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ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY FOR LEARNERS: LET THEM ALL SPEAK AND WRITE

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ABSTRACT

In classroom situations encouraging learners to holistically engage in spoken and written tasks in English language learning with characteristics of being additional and unfamiliar, is equated to enhancing learning environment, thereby fostering individual and collective growth. For organizations to inspire recipients with speaking and writing abilities, this leads to innovative solutions. This paper seeks to inquire whether fostering opportunities in an organizational capacity for learners to engage in speaking and written activities have any significant importance towards enhanced language development. Underpinning this inquiry is a qualitative research approach with a case study design to explore key characteristics of the studied case. To gather data, five conveniently nominated participants were identified from a rurally located institution of higher learning. Semi-structured interviews led to a thematic analysis of gathered data. Findings revealed that through consistent engagements in spoken and written texts (i) there were improved communication skills and (ii) the development of an inclusive learning environment. The study concludes that when learner communication skills have been refined, this is tantamount to academic excellence with recommendations that individual learner contributions should be valued as inclusion promotes mutual responsiveness among teachers and learners not only in language learning but across all subjects underpinning curriculum.

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Introduction.

Organizational capacity is defined as the ability of the organization to achieve the intended goals and objectives with competence (Celce-Murcia, 2008). It is therefore a functional stance for an effective and efficient classroom situation for learners to be encouraged towards speaking and writing proficiencies as means to enhance learning environment, thereby, fostering individual and shared growth with regard to English language development (Sutaman & Febriani, 2021). In line with the preceding argument, Wirantaka (2016) asserts that learners who speak and write fluently when engaging in English as the language of instruction and assessment are those who get advantaged in comprehending texts; and this is aligned with academic attainment. There are various benefits when learners in an organization are afforded spontaneous opportunities to engage in speaking and written activities and such benefits positively contribute to the capacity of an organization (Kerr, 2020).

After that, when learners in diverse abilities are stimulated to speak and write in an unfamiliar language learning, the growth prospects of such an organization tap into a wide range of perspectives and experiences. Being vibrant speakers and writers as proclaimed by Al-Jamal and Al-Jamal (2013), can result in innovative school environment solutions coupled with a comprehensive understanding of

challenges within all subjects underpinning the prescribed curriculum as there are texts to be comprehended (Saleh, 2019). The vital situation is that learners need to be allowed to share their own perceptions, goals, and objectives in whatever lesson being presented as this strategy caters to inclusive learning. Furthermore, diverse information sharing has the benefit of being congruent to the exchange of ideas encouraging critical thinking which is an essential skill needed to holistically understand the lesson content or the subject matter (Ahmad, 2014).

Therefore, exposure to a participatory atmosphere by Wan Mohd Yunus (2020) is regarded as a dynamic approach intended to encourage those learners observed to be displaying reserved or shy attitudes, thereby building confidence in them by outlining how valuable their input is. Long (2015) is of the same opinion by declaring that when learners get acquainted with consistent spoken and written tasks, this being done in the form of open learning group activity, confidence is nurtured for one to express oneself displaying improved communication (Habibi, Sukirno, Taufina, Sukma, Suriani & Putera, 2020). Extension of such confidence is equated to overall self-esteem in other subjects offered and for life-long prospects. For such approaches to be effectively implemented it then becomes a vital need for English language teachers to create a safe yet respectful environment to cater for comfortability as learners express themselves and collaborate with peers. In this regard, both summative and formative assessments might include but are not limited to presentations, group and pair discussions, as well as written assignments as these allow peer cross-learning and exposure to an unfamiliar language (Kerr, 2020).

As both speaking and writing are fundamental aspects of English language learning and of academic importance (Adam, Abid & Bantulu, 2021), studies have been previously conducted by other scholars on capacitating learning through speaking and writing, this study has identified a gap (Al-Jarf, 2021g). Little is pronounced by literature on the effectiveness of certain teaching-learning strategies to enhance language learning, hence there arose a main research question to be addressed by this investigation: What strategies are employed by organizations towards promoting English language speaking and writing as learning and language development tools?

