

Learners and Teachers' Perspectives on First Additional/L2 Language Learning as Social Practice in the Diverse Community of the University of Western Cape

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ABSTRACT Inevitably, life in the twenty-first century globalised world brings people into contact with “others”. Through these contacts, the need for interactions demands that these people find different ways of understanding one another to generate knowledge. In order for them to achieve this objective, they need a strong and coherent medium. First additional language education has been developed in South Africa to unravel as well as address challenges posed to competence in intercultural communication, with the emphasis placed on how to communicate with a different “other” since the world now has become a small village. The study made use of a qualitative research methodology, revolving around an ethnographic design. The research population constituted lecturers, tutors and students from the University of Western Cape. The four principal tools used for data collection included: Interviews, Questionnaires, Naturally Occurring data and Participant Observation.

INTRODUCTION

Issues of identity are more complex than merely looking at it as fluid and dynamic. Fluidity does not entail complete transformation of the self but rather adaptation where some baggage of culture is dropped in favour of others. Intercultural communication competence seeks to address these issues and to propagate competence as a means of adaptation. In view of this, English appears to be the communicative tool that can ease adaptation since it is the *lingua franca* of the world.

In today's world, living with differences both at home and abroad has become not only indispensable but also indisputable. People tend to assign various meanings to their individual attitudes that must be fully respected and integrated with life. Such differences underscore the urgent need for a well-informed focus on Intercultural communication competence which constitutes the core issues that this study sets to investigate (Foncha 2013: 13).

Language is not merely a tool for delivering a message. Language is a reflection of national character, culture, and national philosophy (Lewis 1998). People from different countries use their language and speech in different ways. Differences in speech and language styles bring misunderstandings and confusion in the attempts to interpret message (Matveev 2002: 33).

Potential problems can occur due to the linguistic differences when translation is needed. Research on communication behavior reveals that the communication competence of an individual is related to willingness to communicate, communication apprehension, and communication assertiveness (Matveev 2002: 33) which is the rationale for this study.

English is one of the 11 official languages in South Africa with a sizeable, indigenous communities of native speakers all over the country but it is a problem in UWC because of its position as either an additional/second language among the demographic, cultural and linguistically diverse community of the university.

In view of the above, the context of the University of the Western Cape is characterized by diversity in terms of its demography and consequently diversity in culture and language. UWC is one of the Universities that can boast of a very high number of locally disadvantaged and foreign students partly because its tuition fee is affordable by these categories of students. With such an influx comes diversity in culture and language that in a way tends to affect intercultural communication competence. Diversity is easily noticeable on campus from the attitudes and behaviors of the lecturers, tutors and students who constitute the respondents in this research. Apart from the foreign nationals, there are a large number of locals from the adjoining rural areas.

Theoretical Framework

The study is premised within (Sivasubramaniam 2011) framework of English as an international language and is consistent with the views of Mete (2011) and Nunn (2011) which focus on international communication competence.

In a multilingual and multicultural University like the one under study, it is apparent that “no educational process is free from the influence of language, and so the role of language is central to any educational process” (Sivasubramaniam 2004: 187). In light of this, the learning of new languages, discourses and cultures are processes that contribute to our understanding of language, of education, and most importantly, the human condition (Brumfit and Mitchell 1990). In the above light, the researchers argue that the greatest difficulty that people have in learning a language is in speaking it, not in understanding it. The context of interaction should then be taken very important as far as learning and using a language are concerned.

The meaning of the words that we use, our actions and our behaviours are socially constructed and personally interpreted (Dyers and Foncha 2012). In other words, language (the use of words and signs) is unable to represent an objective world. In this regard, Sivasubramaniam (2011) observes that words are not pictures of the world but representation of social practices that allow a community of human beings to understand each other. In light of this there does not appear to be any universal language through which reality can be explained. Thus an understanding of a given context can account for the degree of competency in the language in use.

