

Investigating Causes of a Reluctance to Speak English in the Classroom – The Case of Botswana Junior Secondary Schools

Winnie R. Galebole *

University of Botswana, Communication & Study Skills Unit

Tamucha H. Mothudi

University of Botswana, Communication & Study Skills Unit

Citation: Galebole W.R. and Mothudi T.H. (2022) Investigating Causes of a Reluctance to Speak English in the Classroom – The Case of Botswana Junior Secondary Schools, *European Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*, Vol.10, No.9, pp.1-22

ABSTRACT: *This study discusses the factors underlying the phenomenon in which, often, students in Botswana Junior Secondary Schools (JSSs) seem reticent towards speaking English during lessons, in order to develop their proficiency in English as a second/ foreign language ESL/EFL. The implications of this disjuncture were also examined. Further, possible measures that could be emplaced to encourage students to speak English willingly were explored. A multi-method research (MMR) approach was used to unearth the state of English language (EL) use in Botswana’s JSSs through questionnaires for students and interviews with teachers. The conclusion was that students are not entirely averse to speaking English. Instead, they are primarily inhibited from adhering to the ‘English-Only Policies’ (EOPs) for fear of possible ridicule by their peers. Additionally, the study established that some students preferred communicating in their mother tongues (L1), since these were natural and easy to produce. Furthermore, it was determined that currently, no concrete rules exist for enforcing EOPs during school time.*

KEYWORDS: Reluctance, Junior secondary schools, Classroom Learning, practise, communicative competence, English speaking policies

INTRODUCTION

The 21st century, post-modern, globalising world highlights the benefits of commanding an adequate communicative competence (CC) in the EL that accrue to both students and employees. Therefore, the need for institutions of learning to underline such benefits to their students cannot be over-emphasized. Despite the overarching role played by a satisfactory proficiency in the EL to their learning experiences and life chances, educators and researchers have raised concern that often, students seem to be reluctant to use the EL particularly within the school environment. In addition, tertiary-level teaching experience has informed these investigators that beyond secondary schools, one also encounters situations where students are reluctant to speak English during lessons. Literature (Webb, 2004; Cummins, 2000) reports that the world over, English as a second language (ESL) students lack an “English speaking culture”. This challenge is pertinent not only to EL lessons, but is equally applicable to other

subjects that are taught in English, since it is a language of learning and teaching (LoLT) in Botswana. In the backdrop of this observation, the two researchers embarked on investigating the subject matter.

As highlighted, the problem spills over to tertiary-level institutions, owing primarily to the absence of regulations enforcing an obligatory speaking of English within the lecture halls. Reliant on our professional practice, it would appear save to observe that lecturers at the University of Botswana (UB), especially in the parent disciplines (including Social Sciences, Healthy Sciences, Arts and Media, Business, Engineering and Technology, etcetera.) communicate with learners in English but the students in turn often respond in Setswana, especially if the student and the lecturer are both native speakers of Setswana. It has also been observed that the problem relating to inappropriate code-switching, was widespread among students during oral presentation sessions, across subjects; including the teaching and learning (T&L) of the Communication and Academic Literacy (CAL) skills courses, (Mokgwathi & Webb, 2013; Mothudi, 2015). Experience has shown us that only on some very rare occasions would one come across students who conduct their assessable oral presentation segments in English from beginning to the end, without chipping in some Setswana word or phrase here and there. The tendency wherein students frequently resort to using their L1 during classroom discourse is regarded by English Language Teaching (ELT) practitioners, as constituting some serious inhibition to the development of their communicative proficiency in the language. This is especially true of practitioners who subscribe to the perspective that learners lack the knowledge and skills for an effective code-switching process. A preference by students' to communicate in their L1 rather than English, especially during oral communicative tasks has precipitated concern that probably, their English language proficiency (ELP) was inadequate.