Literature Review.

In this sector it is where a wide range review of existing literature on organizational capacity for learning has been conducted, explored, and interrogated in relation to how fundamental language learning aspects of speaking and writing impact language proficiency (Febtiningsih, Ardiya & Wibowo, 2021). Despite language development studies that have been previously undertaken, there are still gaps in the literature, therefore, the research aims to address a gap that includes a lack of the effectiveness of certain strategies used during teaching-learning processes towards language learning.

Empirical literature.

Upskilling and Collaboration.

For an organisation to be considered effective in producing learners who can vibrantly express themselves in both spoken and written texts, it becomes essential to upskill all involved with collaboration traits for improvement and achieving the expected language learning outcomes (Philp, Adams, Iwashita, 2014). However, teachers offering other subjects besides languages need to be conversant and encourage open communication as this is beneficial for learning. Therefore, the Staff Management Teams (SMT) have a huge responsibility as school managers to ensure they strike a balance of promoted language proficiency versus productivity in all subjects fully dependent on spoken and written texts for learner progression (Bobojonova, 2020).

Lantolf, Poehner, and Swain (2018) contend that these two language aspects: speaking and writing, when collaboratively and concurrently addressed, not only benefit English language curriculum but also have underlying advantages of modifying social, personal, and academic advancement. With this progression, learners are enabled chances to coherently articulate thoughts in a manner depicting improved analytical and critiquing skills needed to groom the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR) generation of scholars (Pascale, Sternin & Sternin, 2010; Shadiev & Yang, 2020). Learners are regarded as achievers of such high economic levels, which propels there are projections of self-esteemed and confident learners (Nunan & Richards, 2015).

Is Speaking and Writing Core in Language Development?

With zeal and interest, I had to closely interrogate the impact of speaking and writing in an organizational capacity towards language development, and a question arises into whether speaking and writing are core aspects of language development. Indeed, Sheokarah and Pillay (2021) affirm a fully-fledged language acquisition encompasses a variety of related communication skills, inclusive and not limited to listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Payne, 2020). This simply depicts that both speaking and writing are significant aspects of language development (Golparvar & Khafi, 2021).

As speaking is aligned with oral language development it becomes vital to consider the production of sounds, letters, words, and lastly, sentences as they help to convey meaning. When learners have attained these necessary speaking skills, the bottom line is that they can develop into worthwhile scholars who are able to formulate paragraphs through the already attained skill of sentence construction (Nassi & Nasser, 2019). These critical forms and stages of language development are considered a viable foundation for communication, not only for languages learnt but as competent citizens who are able to confidently communicate and interrogate texts in global perspectives and dimensions (Bayraktar Balkir, 2021). For learners to have been capacitated till reaching these growth stages, they are considered to have attained essential communication skills, tantamount to excelled academic success (Golombek, Klingsieck & Scharlau, 2019).

Concurrently and alongside the essence of spoken texts, written language development also implicates the creation of written symbols and letters, words, sentences, and clauses. Writing is the uppermost complex skill meant to allow learners opportunities to compile structured texts aligned with grammar rules towards refined language attributes (Hidayati, 2018). Therefore, it is worth noting that language teachers need to take into cognizance nurturing writing skills involving understanding of grammar, vocabulary, and syntax (Zhang, 2013). This structure is perfectly mastered when learners have become well-versed in the ability to convey facts clearly and logically (Mamaraimova, 2022).

It therefore goes without hesitation that both speaking and writing contribute to various aspects of language development through vocabulary acquisition, grammar and syntax, comprehension, cognitive development, and academic achievement (Gregg & Steinberg, 2016). These functional language developmental aspects can be achieved through engaging in speaking and listening, thereby getting exposure to new and unfamiliar words, with meanings. This expansion of vocabulary is applicable and viable for both written contexts. As learners engage in these academic activities, they get acquainted with grammar rules and improve comprehension skills. It is argued by Wen (2013) that reading comprehension and writing proficiency are considered durable and fundamental language skills for academic success across entire subjects buttressing the prescribed curriculum (Bingham, Quinn, McRoy, Zhang & Gerde, 2018). Educationally, this also has an implication that for enhanced English language development both teachers and learners need to cultivate within themselves these necessary skills for excelled communication and heightened academic endeavours throughputs. All the debated language components, when integrated, immensely contribute to a holistic language learning experience toward framing proficient and comprehensive speakers and writers.

