

Revering Heritage, Empowering High School Learners: Enhancing English through Multilingual Inclusion

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Abstract

While South African language policies espouse multilingualism, the education system appears to function differently. Although policies recognise learners' home languages, most schools choose either English or Afrikaans as the medium of instruction. This article considers a Heritage Day event at a high school in KwaZulu-Natal where language rights were respected, albeit for a short time, transforming learning and empowering second-language learners. It aims to explore how fostering multilingualism can promote the development of listening and speaking skills in English, empower learners, and enhance confidence and participation. The key question is, how may the use of learners' home languages alongside English instruction enhance linguistic confidence and participation? This article is part of a larger study using a critical paradigm and qualitative approach, with data generated through field notes, observations, and interviews. The findings reveal that when home languages and English are respected, learners gain a deeper appreciation for both, leading to increased self-confidence, better expression, a sense of belonging, and greater classroom participation. Considering this, I suggest the use of learners' home languages, sparingly, to enhance their motivation towards and confidence in the learning of English. The findings offer valuable insights into fostering multilingualism as a strength in English language education by supporting transformative approaches that celebrate linguistic diversity, nurture confidence, and empower English language learners. Integrating learners' home languages alongside English instruction can significantly enhance language learning. It is recommended that schools incorporate multilingual practices, train teachers on how to support language diversity, and advocate for policies that value linguistic inclusion to further empower learners.

Keywords: multilingualism; listening and speaking; second-language learners; home language; language policies



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Introduction

In regions where young African learners have limited exposure to English outside of school and where educational resources are limited, introducing English as the primary language of instruction at an early stage has proven to be detrimental. This approach has negatively impacted learners' ability to master both English and their native African languages, resulting in challenges when it comes to educational achievement (Casale and Posel 2011). Heugh et al. (2019, 9) stress, "It is not that students 'fail'. Rather, it is the education system that fails students. Students cannot learn what they cannot understand." This assertion recognises the shortcomings of the education system by highlighting weaknesses within the educational framework, and with the language policies, underscoring the inadequate implementation and accommodation of multilingualism in South African schools.

In South Africa, despite multilingualism being endorsed in education policies, English remains the dominant language (Mkhize and Balfour 2017), often undermining the language rights as protected by the Constitution. This goes against the promotion of multilingualism as supported by the Language in Education Policy (Mkhize and Balfour 2017). This is also argued by Mncwango and Makhathini (2021, 15), who highlight that "as a minority language, English dominates education, economic and other spheres and its hegemony threatens the role of indigenous languages in learning." Multilingualism is deemed to be a "creative resource" (Gilmour 2020, 2) and should be acknowledged as such, particularly within the diverse nature of South African classrooms. Therefore, it is important to gain insight into the ways that multilingual practices can benefit English language development. Thus, this article emphasises the importance of adopting a balanced approach to language instruction, considering the linguistic diversity of South African classrooms. Not only does incorporating learners' home languages alongside English instruction promote bilingualism, but it also preserves cultural heritage, and can potentially nurture confident and empowered English language learners.

This article considers a Heritage Day celebration held at a school in KwaZulu-Natal, where language rights were acknowledged, albeit temporarily. This event facilitated a transformation in teaching and learning, empowering second-language learners in a high school English Language Club (ELC). This programme constituted one of the interventions within the broader action research study that considered how using an ELC can support the learning of English. The central question of this article is, how may the use of learners' home languages alongside English instruction enhance linguistic confidence and participation? The inquiry revolves around the way learners in this study, for whom English is a second language but studied as a home language, navigate the integration of their native language within the educational framework, thus transforming the teaching and learning journey by enhancing their linguistic confidence and increasing participation.

The purpose of this article is to explore how a school Heritage Day programme, which respects learners' home languages alongside English instruction, can enhance the learning of English, empower learners, and increase their confidence and participation in the classroom. Specifically, the research objective is to explore how integrating learners' home languages with English influenced their linguistic confidence and engagement.

In this article, I begin by exploring the theoretical framework, which integrates Critical Pedagogy and Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, and review the literature on multilingual education. The literature highlights key research on the potential of multilingualism to drive advancements in teaching and learning, as well as the strategies employed in related studies. I then outline the research methodology and present the discussion, organised into key themes.