Status of the English Language in Botswana

Besides being an international language, English has been designated as one of the official languages in Botswana, concurrent with the Setswana language. To that extent, the Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE) recommends that "English should be used as a medium of instruction as early as standard 2 or as soon as practicable," (1994:18). Thus, it is a medium of instruction in institutions of learning across subjects, except for the Setswana subject. This assertion implies *inter alia*, the desirability for teachers of subjects other than Setswana to act as some indirect partners to the initiative for implanting English communicative skills among learners. Thake (2004) concurs, mentioning that in addition to learning other subjects in English, students also have to learn English as a subject.

The important role the education system in Botswana attaches to English provides impetus for students to possess adequate ELP. This includes the fact that, examinations other than for Setswana are set in English at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Logically, a satisfactory ELP is regarded as an insurance for understanding and responding competently to examination questions, leading to successful performance. Second, current enrolment trends into tertiary-level studies, emphasize that candidates should have attained a grade C (60-69%) or better in the EL. The two factors underpin the importance of English in the Botswana society, a part of the global world in which the language is assigned an international supremacy over many, including Botswana's 23 indigenous languages. Consequently, the Botswana education system

has designated English a combined role as the language of both education and social communication.

Owing to the critical role assigned to English, many public secondary schools, drew up EOPs as means of entrenching an English speaking culture, as well as implanting high levels of communicative capacities among students. A major aspect of the EOPs was that they were to be observed by the entire school population (i.e. both students and teachers). It was expected that the initiative would redress the students' poor performance in the examinations, a phenomenon understood to be underlined partly by their inadequate ELP. Another common principle underlying the EOPs of the varying schools, was that students were to communicate solely in English while on school premises. They were, in turn, expected to receive reciprocal action from all the teachers, irrespective of whether or not these teachers shared some L1 with the students. Cognisant that tremendous effort was invested towards helping develop English language speaking skills for the public schools by both the Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoESD), and schools' management, the question arises: why are the students in these schools not predisposed to speak English willingly?

In contrast, Botswana's private education regime, popularly referred to as the 'English Medium Education System (EMES)', has demarcated EL the status of a compulsory language of communication. Compared to public schools, Botswana's EMES have an effective and well-coordinated official 'English-Only' policy. Several factors have aided Botswana's EMES to successfully promulgate, implement and sustain an official EOP as part of their set mandates:

- Exorbitant fees being charged have set out the EMES as the exclusive terrains of students originating from the middle and higher ladders of society.
- A large proportion of teachers are expatriates, placing high premium on English as a medium of communication.

Thus, a combination of the above factors serves as fertile ground for realizing the high levels of ELP that the EMES schools have set out to accomplish. In addition, the middle and higher brackets of Botswana's society, especially those located in urban areas, have adopted a culture of frequently using English for day-to-day social interaction. Literature (see, for example, Nkosana, 2006) has observed that the urban elites in Botswana "glorify and celebrate English to the extent of denigrating their indigenous languages". Therefore, students from the higher brackets of the society, would from their engrossing familial exposure, understand and appreciate the important role that the EL plays in public life, including social practice. Among prerequisites for entry into these social strata, one may have to familiarize themselves with the register used by their members, providing yet another motivation for high levels of students' ELP. This development makes the EMES to easily embrace and use English as a medium of communication on both the school grounds and at home.

Contrarily, the majority of students in public schools command a working class background leading to them having inadequate exposure to using English in their familial environments. So, it would seem justifiable to label their ELP as 'limited', as many of them would likely encounter English as primarily a classroom subject. This situation presupposes that such

students have minimal appreciation of the role played by English as one of the determinants of their life chances.

In order to buttress high levels of ELP for both academic and social purposes among students, individual schools' management systems initiated some unofficial EOPs. The MoESD however, subsequently officially introduced Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), as an 'institutional methodology', within Botswana's ELT. This ingenuity could therefore, be interpreted as having harnessed the position of the 'English-Only' initiatives in the schools since the two reforms share one main ideal, the pre-eminence of speech' over other language skills. Since CLT techniques and the EOPs place the bulk of emphasis on developing oral communicative skills, their adoption was, perhaps synchronous with the idiom 'practice makes perfect'.

