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A socially inclusive teaching strategy for transforming the teaching of English first additional language

Abstract

This paper explores ways of including indigenous knowledge systems in the teaching of English First Additional Language (EFAL). The aim is to use a socially inclusive teaching strategy in such a manner that the imbalances that past oppressive regimes brought into the teaching and learning of a second language, EFAL in this case, is challenged and possibly reversed. A desperate need for basic educational resources understandably warrants the promotion of a culture that is conducive to learning. Lacking resources are not limited to teacher knowledge, as can be gleaned from schools situated in rural settings. Undesirable cultures and conditions not conducive to learning prevail at the expense of hope and socially just educational practices. Indigenous knowledge systems and community cultural wealth, embedded in rural settings, are often underplayed and ignored. However, if incorporated in the teaching and learning process, they can create a familiar learning environment. In this paper, a socially inclusive teaching strategy was found to be helpful in ensuring the sustenance of transformation of learning while simultaneously contributing to the transformation of teaching English first additional language. This transformative charter of the paper warrants the framing of critical emancipatory research (CER) while adapting participatory action research principles to engage those affected by the problem and to determine solutions captured through meetings, workshops, document analysis, focus groups discussions and observations. The conversations were audio- and videotaped for the purpose of data analysis at the later stage. The reflections that permeate the analytic, interpretive and educative phases of CER, discourses that were subjected to van Dijk's socio-cognitive critical discourse analysis, were found to be very helpful. Research findings confirm the two-way relationship between the availability of educational resources and learner attainment.

Keywords: *basic educational resources, decolonisation, rural settings, socially inclusive teaching strategy, transformation*

1. Introduction

Worldwide, schools situated in poor and isolated areas tend to be under-supplied with relevant and useful educational resources. As a result, these schools experience tremendous pressure as they attempt to offer learners a quality education through the provision of quality teaching and learning. Schools do this despite a lack of resources, which has been proven to influence the quality of teaching and

learning (Equal Education, 2010:3; Giordano, 2008:6). The pressure arising from this problem results in the development of a culture characterised by key stakeholders blaming each other for the learners' poor performance, and a focus by textbooks on content that is not relevant to the lives of rural learners, which, in turn, compromises the teaching and learning process (Wassermann, 2017:19). If teachers focus on the lack of resources, their energy and efforts are diverted from their core responsibilities. This diversion leads to the loss of another critical resource, that of the teaching capabilities of the teachers themselves, including leadership, pastoral care, administration and pedagogical content knowledge (Novak, 2010). This paper argues that teachers should apply their pedagogical content knowledge of Home Language (L1) and English First Additional Language (EFAL) (L2) to make up for the lack of the resources as doing so would make a real contribution in transforming the teaching and learning process.

Most of the resources a school needs, such as indigenous knowledge and equipment for games and cultural activities, are enhanced by the quality of teachers' pedagogical content knowledge (Kersten & Rohde, 2013). If teachers apply their pedagogical content knowledge, they enable learners to access, deconstruct and reconstruct indigenous knowledge and cultural activities into useful academic knowledge and apply it accordingly. Indigenous games have educational value and can be used in the classroom to encourage learners to use language instead of merely thinking about the difficult concepts they must learn (Kersten & Rohde, 2013; Novak, 2010). These games encourage learners to cooperate and interact actively with peers and with their own learning. Moreover, cultural activities encourage learners to be creative, spontaneous and interested in their work (Mahlomaholo, 2013:2; Phillipson, 2009) by requiring them to use things that matter to them and language in a meaningful way. As a result, teachers can use indigenous knowledge and games to teach and transform the learning of L1 and L2 effectively, which is, in this case, EFAL (DBE, 2014:20; Kirby, Griffiths & Smith, 2014:108; Scharer, 2012:2).