Thus the traditional view of language learning is therefore unable to present an objective view of the words and signs that we use in a language because meaning making and interpretation in a language are determined by the context of interactions. Language hence should therefore be seen as a creative tool for meaning making that creates new meaning each time that it is being used. The creative nature of language is known to increase and complicate the position of the human mind in the development of competence. Therefore, the researchers propose that language learning needs to be seen as an interactive and a social process. Otherwise, language should not only be seen as a channel for information, but rather as one for higher mental

processes like reasoning, belief, critical and creative thoughts in contrast with the traditional reductionist notion of grammar.

Based on the fore-going discussion of issues, it is useful to view language not only as a means of sending information, but rather as a set of higher psychological processes that include creativity, critical and hypothetical thinking and reasoning (Sivasubramaniam 2011). This view can make it easier for us to explain the social context of language use and also the relationship that language has with the culture of its interlocutors. Thus learning a new language should therefore be seen as a form of acculturation (Donato 2000). Hence, to be able to gain competence in intercultural communication, one requires the ability to take the context of interaction seriously during interpretation and this should be understood as an ecological view of language.

Language (English) is used in in this context as a meditational tool that can promote thinking in the participants and possibly can encourage meaning construction cooperatively and collaboratively, instead of transmitting a fixed message to the others (Sivasubramaniam 2011). Such an approach can give language learners the confidence to suggest meanings and knowledge without any fear of being evaluated negatively.

Literature Review

In the context of this study, ‘affordances’ offer an alternative way of looking at the dynamics of a language. This is to suggest that an ecological approach to language can unite a number of well-established perspectives of language learning. We use the term ‘affordances’ here to suggest an aspect or quality of an ecology which can facilitate action but not necessarily cause it to happen. In this sense affordance affords action depending on what an organism does with its environment and what it wants from its environment. However this does not change the fundamental properties of the organism. In the same way language can offer different affordances to its learners/users who will find them encouraging to use in their meaning constructions. In light of this, we wish to say that affordance in this scheme of inquiry is viewed as a dynamism that underlies the relationship between language and its learner/user (Van Lier 2000: 252). By the same token, it is

seen as an antithesis to the rationalist/positivist positions of language. The accruing ecological view of language challenges the position that language learning is a cognitive process that relies on the brain to process information, thus shifting the emphasis from a scientific reductionism to a notion of emergence. "It says that at every level of development, properties emerge that cannot be reduced to those of prior learning" (Van Lier 2000: 246). It can then be suggested that not all cognition is explained in terms of all the processes that take place in the brain. Therefore the perceptual and social activities of a language learner, particularly the verbal and the nonverbal interactions are central to understanding (Van Lier 2000). In view of this, they do not only facilitate learning but they are also a learning process in a fundamental way (Van Lier 2000: 246).

This study is of the view that an ecological approach to language learning can complement Matveev's intercultural communication competence model (Matveev 2002), which places interaction in a pivotal and prominent position. Interaction from this perspective can be understood as the negotiation of meaning viewed as a learning process or as learning opportunities in this research. The following quotation can shed more light on this assertion:

... Negotiation for meaning, and especially negotiation work that triggers interactional adjustment by the NS or more competent interlocutor, facilitates acquisition because it connects input, internal learner capacities, particularly selected attention and output in productive ways (Long 1996: 451-452).

The type of input that is suggested in this quotation can benefit any learner with an improved comprehensibility, enhanced attention and the need to produce an output (Van Lier 2000). The usefulness of an ecological approach is that it brings out an emergence of language learning. In terms of learning, language emerges from the semiotic activity where its context provides the "semiotic budget" within which the active learner engages in meaning making activities together with other participants who are more, equally or less competent in linguistic terms. "Semiotic budget" therefore refers to those meaningful opportunities for action that are opened up for an active language user (Van Lier 2000: 252-253). "Semiotic budget" can provide opportunities for meaning making actions that a

situation could afford rather than on the amount of input that is enhanced for comprehension (Van Lier 2000).