Statement of the Problem

There seems to be some reluctance by students to speak English during lessons. The study aims to confirm or deny this proposition.

Despite the fact that English has been designated as a LoLT, evidence (Botswana Education and Training Sector Strategic Plan (ETSSP) 2015-2020; Mothudi & Bosman, 2015; Nkosana, 2006), describes the students' ELP at all levels of the education system in Botswana as unsatisfactory. One of the major contributory factors to this inadequacy is that students in Botswana often speak or are exposed to English only in the school environment. Consequently, they display a preference to speak Setswana, or any of their L1. The sum effect of a disinterest to speaking English is that students often deny themselves the opportunity to exercise and perfect skills for effective communication in English, which in turn could be transferable to other three skill areas: reading, writing and listening. The limited exposure to English in the environment therefore, implies that the students lack an immersion in good examples of communicative episodes in the target language (TL) which they could mimic and internalize as part of their EL expressions. Candlin (1981) strongly complains about the difficulty students, the world over, endure as a result of absence of sufficient immersion in the TL; "[...] learners are not able to experience appropriate communication which they could have in turn evaluated, imitated and ultimately internalised as part of their repertoire of skills."

The purpose of this paper is to confirm (or deny) the statement that students in Botswana are reluctant to speak English in the classrooms.

Aim and Research Questions of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate whether or not the phenomenon of reluctance to speak English exists among students in Botswana JSSs.

General Research Question:

Are the students in Botswana reluctant to speak English during classroom lessons?

Four research questions were formulated:

- a) What evidence attests that students in Botswana are reluctant (or otherwise) to speak English during classroom lessons?
- b) What are the possible causes of the students' reluctance (or otherwise) to speak English during classroom lessons?
- c) What are the impacts of a failure to speak English consistently on the students' performance?
- d) What possible measures could be brought in to alleviate the problem(s) caused by a failure to speak English in the classroom?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction of CLT in Botswana's English language teaching

CLT, alternatively referred to as the Communicative Approach (CA), was first introduced during the late 1970s and early 1980s, as an approach for helping correct the discrepancies of the hitherto dominant traditional methods for EFL/ESL teaching, namely, Grammar Translation (GT), Direct Method (DM) and Audio-Lingual (AL). These advocated that, the development of ESL proficiency among students derives solely from the prescriptive teaching of its grammatical forms (cf, Cook, 2008; Savignon, 2007; Roberts, 2004; Yule, 1996). Particularly, traditional methods had utilized the "generative" dimension of language teaching as the sole basis for the students' acquisition process. This learning of ESL for 'philosophical' goals however, later proved to be inadequate because through its explicit teaching of the formal aspects of ESL, failed to develop linguistic creativity in real communicative situations.

A theoretical framework that informed the advent of CLT, which also underpins this study is entailed in evidence including Savignon (2005, 2007), that despite being charged with developing the students' communicative proficiency at the foundation stage, secondary school ESL teaching premised on traditional techniques, seldom creates opportunities for students to put language to functional use. This perspective emphasised that memorisation of grammatical rules and lexical items of a language in no meaningful contexts, focused on teaching about the language (linguistic competence) and not to develop knowledge and skills on how language is used to construct meaning (communicative competence). Savignon (2005:646) illustrates, observing that the defining features of English teaching before the advent of CLT was that it was "test-centred".