Theoretical Literature.

Swanson (2013) pronounces theoretical framework as a summarised structure of theories derived from hitherto tested knowledge permitting researchers to have theoretical underpinnings of matters currently undergoing investigation. As this structure supports a theory underpinning a research study, it therefore is not framed by the researcher's own thoughts about the investigated topic, rather, is a compilation of synthesized thoughts by scholars in relevant fields of study or research. Theoretical frameworks benefit researchers in framing their studies towards a refined research question intended to guide and interpret research findings that lead to outlining recommendations and future studies thereof. As the study findings are situated within the underpinning theoretical framework, rigor helps to lens the gathered data in one's own research study, thereby assisting to augment discussions as well as deepening scholastic arguments (Kivunja, 2015).

For the purposes of this investigation, two different theories underpin this study. With an understanding that this chapter outlines two crucial language aspects, speaking and writing, the author felt it imperative that this study be underpinned by both speaking and writing theories as these aspects are intertwined and inseparable because proficient writers' point of departure is excelled with speaking, reading, and writing aptitudes (Kosimov, 2021).

Speaking Theory.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (Mahn & John-Steiner, 2012) alludes to the social and cultural context entangling language development. It is suggested by this theory that to cultivate speaking skills it is essential to interact and engage with knowledgeable persons like conversationalists, peers, parents, and teachers as language is considered a tool for communication. If this tool is efficiently used, there are cognitive development projections. Educationally, this implies that it becomes the responsibility of English language teachers as recipients of teaching-learning practises to generate language-rich environments intended for inspiring interactions that are functional and meaningful (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 1995). This could be observed by assigning collaborative projects like discussions, engaging in dialogues, debates, and sharing of ideas as this helps to facilitate language learning.

Writing Theory.

Another underpinning theory is the Social Construction of Writing Theory by Lantolf and Poehner (2014). The social aspect of writing is persuaded by this theory. This theory brings to the fore that individual cognitive processes are not solely confined in written tasks, as well, are shaped and refined by socio-cultural factors as meaning is drawn from real-life experiences and interactions by most writers, thereby constructing meaning from the so-called socio-cultural contexts of human living (Ertmer & Newby, 2013). This theory has educational implications that English language teachers have a massive task to motivate learners towards realising that their own personal experiences have an impact to awaken and broaden their scope in realising and seeing writing as meaningful when infused with real-life endeavours and social activities. This helps learners within the schooling environment to realise some crucial aspects of social dimension when writing whatever form of texts. Further than that, as they work collaboratively for peer assessment, they get exposure to learn from each other best writing practises and such a strategy contributes on improved quality writing (Van der Kleij, 2019).

Both these theories provide benefits as a wake-up-call on how speaking and writing skills develop especially when inclined within diverse learners and socio-cultural attributes. These are the core factors that inform not only language learning, but also operative communication, curriculum development, and teaching pedagogies that would enhance speaking and writing proficiencies of all learners across varying schooling bands (Harmer, 2015). As outlined by the stated educational implications, the essence of formulating a supportive and collaborative learning environment for encouraging effective speaking and writing skills is accentuated (Imsa-ard, 2020). For teaching-learning dynamics to have integrated these two theories, language development, and up-skilled communication abilities can be enhanced, thereby producing critical thinkers envisaging academic accomplishment.

Methods and Materials.

Jackson, Mazzei, Denzin and Lincoln (2018) declare that the term research methodology is the orderliness of systemic approaches and methods used to conduct research for reasons of gathering the necessary structured information for the investigated problem. For this investigation, a qualitative approach was deemed necessary with its characteristic of determining and comprehending meaning from the study participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Methodological Design.