The successful integration of indigenous knowledge into the teaching and learning of L1 and subsequently L2 is reliant on participatory and communicative action of participants from diverse backgrounds, which, in turn, depends on the active engagement of people whose community cultural wealth may be underplayed and ignored (Barnhardt, 2005:9; Battiste, 2005). This inclusion of community members in the processes of integrating indigenous knowledge and culture in the teaching and learning of L1 and L2 necessitates the adoption of a pertinent socially inclusive teaching strategy (SITS). SITS includes not only knowledge and skills acquisition, but also critical engagements that are crucial for moving beyond the traditional teaching space (Mahlomaholo, 2013). The main purpose of this paper is to devise means to discourage role players from blaming others for failures while doing nothing about the problems, and instead devise mechanisms to integrate the subjugated indigenous knowledge that is available to teach L2 to transform language learning (Wassermann, 2017).

Pursuant to the challenges set out in the introduction, the paper responds to the question:

How best can indigenous knowledge systems be incorporated into the teaching and learning of English First Additional Language (L2) to (re)-construct concrete and meaningful learning content for the transformation of learning?

This question prompts a demonstration of how EFAL (L2) learning environments in rural settings can be transformed by incorporating pertinent indigenous knowledge as part of EFAL content and/or teaching and learning processes. In this regard, the paper identifies subtle but impactful elements of colonialism that may still linger in EFAL learning environments, such as

textbooks that are Western-oriented, with learning activities that do not cater for learners in rural settings. The paper discusses socially inclusive teaching approaches and/or strategies to ensure easy access to relevant sources to explore what learners know and/or with what they are familiar. This paper aims to facilitate mechanisms to incorporate such knowledge in the teaching and learning process. As such, a SITS supports deep learning and is responsive to learners' needs, which are ever changing and contextual (Biesta, 2011:26; Freire, 1985:8–11).

2. The lens

The SITS is couched in a critical emancipatory research (CER) approach, which is the lens through which the problem above is investigated. A SITS is a type of teaching method that attends to learners' learning requirements socially, considers their various backgrounds, learning styles and abilities and ensures that the stakeholders involved feel valued and emancipated (Mahlomaholo, 2013:3). SITS is an approach that inculcates richness of culture and knowledge to individual learners, thus enhancing equity, equality, social justice, freedom, hope and fairness in terms of learning opportunities for all, regardless of learners' diversity (Malebese, 2016). Such a strategy aims to bring together learners' indigenous knowledge and expertise into a classroom environment in order to enhance EFAL (L2) competency. This means that a SITS shares the same ontological and epistemological stances as CER. With that in mind, a SITS views reality or truth as contextual and ever changing (Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000:9).

The crux of this paper is the interconnected relationships between the teachers, parents, learners, society and other stakeholders involved. They all have diverse expertise as agents, and they employ various teaching approaches. SITS also considers knowledge development and creation as being a collective endeavour (Hoppers, 2002:2), which gives rise to its inclusive nature. Banks and Banks (2009:1) and Gay (2010:157) believe a socially inclusive pedagogy requires a practical intervention that harnesses people's indigenous ways of knowing, that encourages hands-on participation and that is sensitive to diverse teaching and learning activities and procedures. These ideas provide an excellent foundation for teachers to determine the types of activities and consortiums required for quality teaching and learning (Gale, Mills & Cross, 2017:347; Smyth, 2012:9) and to achieve goals of social justice, equity, equality, freedom and fairness. A SITS is sensitive to issues of power as they relate to an accommodation of diversity and respect for subjugated teaching and learning practices (Akena, 2012:600). The participation of the stakeholders involved is influenced by their indigenous knowledge, and as such, the way stakeholders mediate ongoing activities in the teaching and learning process are facets of CER.

CER comprises the interpretive, the analytical and the educative phases (Tracey & Morrow, 2012:112). Through these phases, CER critiques, challenges and transforms the status quo by empowering the marginalised (Nkoane, 2012:99). SITS applies these principles in an integrated and inclusive manner to the teaching and learning situations. It focusses on teaching strategies and learning styles with an added aim of fostering the use of as many strategies and learning styles as possible to maximise the possibilities of successful and sustainable learning. During the interpretive phase, the SITS involved teaching in small segments, incorporating and through much practise and repetition, reinforcing abstract concepts with concrete examples (Watson & Watson, 2011:64). The critical analytical phase of CER encourages critical examination of social issues, given that its focus is on the essence

of the problem (Nkoane, 2012:99; Watson & Watson, 2011:64) as learners' voices carry indigenous meanings and experiences.

