders in education [11]. The use of technology in EFAL learning is a flexible pedagogy, a learner-centred technique that allows EFAL learners to choose a variety of options about where, when and how they learn [12]. Additionally, using educational technologies may promote the delivery of teaching, learning and evaluation that can be enabled by technology towards meeting the lifelong educational needs of the modern generation [13]. Educational technologies are ubiquitous, thus further justifying the shift towards flexible pedagogies.

We note that there are challenges to the implementation of technological tools in EFAL classrooms, and this is in line with [14] who noted that teachers who have only been exposed to traditional classroom settings prefer face-to-face interactions with learners, whereas the current generation of EFAL learners in high schools prefer online interactions because they are tech-savvy. This means that EFAL teachers' exposure to technology influences their use of technology during EFAL lessons. We also note that some EFAL teachers could be eager to embrace educational technologies, but only if their school administration shows eagerness for technological uses in EFAL classrooms.

The other finding is that an ideal EFAL lesson should be learner-centred. This is in line with the literature that learning approaches in an EFAL classroom should be child-centred meaning learning that mainly majors on the needs of the learners other than those of other involved parties, such as administrators and teachers in the education system [15, 35]. In this approach, the EFAL teacher is placed to facilitate the learning and focus on the interests, needs and learning styles of the learners. We believe this is due to an increased aware-

ness of the importance of liberalising education to cultivate young people with independent minds and creativity, as supported by [36] as well.

Lesson planning has been pinpointed as a necessary tool in an EFAL lesson. As claimed in a previous study, every lesson that is prepared should be an experience [16] and part of a bigger picture that the teacher can use to create an environment for effective learning in an EFAL classroom. It is a way of pinning down the focus of exactly what you want to achieve. In content-driven curricula like CAPS, it is the teacher who must decide on the aims of each lesson, so that learners can attain the stated skills, knowledge and attitudes. We share the above assertions and add that a lesson plan may help the EFAL teacher check on the instructional strategy, used in that lesson, whether it led to success or otherwise.

Another finding is that an ideal EFAL lesson is one whereby learners are incentivised for good performance. Whatever the form, incentives can be a powerful tool to encourage learners to work together and learn from each other. Confirming this finding, [17] found that motivation promotes collaborative learning, improves communication skills and promotes higher-order thinking. While we appreciate incentives as tokens of appreciation, we wonder if financial incentives are the best way to motivate the EFAL to perform in the EFAL lessons. We gladly share those answers to this assertion are beyond the scope of this study.

Furthermore, one of the findings revolves around a good classroom climate as an ideal aspect of a good EFAL lesson. This is in line with the findings by some researchers like [19] and [20] who contend 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.

The other finding is about giving priority to diversity in the classroom. This augurs well with the findings by [21] 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 creates culture [37–40]. We state that since this study is about an EFAL lesson, the EFAL teacher must provide EFAL learners with the platform to create equal educational opportunities for all learners, including those from different linguistic, racial and ethnic groups.

The last finding is about cooperative learning, and this reverberates with [22] who shared that cooperative learning is healthy as each member of the group is dependent on the other members to accomplish a specific task or assignment. We also believe that with various levels of competency and individual strengths, EFAL learners can teach each other new content and skills thus enabling academic success.

The study used only one data collection method, conversational analysis. Besides, the study could not accommodate many participants, hence only one HOD. Further research on the subject under discussion could mean using many participants and accommodating other

data collection methods like focus group discussions and questionnaires.

### 5. Conclusion

This study's objective is to investigate how to promote an ideal English First Additional Language (EFAL) lesson in a high school setting.

This study has highlighted that an ideal EFAL classroom is one where the EFAL teacher is conscious of the fact that having learners with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds in one classroom may have an influence on the teaching-learning process in an EFAL classroom. We believe that this finding calls for EFAL teachers to allow learners to draw from all the dimensions of their lives to interpret any EFAL task at hand.

Besides, it is imperative to measure EFAL teachers' strengths and weaknesses thus making training and career development possible, so that they know how to promote ideal EFAL lessons. It is in the school's best interest to ensure ongoing training and career development of each EFAL teacher. Even performance reviews clarify areas where training may be required, but they also explain unique motivators specific to each EFAL

teacher. Each EFAL teacher is motivated by different resources, for example, for some, it may be money or payment of fees. Staff development is encouraged as it helps in formulating the learning goals, identifying the steps, involved in attaining the learning aims, establishing a healthy classroom climate, promoting cooperative learning and using technological tools, fostering learner-centred learning and keeping learners in EFAL by giving them encouraging feedback.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest in relation to this research, whether financial, personal, authorship or otherwise, that could affect the research and its results, presented in this article.

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### Data availability

Data cannot be made available for reasons, disclosed in the data availability statement. We assured the participant that audio-recorded data will not be shared with anyone.

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**Kufakunesu Zano\***, PhD in English, Research Associate, Department of Academic Literacy and Science Communication, Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University, Molotlegi str., Ga-Rankuwa Zone 1, Ga-Rankuwa, Pretoria, South Africa, 0208

**Vimbai Mbirimi-Hungwe**, PhD in Applied Language Studies, Senior Lecturer, Department of Academic Literacy and Science Communication, Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University, Molotlegi str., Ga-Rankuwa Zone 1, Ga-Rankuwa, Pretoria, South Africa, 0208

*\*Corresponding author: Kufakunesu Zano, e-mail: kufazano@gmail.com*