Ultimately, this article advocates for a more nuanced approach to educational discourse, directing attention to how multilingualism can be used to enhance and enrich the English classroom, while transforming and diversifying the teaching and learning experience.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Pedagogy and Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis

This article emerges from a larger study and works within a critical paradigm, considering Freire's Critical Pedagogy and Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis. Whilst Critical Pedagogy underpinned the formation of the English Language Club, Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis was employed to analyse the results as the elements of each theory effectively complement each other.

Critical Pedagogy promotes humanisation and empowerment by highlighting values such as respect, care, compassion, love, empowering learners, and the importance of these elements in transforming the teaching and learning process (Freire 1970). It leverages learners' experiences, enhances self-esteem, emphasises the importance of their voices, draws on their experiences, and ensures a safe environment where they can feel comfortable expressing themselves through active dialogue and reflection, and thereby, in this study, enhancing the learning of English.

The broader study aimed for critical consciousness and learners, in their roles as planners and implementers of activities to improve their English competence, became empowered as they assumed responsibility for their own learning. This was done by encouraging learners to think critically about their strengths and weaknesses and questioning what worked and did not work for them while learning English. A dialogic approach, considered as liberating and transformative (Law 2015), was significant in the ELC as learners actively engaged in conversations, and reflected on teaching and learning strategies.

The Affective Filter Hypothesis, proposed by Krashen (1982), “refers to how factors relate to the process of second language acquisition” (Krashen as quoted in Sheokarah 2022, 39). The Language Acquisition Device (LAD) is a theoretical concept used to explain children’s ability to acquire language (Hoque 2021). The “affective filter” prevents input for the acquisition of language, thus the Affective Filter Hypothesis advocates for creating a low-anxiety, high-confidence, and motivating atmosphere through positive reinforcement, learner involvement in activity design, and fostering a friendly environment. These elements work collectively to reduce the affective filter, optimising conditions for language learning.

The figure below is a representation of how Critical Pedagogy and the Affective Filter Hypothesis work together to create a conducive and transformative environment wherein learners are empowered, enhancing the learning of English. By establishing a safe and supportive learning environment—the ELC in the broader study, which embraced the principles of Critical Pedagogy—learners were encouraged to participate in enjoyable and, at times, outdoor activities in a more comfortable environment than their overcrowded English classrooms. This approach motivated them to engage with the language without fear, thereby lowering the affective filter and enhancing their English learning experience. Essentially, an environment that is motivating and allows learners to be relaxed and comfortable in the learning process opens the filter, allowing for more effective acquisition of language (Krashen 1982; Nath, Mohamad, and Yamat 2017).