The aim of this phase is to help all the stakeholders involved, especially learners, to understand how to interact with their personal, effective investment in textual reception. The aim of SITS is to bring together different skills, knowledge and expertise in a classroom environment to enhance learners' subject competency. Thus, we can conclude that the CER and SITS approaches fit within the critical theory and are focused on empowering individuals and transforming the teaching and learning process, as well as practices that influence oppression and inequality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:37). Lastly, in the educative phase, the researcher and the stakeholders involved took up a clear position about intervening in hegemonic practices, served as advocates to expose the material effects of marginalised locations and offered alternatives (Boud, 2013:32; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:ix-xvi).

Drawing on Freire's (1970:66) concept of education and literacy, I frame the creation of a SITS context for marginalised learners. Doing so involves raising their awareness of the power they possess if they work collectively as a team to overcome their learning barriers. Avelar (2011:2) asserts that Freire's perception of humankind and oppression leads us to understand his method of raising consciousness. Hence, the choice of the CER lens in support of SITS serves to improve the effort to address equity, social justice, freedom, peace and hope (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011:37). CER principles encourage all participating members to promote creative and constructive actions that address the social realities discussed in or outside classrooms through a variety of transformative literacy practices and modalities (Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000:9–10). The most salient and consistent concept interwoven throughout this scholarly work is the idea of social inclusivity and a transformed learning community, which are necessary conditions for the equal treatment of all people in society.

3. The role of home language in the acquisition of additional language

Cook (2013:234) and De Keyser (1997:197) assert that the impact of L2 learning is a profoundly unsettling psychological proposition and that limited L1 proficiency is a serious barrier to learning L2. This situation is worsened by the prevalence of external factors such as the lack of appropriate support and mentoring, and the shortage of or neglect of resources, as is common in rural settings. Cook (2013:8) maintains that anxiety is a major obstacle to be overcome in teaching and learning when using another language. Also, perceptions that L2 is a barrier, or blaming L2 for presenting a barrier, may arguably contradict research findings that mastery of L1 leads to mastery of L2 (García & Kleifgen, 2010:7). These perceptions come from the fact that where L2 presents a challenge, L1 was not taught and learnt appropriately. Where L1 is perceived as being well taught and learnt, i.e. where performance in L2 is good, indigenous knowledge is prevalent as a content of learning L1.

At an elementary level, this knowledge is sourced from learners' immediate backgrounds. That means local knowledge is preferred to aid the comprehension of more abstract and distant content, as represented in semantic memory (Akena, 2012:603; Gay, 2010:157). This is important because, instead of contesting the contexts due to learners' disbelief and inquisitive minds, learners focus their efforts and energy on the language and association of concepts. These statements are related to the principle of social inclusivity, and hence support an urgent call for the implementation of a SITS. The curriculum should be sensitive

to ideas and values that correspond with local conditions, especially indigeneity, while at the same time responding to shared, but global issues of human concern (Freire, 1970:67). The aforementioned clearly shows that the most important characteristic of the delivery of the curriculum is how knowledge is conveyed and constructed.

Instruction is given in English as the language of teaching and learning. In this case, it is a foreign language, and this has a negative impact on learners in a Grade 4 class. Grade 4 is the beginning of the intermediate phase where EFAL becomes the only language of teaching and learning. Owing to this language barrier, most school leavers have an inadequate command of reading and writing and they are therefore, relegated to the peripheries of their societies. Sandhu and Higgins (2016:179) have the same opinion as Fanon (2008:9), postulating that colonialists imparted on those African individuals who were fluent in the colonisers' languages a superiority complex and afforded them higher social status than those who were less fluent. The paper, therefore, seeks to advance the recognition of indigenous knowledge and to bring it into the classroom, particularly with reference to using various teaching strategies to teach EFAL (L2), such as indigenous games. The role of language in the successful delivery of the curriculum is critical.

Akena (2012:560) and Banks and Banks (2009:1) confirm that indigenous education and knowledge have a transformative power. Thus, before learners can master a subject, they first have to overcome the barrier of the language of instruction and/or have mastered their home language. This statement acknowledges that decolonisation cannot be achieved without knowledge of the psychology of colonisation and its impact on education (Denoon, 2013:87; Phasha, Mahlo & Sefa Dei, 2017:2-6). However, the right to education focusses mainly on educational resources, rather than on the restoration and recognition of indigenous knowledge for transforming the teaching of EFAL.