According to Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory (1978), language and thought emerge (and merge) through an engagement in human activity both with physical objects and artifacts (tools) together with social, cultural and historical practices (signs). This development proceeds through the internalization of activities that is first realized in social interactions like the activities in a classroom setting (Bakhurst 1991: 83). This kind of argument diverges from the earlier cognitive revolution which finally led to the cognitive debate. The situated perspective suggests that language is a social and contextual process. Vygotsky's socio-cultural perspective suggests that mental abilities should be studied by analyzing their development in the context of interaction with others. Thus, the zone of proximal development (ZPD) must be seen as the context in which careful interventions stimulate internalization with its insight to be seen in the detailed description of particular cases rather than quantification which serves as a rationale for this ethnographic study. Language seen through this perspective emerges from a social relationship and the development of skills of movements around objects and into physical and social spaces and into gestures. Hence, an ecological view of language therefore is against the rationalist notion that language is seen as cognition (in-put out-put), present in the brain.

The ecological view of language conceptualizes language as an inventive, innovative and creative force. Both paradigms argue that when we learn a language, we also in a way learn its sociocultural aspects with it which is suggestive of the participants' differences in their interpretations. This argument is summed up in the words of Leontiev (1981) that "these meanings could become available gradually as the learner may act and interact within and with [his/her] environment". Learning should not therefore be seen as a "holus bolus or a piecemeal migration of meaning to the inside of the learner's head, but rather the development of the increasingly effective ways of dealing with words and their meaning" (Leontiev 1981: 246). Thus, the researchers' aim and objective in this study does not only focus on the proficiency of the participants, but rather on their abilities to make meaning out of language use.

Since a constructivist view of language locates meaning in language use in context, it tallies with an ecological approach where everything is being connected. Thus an ecological view and a constructivist view of language assign a particular prominence to the learning environment, which is relevant to the context of this study. In light of this, language is representational and figurative (McRae 1991), dialogical and as a result, expansive (Bakhtin 1981); immanent and therefore semiotic (Peirce 1995). The above observation reinforces an Ecological view of language as it has the potential to open up alternative route of human enquiry to all other rational approaches in order for the participants to gain competence in intercultural communication.

The views examined so far suggest that language is dynamic rather than static; competence in language is only understood with reference to meaning that comes out from context, time, person and process (Van Lier 2000). Contextualization which is the lens, through which this study understands competence in intercultural communication, cannot therefore align with a quantitative survey because meaning is only made in interaction and within a given context. Our argument here is that any form of interpretation is based on a context as no interpretation can be context-free. When we grow up, we socialize with societies around us, and these societies help to nurture us into different cultures which in turn help us to see the world the way that we do. Our understanding of the world is not a universal one and as a result, all of us therefore have different world views. This implies that intercultural communication competence can only be achieved in a given context, the environment where interaction takes place and thus should only be understood qualitatively from the participants' point of view as is the case in this research.

Each context has its own signs (culture) in the form of verbal and non-verbal language that facilitates its world views. Therefore signs need to portray and represent the way that we see and interpret the world around us. It should only be through these signs that we can be able to construct the world around us subjectively. Therefore for intercultural communication competence to exist in a given context, the interactant is required to understand the schemata and frames (culture) of the people in that space.

The participants in the study therefore need effective and appropriate intercultural communication competence to realize their goals in Education. According to Chen and Starosta (1996: 359), for an individual to claim competence in intercultural communication, such an individual should have "the ability to negotiate cultural meanings and also to execute appropriately effective communication behaviors that would recognize the interactant's multiple identities in a specific environment". In the same vein, Bennet (1998) suggests that intercultural communication competence is the means through which individuals achieve mutual understanding in a culturally diverse community. Krasmusch (1993) further suggests a "third space" where a diverse population can come to an understanding through a dialogical exchange of ideas, emotions, visions and stories. Thus for the participants in this study to achieve their goals in an academic setting, mutual understanding is pivotal to get access to intercultural communication competence. The context of communication therefore is very essential for meaning making in any interpersonal/intercultural interaction encounters.