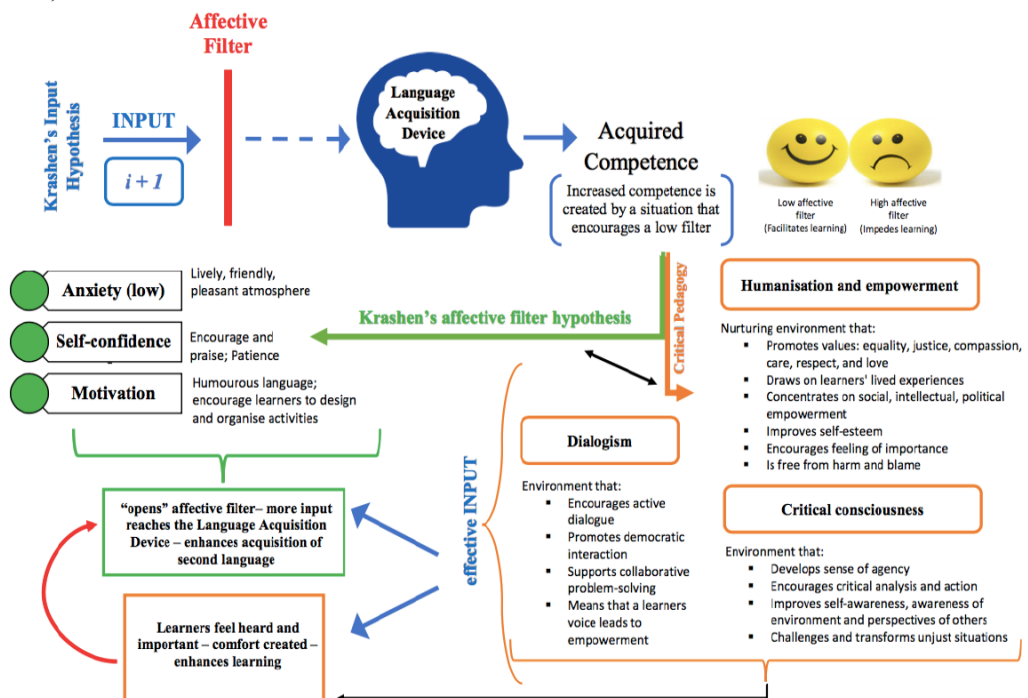


Figure 1: How Critical Pedagogy and the Affective Filter Hypothesis work together (Sheokarah 2022, 43)

The integration of both theories underpinned the ELC and facilitated a deeper comprehension of the research findings due to the complementary nature of the concepts. The humanising principles of Critical Pedagogy empowered learners within a safe and comfortable environment and provided opportunities for active dialogue and critical consciousness, which had a positive impact on the learning journey. By fostering critical awareness, the ELC provided opportunities for learners to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses and gave them a sense of agency as they were involved in the learning process, thus reducing anxiety, improving self-confidence, and enhancing motivation to learn English. Therefore, integrating both theories enhances second-language acquisition by creating an environment that promotes a low affective filter, facilitating the language learning process.

Literature Review

In South Africa, the majority of people speak an indigenous African language, which is their home language, in most cases; furthermore, less than 1% speak English at home (Casale and Posel 2011). Despite the introduction of a language policy following the advent of democracy in South Africa that aimed to maintain linguistic diversity, English and Afrikaans have remained the dominant languages (Posel and Zeller 2019). Although the South African government promoted a progressive constitution, adopting 11 languages (9 of which are African) as official languages in the country, English is “the main language of business and government” (Howie et al. 2017, 18) and is the dominant language of “public life and education” (Posel and Zeller 2019, 289). This contrast underscores a gap between the country’s progressive constitutional principles and the lived reality of language use and power dynamics.

The Language in Education Policy in South Africa stipulates that in the early years of schooling, home languages must be maintained as the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) (DBE 2010). From Grade 4, the LOLT for many learners is English (Posel and Zeller 2019). The school governing body makes decisions regarding the LOLT, which is informed by a “preference for English language instruction, among both parents and learners whose home language is not English” (Posel and Zeller 2019, 290). In other words, in multilingual societies, English maintains its dominance due to the language providing access to higher education and job opportunities (Norton and Toohey 2011; Ullah and Akram 2023). As a result, the evident shift in language in South Africa highlights how English influences “the use and maintenance of the Bantu languages spoken by the majority of South Africans” (Posel and Zeller 2019, 289), raising questions about the Language in Education Policy. The dominance of English in most South African schools may hinder second-language learners’ development, as they must acquire English alongside academic content. This challenge can slow their learning process, as they engage with a language that is less familiar.

A multilingual classroom is characterised by the presence of learners who are proficient in two or more languages that are spoken in their home or community, or where they are expected to acquire proficiency in two or more languages. Learning English in a

multilingual setting is defined as “learning and using multiple languages in school” (Emperador-Garnace 2021, 41), a concept in this article that refers to encouraging the use of learners’ home languages alongside the teaching of English. This not only increases learners’ motivation and interest in learning English, but also provides insights into different cultural perspectives (Deardorff as quoted in Hamdalo, Rodriguez-Martinez, and Dominguez-Garcia 2023, 141). In certain multilingual classrooms, educators are advised against employing learners’ native languages and instead focus solely on the languages taught within the school. However, without incorporating the primary languages of learners into classroom activities, some will struggle to succeed academically (Heugh et al. 2019) because they need to have a solid foundation in their home language before they successfully learn through the second language (Posel and Zeller 2019).