4. Transformation

In this context, transformation refers to the inclusion and equitable consideration of L1 and L2 (Cuervo, 2012:84; Soudien, 2010:4). Learners who are fluent in L2 stand a better chance of understanding other subjects that are taught in L2, such as mathematics, science, life orientation, geography, history and technology than learners who are less fluent and who are encountering L2 for the first time, as in this case in the Grade 4 class. This difficulty is made complex by the exclusion of L1 from teaching and learning practices. This excludes learners' indigenous background in the rural settings from the classroom and replaces it by L2 as the language of teaching and learning. In rural settings, the challenges faced are usually isolation, substandard infrastructure, school attendance problems and diverse learner backgrounds. Inadequate language proficiency also influences the delivery of quality education (Hlalele, 2012:113–116).

Soudien (2010:4) maintains that, for rural education to be transformed, teachers' responsibility is to ensure an effective implementation of curriculum specifications and teaching of learners. In this case, the teaching and learning process is not left to teachers only. Instead, a collaborative effort was implemented, of which the aim was to address the needs of teachers from diverse backgrounds and their teaching capacities in order for them to achieve their full potential. Documents that focus on transformation have developed into policies and practices to stimulate the facilitation of quality education. In this regard, the transformation of education systems and surrounding communities, teachers and the stakeholders involved can create a

socially inclusive learning environment that encourages learners to take ownership of their own learning (Lybeck, 2010:91).

5. Method

A qualitative research method was employed for this investigation and participatory action research (PAR) was adopted for data generation. PAR is an interpretive and qualitative method that combines social investigation, educational work and action (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2008:279). SITS emphasises a strong link between theory and practice to create conditions that foster space for transformation and empowerment, thus requiring a practical intervention through PAR. Within a PAR process, communities of inquiry and action evolve and address problems of inequity, assisting people to resolve issues and initiating change (Lybeck, 2010:91), studying the influence of those particular changes. With this in mind, PAR addresses wider issues relating to social justice, inclusion and empowerment of marginalised communities (Mahlomaholo, 2013), while promoting collaboration among the team members.

The research was conducted with the involvement of a group of Grade 4 EFAL learners and their teacher, parents and non-government organisations such as the owner of a local polo club and a community-based development organisation (CBDO). The teacher involved in the research was the only teacher at the school, which has 36 learners from grades 1 to 6. The teacher is obliged to apply a multi-grade teaching approach and to teach all subjects to all six grades. Thus, the teacher's contribution was central to the success of the research. Empowerment was clearly considered a benefiting factor in this research, as Grade 4 learners' learning capacity could potentially improve and be transformed by an intervention using SITS. Learners being involved in the system of change and treatment plans, guiding social development towards effective practices for promoting learners' learning enhanced the project (Gosin, *et al.*, 2003:364). Grade 4 is often a Rubicon of sorts as learners are ill prepared for a transition to English as a language of teaching and learning in the intermediary phase. The role of the CBDO and parents was to support and to contribute ideas, knowledge and experience on collaborative work during the teaching and learning process. The CBDO itself was involved in a collaborative community-based project that seeks to provide the community with lifelong skills for sustaining livelihoods.

The team adapted the PAR spiral model (Jasper, 2003:16), which comprised iterative processes of planning, acting, observing, reflecting and re-planning in accordance with the principles of SITS. The act of repeating a process when teaching and learning are not passive, but an active part of the pursuit of information and ideas to guide future actions. The team, therefore, set aside time to reflect and go back to their initial plan after the day's session to see how the lesson went, whether to improve and/or revise the initial plan, especially team members who were closely involved in the teaching and learning process. During this process, team members with various areas of expertise provided rich information and enhanced the investigation with their powerful and valued participation at various points, as they were able to study the existing problem, to analyse it and to design ways to address it by applying various teaching strategies. Progress was monitored continuously during meetings to get feedback from the team members.