Since identity is a very prominent issue in intercultural communication competence, communication in the classroom can therefore either be constrained or enabled by issues of identity, competence and voice. In other words a focus on identity also helps to account for individual differences within, among and across cultural "others". Therefore it is suggested that all the models for intercultural communication competence should account for the reduction and the renegotiations of cultural identities. Yet all these models still fall short because they do not sufficiently problematize the formation of intercultural identities. That is "the pressure that may disrupt a steady progression in the development of acculturated identities into intercultural ones" (Guilherme 2002: 136). The participants therefore have the need to be aware of the context of interaction in order to make meaning out of their interpersonal interaction with others.

Although Byram (1997) considers knowledge, skills, attitudes and values as the basic requirements for competence, there is still dire need for cultural awareness. In light of this, the participants in this study also need the ability to evaluate critically their own practices and products to those of the other cultures around them.

Therefore there is need to understand the “other” in order to understand the “self”. Thus the sociocultural context where interpersonal interaction takes place is very critical in changing the perceptions, values and visions of those that are involved in the exchange (Holliday et al. 2004).

Kim (2002) is of the opinion that being competent in a given culture does not necessarily amount to competence in intercultural communication. Therefore Intercultural communication is an “internal capacity in each individual’s psychic to alter its existing attributes and structures to accommodate the demands of the environment” (Kim 1991: 268). Kim further suggests that these attributes embody a cognitive dimension (discerning meaning), the affective dimension (emotions involved with the willingness to accommodate different cultural ways) and the operational dimension (behavioural flexibility and resourcefulness in intercultural encounter). Kim fails in her observation to point out that ‘being perceived as a cultural different other in an intercultural interaction [can] contribute significantly to favourable outcomes (for both participation)’ (Arasaratnam and Doerfel 2005: 137-163).

The cultural identity approach is defined as “the effective negotiation process between two interactants in a novel communication episode” (Ting Toomey 1993: 73). In this approach, cognition, affect and behaviour constitute the components of intercultural communication competence. This means that the variables that are present in an interpersonal competence are also present in intercultural communication competence. One should also note the importance of motivation, knowledge and skills, which are the key components of interpersonal and intercultural communication competence. When in a classroom context the participants are asked to watch and describe an object, what each individual student sees, tend to vary depending on their world views probably from their prior/experiential experiences. Competence at this level can derive from their different subjectivities only when these subjectivities come to be merged. It is only when an interactant’s psyche translates into knowledge that we then talk about intercultural communication competence (Arasaratnam and Doerfel 2005). Thus competence in intercultural communication is only derived by looking at commonalities in the different perceptions in an intercultural communication encounter

(Anderson 1996). Said differently, “the perceptions of objective reality are influenced by variables that are unique to each individual and the only way to arrive at the true nature of what is perceived, is to find out if other individuals perceive it the same way” (Arasaratnam and Doerfel 2005).

In view of the above, language is used to “*mean* something and to *do* something” and that this “meaning and doing” are linked to the context of its use (Talbot 2007). Therefore for one to interpret a text properly, “one needs to work out what a speaker or a writer is doing through discourse and how this ‘doing’ can be linked to wider inter-personal, institutional, socio-cultural arm of social practice material contexts”. “Texts” in this respect refers to “the observable product of interaction,” whereas discourse is “the process of interaction itself: a cultural activity” (Talbot 2007: 9). This is suggestive of both Discourse Analysis (DA) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) which would be used as the analytical tools for this study. The stories that people construct about their lives is influenced by how they see themselves at a particular time. In this sense, identity is a life story (Whitty 2002). Narrative and self are inseparable in that the former is borne out of experience while it gives shape to experience. Narrative in this sense is considered as a version of reality, and as such an essential resource in the struggle to bring experiences to conscious awareness (Ochs and Capps 1996).