Although considered to be a demanding approach, multilingual education holds significant potential for facilitating numerous advancements in teaching and learning. Understanding the intricacies of a multilingual learning environment can guide the development of effective teaching methods that leverage the benefits of multilingualism while addressing the challenges. Through proper support and teaching methodologies adapted to suit multilingual contexts, learners can successfully embark on the English language learning journey (Hamdalo, Rodriguez-Martinez, and Dominguez-Garcia 2023).

When learners’ languages are effectively integrated, they serve as valuable assets for eliciting prior knowledge and grasping new concepts and languages (Moll as quoted in Heugh et al. 2019, 45). The use of learners’ home languages plays a significant role in engaging learners in the teaching and learning process, helping them participate more actively and promoting interaction among learners (Acharya 2021). In their study that aimed to help teachers consider how to leverage learners’ home languages in their learning of English, enhancing both language development and classroom engagement, Turner, Keary, and Tour (2023) found that incorporating home language practices in the classroom enhances English learning and promotes broader language awareness. Both learners and teachers reported positive engagement, with learners enjoying being recognised for their home languages and learning about language diversity. This approach not only benefits English learning but also fosters an inclusive and engaging classroom environment. Similarly, teachers in the study by Acharya (2021) found that learners struggled to engage in learning activities when only English was used in the classroom. However, allowing learners to use their home languages created a more dynamic environment, helping them to express themselves more clearly and boosting motivation.

Communication through speech is the primary method of acquiring a language (Emperador-Garnace 2021). Prior to the commencement of the participatory action research study, my participants (Grade 8 and 9 learners) completed mind maps that aided in planning the action research cycles, with a particular focus on addressing their

challenges in learning English. A significant finding revealed that learners (12 participants) mentioned how they felt about speaking in the classroom—they were either shy or afraid to speak in English due to the fear of being laughed at by their peers (Sheokarah 2022). This finding is in keeping with Dewi et al. (2017), who highlight that the laughter of peers is a contributing factor in English proficiency and results in the fear of speaking. Encouraging the use of learners' home languages alongside English helps reduce the fear of speaking in a second language by creating a safer, more supportive classroom environment. This approach allows learners to develop confidence and gradually overcome the anxiety of speaking English in the presence of their peers. Moreover, encouraging the use of home languages alongside English fosters inclusivity, validating learners' linguistic identities and promoting respect, as they feel included. This leads to greater participation and academic success (Wijayanti 2024).

Of importance is the idea that second-language learners have low self-esteem when it comes to speaking. Thus, learners need to be empowered for any improvement in listening and speaking skills, or in participation in the English classroom overall. Consequently, if speaking is deemed the most fundamental yet challenging aspect among the four language skills (Al-Sobhi and Preece as quoted in Emperador-Garnace 2021, 40), it is important to provide learners with meaningful learning opportunities aimed at improving their listening and speaking skills. This article argues that one of the ways to address this is by nurturing learners' identities and acknowledging and showing respect for their languages (Heugh et al. 2019), as evidenced by the findings of this article.

Methodology

Participatory Action Research Design

The larger study, on which this article is based, employed a participatory action research (PAR) design, recognised for its effectiveness in comprehending and enhancing practices (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison 2011). While teachers are recognised as significant contributors to knowledge development, PAR reduces the conventional knowledge hierarchy by emphasising that all stakeholders, which in this article includes the second-language learners, contribute their knowledge and experience to the research process and ensures that everyone's voice is heard (Jacobs 2016). PAR was particularly suited to this context as it facilitated active involvement and critical reflection from both learners and their teacher (me), aiming to transform the teaching and learning environment through activities in the English Language Club. Within this framework, I also aimed to refine teaching methods by gaining insights into their effects and adjusting them accordingly, with help from the learners who were actively involved in the process.

Reflection is a significant component in PAR and played an integral role in the ELC. After several interventions, namely “tell the news activity,” “telephone role-play,” and “step-by-step instructions” in the Listening and Speaking cycle, the learners and I

critically reflected on their progress and identified the need for a larger audience to further develop their skills. Since these activities were completed within the ELC with a smaller audience, this reflective process led them to recognise the Heritage Day programme as a valuable opportunity for meaningful practice. Subsequently, learners chose what they wanted to verbally present at the school's special assembly.