Insights were used in the re-planning and strengthening of the intervention. Data for this paper was generated through meetings, workshops, document analysis, focus groups discussions and observations. The conversations were audio- and videotaped as well as

documented for the purpose of data analysis at a later stage. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) was used to analyse data to get in-depth insight into the meaning of the gathered data (van Dijk, 2003:256). Burns, Harvey and Aragon (2012:1) maintain that action research serves as a tool for collaborative learning to achieve an empowered and emancipatory community of learning. PAR instills a democratic way of living that is equitable, liberating and life enhancing by breaking away from traditional teaching methods and incorporating learners' indigenous knowledge in the classroom. PAR involves forming coalitions with individuals who have the least social, cultural and economic power (MacDonald, 2012:37).

Ethical considerations were central to the establishment of the team (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit 2004:213) in that the participants were informed about permissions sought and given by the university on behalf of the researcher, the Department of Education and the school. Parents and learners were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study, and anonymity was assured. Prospective participants' rights to confidentiality and withdrawal from the project were also disclosed so that they could make informed decisions, and the generated data results were not revealed to people outside the research group. The use of audio- and videotape was clearly explained and agreed upon, as was who should get to see the captured information. After every meeting, we summarised key points and actions and circulated it to everyone to verify that all points had been captured. Most importantly, the research did not hold any physical risks that could have impeded the progression of the research.

6. Findings and discussion

This paper aimed to transform the teaching of English First Additional Language using SITS, allowing the integration of various teaching strategies that make learning meaningful to learners with diverse learning styles. Through peer learning, learners who do not excel during individual learning tasks are able to comprehend new skills. The integration of various teaching and learning strategies created a conducive learning space for learners to express their thoughts and to challenge one another by competing in assessing knowledge gained. SITS builds transferable skills based on teamwork and collaboration (Whatley, 2012:79) rather than memorisation of facts. It encourages offering a thorough understanding through presentations (Hmelo-Silver & Barrows, 2006:22).

Hmelo-Silver and Barrows (2006:22) further maintain that SITS stands out for transforming conceptual learning, for creative problem solving and for developing academic language proficiency. In the following case scenario, the teacher facilitated a learning activity with a pre-intended lesson plan. The teachers' instruction appeared to assume that learners have the prerequisite knowledge and skills to complete the task presented. The teacher's instruction, therefore, contradicts best practice as captured in the literature, which states that learning is cumulative (Fox, 2013:4). The teacher did not consider activating learners' prior knowledge. The following is the classroom scenario as a learning activity:

Teacher Mary started her lesson by asking learners, "take out your learning activity book and turn to page 42, provide answers to the problem"

The identified learner responded correctly to the question, and the teacher further elaborated on the learners' correct response. The learners' positive responses proceeded according to the teacher's plan, but immediately when other learners' responses deviated from the teacher's plan of action, the teacher's limited plan of action became a barrier

from adapting to an evolving plan (plan B). After a lesson, the researcher approached the teacher about the mediating factors to improve the situation.

The above excerpt shows that the teacher's passivity towards the teaching and learning process hindered the learners' learning capability. However, at the end of the lesson during the feedback session, the teacher realised her weaknesses and she was willing to be assisted and welcomed any help to improve her teaching skills. After a brief summary of what transpired during the lesson, the stakeholders then strategised and prepared various lessons in collaboration with the teacher. Rich information was gathered with the help of other skilled colleagues who serve the same age learners and who shared what has worked well for them. Teaching in silos refutes the principles of SITS, which are couched in CER and which centres on stimulating a learner-centredness and sustained learning environment. Sustainable learning needs, the cognition of the learner and the environment to be utilised equitably for continued distribution of sound rapport, resources and opportunities (Schweisfurth, 2013:9). Therefore, a reflection is that the teacher did not understand how incorrect learner responses could be a window into their understanding and how these understandings could be used to focus discussions.