METHODOLOGY

This study is drawn from Foncha’s PhD research with Sivasubramaniam as the supervisor. The theoretical underpinnings examined in the Literature review suggest that a study of communication competence can best be understood qualitatively because competence is context based and can only be understood from a participant’s perspective. In this regard, the study affirmed its faith in the constructivist view of language learning where language teaching is seen as an “educational process capable of fostering educational outcomes in terms of students’ learning” (Elliott 1991: 50). It was based in a mixture of both a case study and ethnography to ascertain that the weaknesses of each design were overcome by the strength of the other. The population included lecturers, tutors

and students from the Faculty of Education of the University of Western Cape who were chosen randomly based on their availability. The data was collected through field notes, participant observation, naturally occurring data, questionnaires and interviews. The researchers played the role of an insider. All ethical considerations were dully observed. For the purpose of this study, only the interviews would be analysed because this instrument seems to cover all the others used for the collection of data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

At the top of the themes, language appeared to be very prominent since it can be seen as a social practice against the traditional scientific reductionist view of language as a system that is present in the brain (cognition). Through the metaphorical categorization of the data collected and with the help of the theoretical underpinning from the literature review, the study made use of the following themes: role of environment on language learning, English as a lingua franca and language of instruction, motivation for second language learning and Intercultural communication competence. For the purpose of this study, only the interviews from the Teachers and learners would be presented and analyzed.

The Role of Environment on Language Learning

Q: Do you think that the environment of the university provides enough support to these students for language learning?

Lecturer 10: *It is a very difficult question because most students who come here and are unable to speak English start speaking the language after a while without formally learning. Although I might say that the University does not help in this regards, I can say that since the language of instruction is English, students from foreign countries and Xhosa and Afrikaans speaking students have no choice but to learn how to speak the English language. Yeah the language problem is an issue and it is up to the students to make sure that they fit themselves into it or they won't be able to succeed.*

Lecturer 4: *I strongly think that the university helps to provide support like the writing Centre, PET project, ERRU etc. Besides, there*

is room for consultation both for tutorials and lectures just to give support. Although students may come here without a good knowledge of English, they learn easily because of the resources available.

The data above is indicative of the importance of an affective environment for language learning. The reason why it has to be affective is because it appears to provide the opportunity for the students to overcome their fears and anxieties, thus building self-confidence to participate in activities and events even if they were not conversant enough in them. This kind of environment can also provide an opportunity for students to get to know each other's background and consequently to understand "otherness" (Van Lier 2000).

English as Lingua Franca and Medium of Instruction

Q: So do you think the use of English is effective and efficient in the University of the Western Cape?

Lecturer 8: *Of course yes. There could not be any better language than English because it has an international status and the students in this university are very diverse. English is not only good for students but also for the staff because of their different linguistic and cultural backgrounds that is responsible for their differences.*

Q: Can you point out some of the advantages and disadvantages of the use of English as a language of instruction?

Lecturer 9: *As mentioned in the previous question, the status of English has placed it at an advantaged position because it is widely spoken all over the world. Again English is the most standardized language among all the other languages spoken around UWC. Still, English has all the resources needed for language learning, policy and planning. The only disadvantage that I can pick up is the fact that English is not an indigenous language.*

Q: What effect does English have on you as a student?

Student 6: *I think that English has a very positive effect because if I am doing well in English, it will help me to pass my examinations and I can also get a job anywhere in the world. I am able to learn other cultures from other students because of the use of English. I*

am very happy that we are using English for our studies.

The findings appear to signal a view of English as a lingua franca (common code) that functions globally and locally and which seems to align with the constructivist approach to language learning. The researchers think the above data presupposes that our ideologies in a language may determine our attitudes towards that language and whenever and wherever we may try to apply a positive attitude, we can possibly yield good results (Abongdia 2009).