Participants

The ELC in the larger study involved 43 learners, in Grade 8 and 9. Learners joined each stage of the study voluntarily, participating in activities based on their needs as each cycle focused on different skills. For the purposes of this article, however, the focus is on the Heritage Day programme in Cycle One (Listening and Speaking).

Seven participants (pseudonyms used) were part of the presentation during assembly: Cindy introduced Heritage Day by delivering a speech; Sammy recited her own poem; Lee, Wethu, and Andy had other speeches to share, and Sbonga recited his own isiZulu poem which Jabu translated into English. The learners' presentations at this school programme served as an observation of their listening and speaking skills at the end of the cycle.

Data Generation

The main sources of data generation following the programme included field notes, observations, and interviews.

During Cycle One (Listening and Speaking), the implementation of activities within the ELC was observed and noted. For this article, field notes documented the school's Heritage Day programme, considering external factors beyond the ELC environment that influenced the learners, particularly their interaction with the broader school community.

While observing the ELC learners' presentations, I made notes of their speaking and listening skills in terms of eye contact, audibility, and expression. The observation schedule also focused on facial expressions, body language, and attitudes portrayed before, during, and after presentations.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted at the end of Cycle One to gain a better understanding of how learners experienced the activities in the cycle. Additionally, the interviews served as part of the learners' reflective process, allowing for reflection and planning of the interventions for the next cycle, based on their feedback. They also contributed to the development of their skills as learners engaged in active listening and speaking during the interview.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used for the purpose of this study. By thoroughly examining field notes, observations, and interviews, recurring topics were identified and organised into themes. I then analysed learners' responses aligned with these themes and documented the findings accordingly.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical procedures were followed by obtaining the necessary gatekeeper permission to conduct research with learners at the school (site of the study). Furthermore, ethical clearance from the university was sought from and approved by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC/00000143/2019), following which, consent was obtained from learners and their parents; the consent form outlined the purpose of the study and discussed participants' ethical rights.

Discussion of Findings

Key themes emerging from the data include: the importance of teachers' feedback in enhancing learners' linguistic confidence, the significance of teamwork for the enhancement of listening and speaking skills, how learners' attitudes towards others influence motivation for listening and speaking, and the impact of learner responsibility on listening and speaking.

The Importance of Teachers' Feedback in Enhancing Learners' Linguistic Confidence

One of the prominent themes that emerged is the significance of teachers' feedback for linguistic confidence. Before learners from the English Language Club presented their items in the special assembly, they had a last rehearsal in the staff room in the presence of other teachers. Fieldnotes revealed that the final rehearsal served an important role in learners' improvement in listening and speaking.

The illustration of the importance of feedback emerges through a teacher's recommendation to Sbonga; after commending him, she noted that he was lacking facial expressions and that he needed to introduce more body language in the presentation of his poem. As a result, Sbonga recited the poem in assembly better than the rehearsal in terms of tone, eye contact, and voice projection. The development in his confidence was also evident in his body language as observations revealed that he passionately used action to express the ideas in his isiZulu poem, illustrated in Figure 2 below. Sbonga's partner, Jabu, who translated the poem in English, also received feedback from other teachers in the final rehearsal; there was an improvement in expression and audibility, which was said to be lacking in the rehearsal. The importance of teacher feedback is supported by Dincer and Yesilyurt (2017), who argue that for learners to be encouraged to speak, paying attention to them and providing feedback are of paramount importance.

Ultimately, this resulted in lower anxiety, increased motivation, and a greater input (Krashen 1982).



Figure 2: Sbona using action to present key ideas in his poem (Sheokarah 2022)

Though Sbona's poem was presented in isiZulu, it was noted in fieldnotes that he began using English more frequently after the Heritage Day programme and was more willing to participate in the ELC. Initially, he would speak to me, and most of his teachers, in isiZulu and showed no intention of wanting to communicate in English. Thus, it can be noted that learners value their home language and English more when both are respected and treated as equally important. This process of embracing their language diversity can lower their affective filter, allowing them to engage more effectively in language learning. This is also in keeping with the humanising nature of Critical Pedagogy. The above serves as an indication that not only did Sbona listen to and understand instructions carefully, but this enhanced his linguistic confidence.