An identified functional research approach becomes more viable when entrenched in a research design as resonated by Mckenney and Reeves (2018). This qualitative inquiry was embedded in a case study design which became the phenomenological pillar to help explore strategies employed by organizations towards promoting speaking and writing as learning and language development tools. Additionally, the in-depth case study enabled provision of rich, context-specific insights together with a comprehensive understanding of the organizational capacity of learners and ways that would allow them to speak and write, thus contributing to their learning experiences.

Population and Sampling.

Within the studied institution of higher learning located in a rural Education District in the Eastern Cape Province, all language teachers were considered as the population of this study. To directly interrogate the underlying challenges on how the organisation supported learner expression impact the overall learning environment, five conveniently nominated participants were identified as the relevant

and convenient sample as they have been offering English language-related modules for the past number of years to both post-graduate and undergraduate learners enrolled in this university. As articulated by (Creswell, 2015), with the background to have offered services in a rurally located institution for some years, that would have an impact to allow this cohort of participants to share their real-life experiences as diverse learners enrolled emanated from varying linguistic constituencies and complexities. Additionally, with vast experience to have offered tuition to learners enrolled for different programs, post and undergraduate, makes these participants convenient because of this diversity in educational contexts.

Research Instruments.

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Gathered data through semi-structured interviews was analysed to compare the contrast between different approaches liable to promote learner speaking and writing aptitudes. Later, thematic analysis was administered by transcribing and coding the interview data (Davidson, 2009). This process was done by looking for areas of convergence through re-listening to audio tapes and re-reading field notes constructed, until frequent codes, themes and patterns were identified from differing participant viewpoints (Locke, Feldman, Golden-Biddle, 2022). When no more additional information could be gathered, it was evident that a point of data saturation had been reached because no emerging themes and perceptions could be identifiable. With a closer look at the newly formed data patterns, one could denote and draw an inclusive picture of how learner organizational capacity is prejudiced by spoken and written texts. The section below discusses the acknowledged themes as the findings of this study.

As undertaking research needs one to ensure observance of ethical considerations, for this study to be conducted in accordance, procedures for informed consent were followed throughout the entire research process, as this study dealt with human subjects (Evans & Lewis 2018). Permission was applied for and obtained from the participants by completing the informed consent forms. After participants were notified of issues to keep all their identities confidential and anonymous, they willingly indicated an eagerness to be research subjects towards assisting in obtaining the required information. All these procedures were adhered to for the maintenance of data integrity and scholarly academic standards.

Discussions of Results.

This is the section where findings are discussed within the contexts of both the main research question and the prevailing literature. Accordingly, implications of the findings for organizational practices have been highlighted in this section.

As the study had its main aim to address a gap indicating lack of the effectiveness for certain strategies used during teaching-learning processes towards English language learning, findings divulged that organisational capacity when spoken and written texts were at the core during language teaching-learning practises, there are improved communication skills and an enhanced inclusive learning environment.

Improved Communication Skills.

If learners are afforded regular speaking and writing opportunities during classroom engagements, they get assistance towards refined communication skills.

When arguing on this concern, P 1 reflected:

To my perception, spoken communication has refined language proficiency for the learners I teach because at times when they fail to understand what a specific concept means, for me as an instructor to change the tone, thus using body language for conveying emotions, they begin to get a grasp of the underlying meaning.

P3 had a differing dimension but still in line with improved communication:

Considering how digitalization has swept over the past practises and made written texts to be of dominant, as language teachers we should not be overwhelmed to the extent that we begin to underestimate how strong and vibrant the power of face-to-face conversations for holistically moulding learning is. Over and above, while communication permits immediate and real-time feedback, written texts also drive learners to craft their comprehension in a more coherent and logical manner for any reader to easily identify misunderstandings and follow the tune of events.

In line with the above claims, P5 articulates:

To me, written text is a prerequisite for formal communication and academic texts as against the spoken language which is a necessity for informal interactions. Meaning, for learners to have refined communication skills, it is our duty as English language teachers to plant such speaking and communication skills through academic events like presentations, debates, and symposiums.