In the same light, the data also appear to propose that English is a passport that could provide the visa for employment, travel and communication (Foncha and Sivasubramaniam 2014). In this sense, an English speaker appears to command more respect and may draw courteous responses in some situations than the speakers of indigenous languages possibly can. This is meant to suggest that expression and communication seem to be powered by English in UWC as a community where Linguistic competence appears to me the key to unlock the door of opportunities in a world where borders are blurring in the blink of an eye and where English appears to be the ideal language (Foncha 2013).

In keeping with the ideas of the ongoing processes of knowledge construction advocated above, this study therefore proposes that the environment of learning and participation are inseparable but these processes should not be regarded as individual acts of cognition (Van Lier 2000). Most of the knowledge humans learn is not wholly new, although it may be novel to the individuals encountering it. So engaging in interactions and activities interdependently links individuals' thinking and acting and their learning to social sources. Environments therefore seem to provide interactions with human partners and non-human artefacts that contribute to individuals' capacity to perform and learning is known to arise from their interaction and performance. These contributions to learning are conceptualized as being between individual social worlds before becoming a cognitive attribute (Vygotsky 1978).

Motivation for Language Learning

Q: How would you be able to interact with people that you do not know and whose language you do not speak?

Lecturer 1: *I can say it is very easy. All I need to do is to be friendly to the people, observe them keenly and make sure that I do not do things that they do not do. In short I just need to compose myself and the rest will fall in place. But if I am too inquisitive they will not like me and I will not be able to learn their language, their way of lives etc. I only need to keep my cool and that is about it.*

Q: The question now is why would you go through so much trouble to learn this language?

Lecturer 6: *If you meet people who do not speak English and you need to communicate with them, then you have no choice but to learn their language. You have to show some respect to the people and their ways and to do this you must learn their language. So the only way is to be able to say hello and so on so that they too can respect you.*

Q: Do you think that the environment of the university provides enough support to students for language learning?

Learner 3: *I think I agree because all the students are able to use English now without formally learning it.*

Q: What other reasons might force someone to learn a language that they do not like or a foreign language?

Learner 5: *Among the many reasons, studying is the key reason why I am studying English since all communication and assessment are in that language. I will not get a good job from the government if I do not speak English. You know what I mean? In short, without English you cannot do anything.*

The findings here appear to reinforce Blommaert et al.'s (2005: 203) observation that 'spatial environments organise particular regimes of language which can enable or disable particular linguistic identities'. The data also appears to tally with Gardner and Lamberts' assertion that:

An individual successfully acquiring a second language gradually adopts various features of behavior which characterize another linguistic and, as is often the case, another cultural group. The learner's ethnocentric disposition and his attitude toward the other group are believed to influence his success in learning the new language. His motivation to acquire the language is considered to be determined both by his attitudes toward the other group and by his orientation toward learning a second language (Gardner and Lambert 1972: 22-229).

On the basis of the above arguments, it does not seem to be a surprise that some students drop out of the university because of the language barrier. Thus, since the culture of higher education is based on academic writing it appears in this study to be communicatively incapacitating to the students who are not proficient in English and academic writing. People in this regard, seem to attribute meaning to spaces that they know and use. These spaces all appear to be filled with symbols and attributes (Vigouroux 2005) and these symbols and attributes might project indexicalities to them. Most of the participants appear to be of the view that context deciphers meaning. The study also seems to suggest that the accents that are used by the different role players do not only tell us where they come from but could also be indicative of their class (Blommaert et al. 2005: 208).

Intercultural Communication Competence

Q: What reasons would you give for wanting to become interculturally competent?

Lecturer 8: *For the most reason if you have to travel then it is necessary and you cannot do without. So you need to know other languages and particularly different cultures so that when you meet people from these different cultures, you can show them some respect instead of fighting with what they say or they do. This will also open job opportunities and you can be able to work with people from different places and backgrounds.*

Q: How do you think someone could become interculturally competent?

Lecturer 8: *Do what others do around you without trying to judge them. Try to understand why they do what they do rather than tell them why they should do it. It boils down to being patient with people around you so that you can appreciate their own ways. This is the way that you could be respected as well.*

Q: So in effect, are you saying that English solves the problem of diversity?