When rewarded for using their home language and English, learners showed an improvement in self-confidence, and they were better able to express themselves. Resultingly, this contributes to greater participation, as learners feel that their contributions are valued, whether they are using their home language, English, or a combination of both. Therefore, teachers' feedback is important in fostering an atmosphere where learners feel confident, included, and motivated to engage in the teaching and learning process.

The Significance of Teamwork for the Enhancement of Listening and Speaking Skills

Prior to learners brainstorming ideas for the Heritage Day performance, they collectively proposed participating in the programme as a club rather than as individual performers. The learners and I then decided that while each of them would have their

own presentation, they would collectively appear as a united group at the assembly. Working as a team fosters an environment where learners are encouraged to do better, with the support of peers who share common objectives (Deysolong 2023). Moreover, when learners work collaboratively in a supportive, non-threatening environment like the ELC, their emotional and psychological constraints are lowered. The ELC was a space where they felt safe practising their English listening and speaking skills without fear of judgement. The positive social atmosphere where they were able to work as a team significantly reduced stress, encouraged participation, and promoted development in their linguistic confidence.

During rehearsals for the school's Heritage Day event, learners worked together by listening to each other and practising together, establishing a support network that motivated them to improve and develop their performance. Most of the learners in the ELC discussed their performances in their home language before reporting their progress in English. By enabling learners to express themselves and develop ideas in their home languages alongside English, they felt more confident in their linguistic abilities, ultimately leading to feeling motivated to participate. This peer support reflects Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis—when learners receive encouragement and validation from their peers, their anxiety is reduced, ultimately lowering their affective filter. This positive emotional environment provides the platform for enhancing their confidence, motivating them to participate and perform better, as seen with Sbonga and Jabu.

Jabu highlighted the benefits of teamwork when she expressed in the interview, “The good thing working with someone [is] you can communicate. ... could get ideas together and bring up something pretty nice,” which may account for her linguistic confidence. It was also revealed, as reflected in field notes, that pair work is a contributing factor in developing linguistic confidence as learners are compelled to meet the standard set by their partner. In the Heritage Day programme, Jabu, after collaborating with Sbonga, delivered the English translation of the poem notably better than in rehearsals, driven by the determination to “match up to his great performance,” which she expressed in her interview. To enhance confidence and alleviate learners' anxiety, Du (2009) notes the importance of incorporating group work and social activities, a strategy supported by the success of the Heritage Day event.

This article argues for a different approach to teaching English—one that focuses on enabling learners to comprehend their own and others' linguistic skills acquired in various settings, whether in the classroom or outside the conventional teaching and learning setting. By doing so, learners can acknowledge their ability to embrace a multilingual identity, wherein they explicitly recognise themselves as users of multiple languages (Forbes et al. 2021). Heugh et al. (2019, 37) note, “If we can see or hear our languages in a particular place, then we might feel more welcome.” This inclusion can reduce language anxiety, making learners feel more comfortable and motivated to

engage with English. Therefore, this shift in perspective will foster a greater enthusiasm for language learning (Forbes et al. 2021).

How Learners' Attitudes towards Each Other Influence Motivation

An encouraging school environment significantly contributes to enhancing language learning (Graziano 2011; Hannah 2013). Thus, learners' attitudes towards each other influences motivation for listening and speaking.

Fieldnotes and observations revealed that as Sbonga presented his isiZulu poem at the Heritage Day programme, both he and Jabu showed signs of increased confidence and motivation and continued the presentation with broad smiles, as the rest of the learners in the crowd enthusiastically applauded them. It can be asserted that receiving approval from their peers at school was a significant source of motivation. Not only did the peer recognition enhance learners' linguistic confidence, but the learners cheering them on motivated them to do their best in reciting the poem. The positive reinforcement from school mates created a supportive environment that encouraged the learners to improve and perform at their best. This belief was confirmed by learners' written reflective pieces after the Heritage Day programme: "It made me feel happy and I was so proud of myself. The things that made me feel happy are that people loved my poem and called me poem master" (Sbonga) (Sheokarah 2022, 133). This reinforces the notion that engaging in group work and social activities is crucial for alleviating anxiety and enhancing confidence (Du 2009). Jabu echoed a similar sentiment: "I wish we could do it again. The crowd loved us the most!" (Sheokarah 2022, 133). Her eagerness to repeat the experience indicates her enjoyment and a heightened level of confidence afterwards, contrasting with her apprehension during rehearsals.