With the responses above, the core of spoken language rests in its capability to build rapport. It goes without say that spoken communication for it to become engaging, it is therefore regarded as effective for teaching and learning discussions (Junining, 2014). In the same vein, language that is spoken leads to persuasive group discussions as compared to written text, which is much more suited for documenting academic information, be it teaching and learning material, formative or summative assessments.

As prerequisites to effective language learning, there is a need to balance the two fundamental aspects. It is the context that guides such balance and meaning, written texts are decisive and mostly anticipated with formal education whereas spoken language fosters understanding leading to writing well-refined texts. Further than that, spoken language is aligned with active listening which goes hand in glove with immediate responses, whilst careful in-depth analysis of the rules of grammar is a crucial requirement for written texts (Mayasari, Kasim & Zulfadi, 2017). This important consideration helps learners when closely mentored and monitored, present well-polished and precise work.

With an alarming decline in learner language proficiencies, it therefore becomes vital that language teachers take into cognisance capacitating learners with spoken and written texts as these aspects are essential tools that help with the provision of structured and organized texts. At close consideration of participant responses, one can deduce how the importance of spoken and written texts helps improve communication skills as learners get capacitated on how well and clearly they should be effective listeners able to respond in a thoughtful means, leading to articulating ideas in academic and professional manner (Riaz & Akhtar, 2019). Rahmiani and Malena (2020) accord that to allow learners freedom of expression creates that sense of ownership for their learning endeavours. With this empowerment strategy, motivation among both learners and teachers can be increased, and it is already anticipated that highly motivated learners tend to invest by developing interest in exploring further beyond the prescribed curriculum and this is linked with cognitive ability development (Lai, 2019).

Inclusive Learning Environment.

This being the second main finding of the study revealed that together with spoken and written texts when each learner's contribution is valued, a classroom environment that is inclusive is formed. When this sense of inclusivity is created, mutual respect and empathy are then promoted among learners and across the entire schooling environment, positively working as remedial toward the reduction of either bullying or exclusion.

For this prerogative, P 2 commented:

Upon noticing a decline in learner language proficiency, I have made it a norm for all the levels that I teach that I consistently embark on assigning spoken text- activities with their advantage of being more inclusive as compared to other forms of assessment because this form of assessment allows for discussions that are open for all, thereby acting as encouragement for every unique opinion to be shared. Be that as it may, written texts are also worth administering as they provide a structured manner of information transmission that ensures accessibility.

P4 affirmed:

For teachers to allocate spoken language has been noted to have some essence that fosters a sense of community, teamwork, and collaboration. In the concept of 'ubuntu' these are regarded as critical aspects that necessitate an all-inclusive learning environment.

In a similar accord with the previous two participants, P 1 argued:

Imagine how difficult it becomes to have a handicapped learner in your classroom, with both speaking and writing ability as the greatest challenge! But the beauty of it as this cohort of learners gets adapted to spoken texts, this has proved to be useful to help build and maintain cognitive skills of being able to socialize and communicate. As these learners share real-life experiences they engage in real-time dialogue, share experiences, thus co-creating knowledge within themselves.

The above responses are meant to reflect ranging opinions and perceptions on spoken and written text roles towards bringing to the fore an inclusive learning environment that promotes learner-centred approaches to education (Mercieca, 2017). Denoted by claims from various participants above, written texts have been proven to serve an advantage towards provision of resources to support independent learning. An inclusive learning environment is regarded as intermingling spoken and written texts, yet accommodative for differing learning styles and abilities. For a learning environment to be regarded as inclusive, it is where active engagement solely relies on spoken language with its significance in enhancing interactional discussions (Tseng, 2017). Learners regarded as those with learning disabilities benefit from spoken language activities as they provide immediate feedback regarded as extra support for that special group of learners.