Student 2: *Exactly because every student comes to the University bearing in mind that they are teaching in English. Although they can use their mother tongue, the language of instruction should be English. I can say that although there are differences from our schools we can use English to solve this difference.*

Q: Given that their culture is different from yours, how do you come to terms with them?

Student 12: *Like I told you, I respect myself. If you want to fit in any community, any society, you must behave like them. God made us to be accepted in any community, any society if you see the way they are dressing, you must dress like them. But I can't dress like them. So they dress like they are dressing and I am dressing like I am dressing. They put on very ugly dresses.*

It can be noted that individuals engage actively in the process of determining the worth of what they experience and how they might engage with it and learn from it (Goodnow and Warton 1991). In light of this, these researchers hasten to suggest that social practices are able to provide different levels of pressure for individuals to engage with particular knowledge. This appears to be in keeping with Rogoff's (1995) suggestion that in the reciprocal process of learning both the object and the subject are transformed through interaction. The concept of co-participation (Billet 2001a) has been used to account for the reciprocal processes of learning shaped by interactions between what is afforded by the space and how individuals choose to engage with what is afforded. In this view and attested by the data, participation and interaction affordances are known to be shaped by local negotiations and ordering (Schumann 1986). These localized needs constitute the particular requirements for engagement and interactions. However, situational factors alone could be insufficient to understand learning environments. What is required should be the understanding of the way individuals' agents' actions and intentions (Somerville 2002) which might help to shape how they participate in and learn through interactions. This agency has social as well as cognitive origins. The kind of social experiences that individuals have throughout their life history contributes to what constitutes their subjectivity and identity which then shapes the exercises of their actions. In considering learning as participation and interaction, it is important to stress that engagement in and what is learnt from socially-determined practices is not determined by the social practice. Instead, individuals decide how they participate in and what they construe and learn from their experience (Billet 2004: 315).

When the participants attempt personal constructions and explorations of meaning, they

somehow get to use the alternatives available for them in the language that they use frequently. As pointed out in the literature review, this appears to be consistent with a late-modern age typified by the free flow of people and ideas around the world (Appadurai 1996). English enjoys an almost unassailable position as the dominant language of global trade and commerce. Because of its predominant role in these arenas, it is being introduced into the language policies of many countries, creating the type of negotiated multilingualism described by Dor (2004). In this kind of negotiated multilingualism, there is a constant tension between English and the local languages, as nations try to balance their demand for English with the continued use and survival of their local languages. In addition to its dominant role in the global sphere, English is one of the major colonial languages used in Africa as a whole and Higher Education in South Africa in particular. In the context of this study, English appears to have been localized in the sense that it has become the language of instruction and lingua franca of most of South African Universities. Secondly, English is the language that dominates in public spaces despite the fact that it appears to be the language with the lowest number of native speakers (Heese 2010). Thus English can be seen as the language that unites the diverse classrooms and also South Africa as a nation. In this regard, it provides the participants in this study and South Africans at large with the necessary repertoires for understanding diversity to gain intercultural communicative competence, the rationale for this research.

CONCLUSION

The research questions involved a wide range of things which included intercultural communication competence, identity construction, linguistic repertoires, diversity and the construction of a learning context which in this investigation constitutes the governing dynamics. The data analysed thus far attest to the effectiveness of these dynamics as well as their fall outs. Based on the above, the discussion was on a construction of an integrative interpretation since everything was connected in the narratives and interpretations of the participants. In this regard, the study therefore made a bold attempt to interpret the findings in the form of

metaphor in ‘which stock of knowledge hang together and in which the governing dynamic articulates interpreted knowledge along with its features of tentativeness and incompleteness.’

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is therefore necessary to suggest that language practitioners need to create a conducive environment for learning. This can be achieved through sustained silent reading and free writing in class not for the purpose of assessments. Once learners get use to these practices, it would then help to develop a love for reading and writing which are the most essential skills for formal learning.

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