Motivation plays a pivotal role in language acquisition; the higher the learners' motivation, the lower their affective filter, ultimately leading to greater success (Abukhattala 2013; Du 2009; Krashen 1982). In essence, an encouraging school environment is of paramount importance in enhancing language learning, as evidenced by the experiences of learners like Sbonga and Jabu. Peer approval and being supported by applause were key factors in developing their linguistic confidence and motivating them to excel in their performances. The positive reinforcement they received from their peers not only alleviated anxiety but also fostered a sense of pride and achievement, as reflected in their written reflections. These findings underscore the importance of incorporating group work and social activities into language learning to promote a supportive environment that builds confidence. As seen in the learners' experiences, such environments not only enhance motivation but also encourage language learning, ultimately increasing willingness to participate in listening and speaking activities.

The Impact of Learner Responsibility on Listening and Speaking

Learner responsibility is a crucial element in language learning as it encourages motivation. Allowing learners an influence over the learning process enhances

motivation (Ivarsson and Pihl 2013). This, however, can only occur in settings where teachers share power in the learning process, and where learners are presented with opportunities to make decisions about how they learn (Çam and Oruç 2014).

Learners in the ELC were part of the planning of interventions and were encouraged to make decisions related to their learning journey and developed voice and agency. This was evidenced by Sbonga who approached me with the idea of an isiZulu poem and English translation for the purpose of the Heritage Day programme, displaying responsibility/autonomy. From the perspective of Critical Pedagogy, learners must be able to express themselves freely and actively engage in dialogue with their teachers (Asakereh and Weisi 2018).

Cindy also highlighted the role of learner responsibility in listening and speaking when she volunteered to be the first one to speak in the ELC's group performance in the Heritage Day event. Initially, Cindy was anxious and reluctant to participate in the speaking interventions in the Listening and Speaking cycle. However, by the end of the cycle, her confidence had developed so significantly that she was eager to present her speech in the presence of other learners in the school's programme. In her interview at the end of the cycle, she noted that she feels like she is a good listener, but not a good speaker, which revealed that her linguistic confidence still needed work. Nonetheless, Cindy's initiative and participation in the school programme heralded progress in listening and speaking.

Conclusion

In the realm of learning English, listening and speaking skills play a crucial role in the language learning process. However, for many second-language learners, anxiety surrounding listening and speaking tasks can pose significant barriers to participation in the teaching and learning process. This anxiety can stem from various factors, including fear of making mistakes, concerns about pronunciation, or discomfort in unfamiliar social contexts. Despite these challenges, empowering learners to overcome listening and speaking anxiety is essential for fostering language proficiency and communicative competence.

Through the incorporation of learners' home languages alongside English, teachers can foster a deeper connection to learning, promote a sense of belonging, and encourage learners to actively participate in listening and speaking activities, and in the English experience overall. This article argues for the use of learners' home languages, sparingly, alongside English as this study revealed that a multilingual learning environment facilitates the development of listening and speaking skills in English. Learners feel more confident and motivated to participate in the learning of English when their language rights are respected, even if it is for a brief time. This approach not only respects learners' linguistic heritage but also leverages the cognitive benefits of multilingualism in English speaking and listening skills, highlighting the importance of teachers' feedback for enhancing learners' linguistic confidence, how learners' attitudes

towards others influence motivation, the significance of teamwork for the enhancement of listening and speaking skills, and the impact of learner responsibility on listening and speaking.

It is important for teachers to continue exploring innovative ways to integrate learners' home languages into the English language learning process. This includes possibly providing opportunities for code-switching, incorporating culturally relevant materials and experiences, and fostering collaborative learning environments like pair work or group work, where linguistic diversity is celebrated and encouraged. Moreover, by embracing a pedagogy that values and respects learners' home languages, educators can create a more inclusive, empowering, and effective language learning experience for all learners.

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