The teacher employed a teacher-centred teaching approach. Since she did not explain the concept and provide facts to activate learners' prior knowledge, it became problematic for learners to grasp what was expected of them. When the teacher realised that the learners were battling to understand the task, it was extremely difficult to generate an alternative example to back up the lesson. If the teacher shifted the focus of instruction and allowed learners to express their understanding of the subject matter, learning could have been meaningful and/or she could have easily detected learners' learning barriers. How else could learners have learnt the concept? Could they have understood it better through a teacher's explanation? By reading about it? By completing some paper-and-pencil exercises on the subject? Based on the provided facts, it was unlikely that learners would grasp the idea in such a way that they could easily transfer gained knowledge to new settings. As such, the information uncovered through the investigation described in this paper confirms that the use of SITS that are couched in CER can address learners' learning challenges. As such, learning is constructed through integrating learners' prior learning with newly gained information (Jorgensen & Lowrie, 2013:130).

7. Integrative learning

Integrated learning is difficult to define as it combines two different concepts, namely integration and learning. Palmer and Zajonc (2010:10) believe integrated learning weaves together the domains of the human capacity to find a mood of knowing that connects knowledge to humanity. However, in the context of this paper, I can state from my own practical experience that integrated learning can be described as the combination of different domains of learning, including the knowledge gathered from prior experiences in the context of the personal, societal and cultural environment (Conrad & Donaldson, 2011:121). As such, integrated learning encourages learners to connect and infuse what they learn in the classroom, whether theory and/or technique, with their prior knowledge. The learning activity should then incorporate local knowledge. Learners will begin to ask questions for clarity until they are clear on what must be done.

The teaching and learning context was a multi-graded setting in the Foundation Phase, with the focus on a Grade 1 class. The Grade 2's and 3's were invited as they were all in the same classroom. Some learners in Grades 2 and 3 had difficulties with the same task at hand, especially spelling. The Modlin Software was then introduced, which contributed to an integrative learning activity as part of a SITS.

The Modlin Software includes interactive digital lessons across various subjects and grades, e-books, a test and examination generator, a question bank and hard copy as well as digital subject-based dictionaries across all grades and subjects. Modlin is an integrated tool aimed at creating a socially inclusive learning environment with an unprecedented utility developed to assess learners' problem-solving methodology and to diagnose deficiencies. Palmer and Zajonc (2010:8) are of the opinion that such integrative learning comes in many varieties: connecting skills and knowledge from multiple sources and experiences. Moreover, the benefits of interactive learning involved "applying theory to practice in various settings; utilising diverse and even contradictory points of view; and, understanding issues and positions contextually" (Palmer & Zajonc, 2010:8). Learners get to manoeuvre the principles of a given task at hand through sharing ideas and working together as a team, although each learner also gets to work individually. However, without the assistance of classmates and/or other involvement of participating stakeholders, the task would have probably not been successful. Conrad and Donaldson (2011:121) postulate that a SITS approach socially improves learners and/or classroom relations by increasing trust and friendliness and in keeping learners involved with their work and supporting peers.

8. Peer learning

Through peer learning, learners are taught how to be engaged learners, to gradually build their community and take more responsibility for their own and their peers' learning. Peer learning was used as a strategy to implement SITS to realise the aim of this paper. As the Modlin software was foreign to the teacher, a young expert of the same age was invited to teach fellow classmates with the teacher as the overseer. Modlin offers guidance for the practice of deep speaking and listening since good conversation depends on these skills. It also offers a conversational trajectory that starts with stories, moves into theory and emerges in action. The animated pictures provided by the Modlin software with the help of a learning facilitator made it easy and managed to carry learners along. The data were generated in an extremely disadvantaged community where most learners depended on food offered at the school. The learning activity, which was about pancake making, was problematic, as learners did not know what a pancake was.

In this learning activity, learners were expected to list the ingredients of a pancake, write the pancake recipe, the method and list, as well as draw the utensils and equipment required to make a pancake.

Eliminate

The teacher realised that most learners managed to retrieve that information from the Modlin software, but some still failed to complete the exercise. Through the assistance of SITS, the learning interaction was divided into six groups (from Grade 1 to Grade 6 as a multi-graded school). Though this was a Grade 4 learning activity, the team did not want to exclude grades, as the team believed that an injury to one, is an injury to all (Forrest & Kearns, 2001). One of the stakeholders took learners along by physical teaching and showing learners everything

about a pancake. Learners were able to sequentially prepare all the necessary steps, bake the pancake, see what the pancake looks like and got to taste it. Therefore, the exercise led to increased self-awareness and self-control, as well as the realisation of the impact of SITS.