Spoken language, with its being dynamic, is noted to accommodate diverse learning styles. As performing differently, one important causal factor might be impacted by cultural diversity which might result in accent variations for spoken languages due to factors of language complexities. In a classroom environment, this calls for a fostered supportive learning community where active and efficient communication needs to be promoted among learners (Omidvar & Sukumar, 2013). For learners to have formed relationships and connections, that is regarded an essential point of departure for an inclusive environment. Concurrently, for learning to be considered a self-directed study, the reference point is about written text. These types of texts provide universal access to knowledge. With this noted essence, clarity together with reliability in communication is offered with administering written texts.

Therefore, for education processes to be regarded as learner-centred, there should be some equilibrium between spoken and written texts to qualify learners choosing the format that best suits their varying learning style (Mackey & Gass, 2015). Learner-centeredness, if efficiently adhered to, need to prioritize communication skills development across spoken and written forms. Amongst the essential lifelong skills cutting across, are speaking, and writing skills, so, these need to be planted in learners for academic attainment and global competence (Crystal, 2003). Synchronously, an inclusive setting is characterized by spoken communication that addresses diverse learners needs while written text personalise the content that favours diverse learning preferences.

Although findings discussed in the preceding paragraphs triumph that language development is enhanced when aspects of spoken and written texts are made a priority, it is necessary that this paper reflects and acknowledge limitations encountered when this study was conducted. One and foremost limitation is centred around learner diversity. Even if some participants greatly considered spoken language essence towards curbing inclusivity, it becomes essential that with the wide learner diversity, learner preferences might vary to an extent of non-benefit by other learners, individuals, or groups (Wang, 2018). The second observed limitation is in line with overgeneralization. Collaboration was captured by most responses to be an advantageous outcome of administering spoken texts. Be that as the case might be, if not efficiently and properly facilitated, some learners might be deprived and excluded due to voices that might tend to be dominant over others as some learners are shy because of diversity in human character coupled with miscellaneous learning styles, let alone fear, frustration and anxiety of being exposed by lacking information for the so-called English language of instruction and evaluation. Lastly, in close consideration of accent variation challenges aligned with diverse learner home-backgrounds, the study perceives that linguistic and cultural diversity needs further inquiry as this is of great concern for most schooling environments (Lantolf, J., and S. L. Thorne, 2007; Demir Ayaz, Ozkardas & Ozturan, 2019).

Conclusions.

The main aim of this study was to examine whether fostering opportunities in an organisational capacity for learners in line with spoken and written activities has any significant importance towards enhanced language development. It is reaffirmed by this paper that spoken and written activities, when effectively and efficiently administered, is a prerequisite irrespective of learner diversity, towards improved language proficiency, with inclinations of learner academic attainment. This paper therefore concludes that participant responses have played a huge role of providing valuable insights about the functionality of spoken and written texts in inclusive learning environments that highly consider learner-centred contexts. In congruence, as the paper has identified some pertinent study limitations, this has an essence of diagnosing all-inclusive and educational strategies effective enough to accommodate all teaching and learning recipients.

This paper brings to the attention of all stakeholders involved in the education system especially teachers, learners, wider community, and curriculum designers, to recognize how significant is spoken and written communication in the learning process holistically. This means language teachers have a task to create superbly inclusive learner-centred educational environments not specifically for promoting language learning, but for this notion being spread across all subjects buttressing the prescribed curriculum in the South African schooling environment. It is further recommended that it could be worth developing and implementing professional development programs that would help with skills development thereby instilling the necessary and required knowledge to integrate spoken and written communication in a functional manner that would redefine teaching pedagogies. In addition to that, curriculum design together with policy changes can also re-consider putting emphasis on how essential balanced communication modes is, as well strive at the provision of relevant and purposeful resources for implementation and access for all.

For future research studies, this paper proposes that it might be essential to conduct studies on the long-term impact of learner expression on organizational learning or cross-cultural comparisons. Alternatively, studies that are longitudinal in nature could be conducted to closely look at and incorporate long-term impact of spoken and written communication cutting across inclusive learning environments. If such studies could be successfully conducted, this paper believes tracking learner academic and social development for the successive years could be attained.

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