Learners felt the thrill of success, as this change affected and improved learners' behaviour and attitude towards their work. Akena (2012:560) postulates that knowledge is socially determined by a given purpose of the marginalised group constituting the project of knowledge creation through SITS. Once learners understood a concept enough to apply it in a new setting, they had a true grasp of the abstract idea. The following utterances were retrieved from a learner and the teacher as a feedback of what transpired during their after school (extra) classes:

Learner: Mistress, I was not aware I can find pancake making so easy.

Teacher: How so?

Learner: The first time when we were to create our pancakes recipe during the class, I did not know what a pancake was, even after Vido helped us with the computer learning activity (through a Modlin Software learning activity). But in Mme Monica's class, she taught and showed us how to make a pancake by first showing us the utensil and ingredients of the pancake, and allowing us to make and taste the pancake. Now that I have seen and tasted the pancake, when it appears in the test, to write the recipe, ingredients and method as well as to draw the entire procedure and equipment used became easy because we went through that process with Mme Monica.

The above extract was reported after the monthly tests and shows that it was easier for learners to attempt this question once they had learnt it by doing. The excerpt, "I did not know a pancake, but in Mme Monica's class, we made and tasted the pancake" means the process was initialised and constructed, using all the senses, to enhance knowledge gained. This also confirms that goals were set in accordance with learners' potentialities and, thus, learners displayed signs of empowerment, hope and love for learning. The value of knowledge gained for emancipating the marginalised was boundless and promoted a SITS approach, creating a socially inclusive learning environment. Just being able to watch others working on the same task gave learners some important information and being able to talk things over seemed to help even more.

Moreover, evaluation was done in accordance with learners' capabilities. Heightened achievement encouraged learners to enjoy going to school, and to enjoy any learning activity they performed in relation to their learning and that resembled positive learning attainment. This illustration from the empirical data agrees with the literature, namely that learners could move beyond the teaching and learning in the classroom and examine tangible results of learning experiences and develop the ability to disentangle concepts to suit their situation through reflection and then inserting prior knowledge into new practices. Hence, the potential of a SITS encapsulates the strengthened prior and/or newly gained knowledge, thereby creating a conducive space that gives freedom, hope and love for learning to thrive. Mostly, it encouraged learners to reach higher levels of learning.

The argument confirms the literature that a learning environment that is open, trusting and fun encourages new ideas, initiatives and creativity (Wilson, 2012:4). Vygotsky (1986:175) and McLeod (2013:27) imply that SITS does not consider language to be an instrument that serves to enable learners to organise their thoughts, but teaching approaches increases and

deepens opportunities to learn content and develop language and thus has the potential to build equitable classrooms.

9. Conclusion

The most significant contribution of this paper is that it demonstrates the links between a socially inclusive way of teaching and learning to achieve quality education. The paper investigated the importance of exposing learners to learning opportunities that link EFAL content, mainly concepts and principles, with applications encountered in everyday experiences. For learners and teachers based in rural settings, a socially inclusive way of teaching and learning enhances learners' learning effectiveness. The researchers used various teaching approaches that adhere to integral indigenous perceptions of individuals' way of living, experiences, language and customs. Doing so made it easier for learners to transition into the sphere of improved teaching and learning environments. For transformation to take place, emphasis on a SITS was an essential aspect of creating a conducive learning environment that supports learners' learning, thereby promoting positive, indigenous classroom behaviour. Collaboration and good communication with others fostered acceptance of individual differences and friendships, harnessed cooperative learning made possible by a SITS and guided people to recognise themselves in the work of others through shared knowledge.

10. Recommendations

By engaging learners by using their own linguistic resources not only legitimised English as the language of teaching and learning but also provided an opportunity for a linguistically diverse learner to be competent and more knowledgeable within an English lesson. Such acts of inclusion seemed to have a cumulative effect on learning if they are regarded as part of an ongoing pattern of classroom life, especially when using learners as resources for their own learning.

Note:

The names of the co-researchers in the examples are pseudonyms.

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