Compared to traditional methods, adherents of CLT, (Brown, 2007; Tomlinson, 2005; Roberts, 2004; Cook, 2001; Cummins, 2000 Clarke, 1989; Wilkins, 1976), argue that language teaching should be undertaken for 'utilitarian' purposes. This essentially naturalistic approach represented by Lightbown & Spada, (2006); Ellis, (2004), Krashen, (1983) advocates that classroom teaching needs to replicate the kind of behaviours found in social interactions. CLT is therefore, marked by a shift from teaching and assessing linguistic forms to focusing attention on functional language use. A major principle underlying the development of functional language use is that, it is based on the students' active participation in meaningful tasks. The underpinning teaching practice is often described as 'learning by doing'. This primarily naturalistic approach to ESL learning was advocated by among others, Krashen (1983) and Howatt (1984). For naturalistic scholars, typical communicative teaching should be

based on the pragmatic domain of language use and “[...] should approximate a natural language acquisition environment as closely as possible, thereby providing plenty of authentic input to feed the students implicit learning processes,” (Dornyei 2009:35).

A theoretical point of view that was of special interest to this research however, is Krashen’s Monitor Model, especially the Affective Filter Hypothesis (AFH). Lightbown and Spada (1999:39) explain the Affective filter as “an imaginary barrier which prevents learners from acquiring a language from the available input.” The authors describe “affect” as referring to “such factors as motives, needs, attitudes, and emotional states.” Gass and Selinker (1994:147) mention that “in Krashen’s view, the Affective filter is responsible for individual variation in second language acquisition [.....] and tends to explain why some students learn and others do not. This further explains why a student who has a negative attitude or is stressed, for example, “filters out input thus making it unavailable for acquisition,” (Lightbown & Spada, 1999:39). The filter is influenced by other factors such as lack of motivation, low self-esteem, lack of interest, et cetera, (Schütz, 2019). The AFH implies that a student with a high affective filter would have low motivation, low self-esteem, and lack of interest in learning the SL, while one with a low affective filter possesses fewer of the same factors that would impede their learning/acquisition of SL.

It is perhaps, in line with the description of the CA as a teaching whose objective is to provide learners with opportunity to practice how language is deployed to serve real-life needs, that schools in Botswana have introduced the EOP on their school grounds: to serve as agents for re-enforcing the development of functional language skills.

Prior to the advent of CLT, ESL pedagogy of Botswana’s two tier education system comprising Junior Certificate Education (JCE) and Senior Secondary Education (SSE) was also overly-concentrated on developing the students’ mastery of the grammatical and structural features of English rather than on building a capacity for using the language as a tool for effective communication. Several sources (c.f., ETSSP, 2015-2020; Mothudi, 2015; Nkosana, 2006; RNCE; 1994;), complain that until the introduction of CLT in 1998, ELT for both the two tiers of Botswana’s education system was biased towards teaching reading and writing skills to an almost exclusion of the more practically-oriented skills of listening and speaking. Using a theoretically-inclined curriculum resulted in students with limited ELP, as well as, graduates who are not relevantly and adequately skilled to serve the needs of the national economy. A rote kind of learning also caused them apathy towards participating in learning activities. Ultimately, a culture of silence was entrenched among the students in Botswana.

They become passive and non-responsive when they do not understand what is being taught, and are afraid to ask. On their arrival at the University of Botswana, they come with the same attitudes, and are sometimes shocked and pleasantly surprised when they are forced to participate in class, (Akindele & Trennepohl, 2008: 155).

Another complaint often directed at school leavers and graduates of Botswana’s education system is that they display a poverty of knowledge and skills to communicate effectively and

appropriately in real-life situations. It has been remarked, for example, that “*Botswana graduates are weak in language skills [.....]*” (Sunday Standard Newspaper, 2016 Feb 08).

Against the background of students who were apathetic from taking part in communicative activities conducted in English, CLT and other reforms, including the EOPs, were introduced to help remedy the weak English communicative capacities of students in Botswana. As a result in 1998, CLT was officially introduced in Botswana’s ELT as an ‘institutional methodology’. This transformative action was overwhelmingly accepted as a tool kit for ‘helping to remedy the skills deficiencies of learners’ (Department of Curriculum Development and Evaluation, 1995: i). Its associative communicative activities were expected to give students the independence to speak at will, the freedom to explore the TL and the liberty to tackle different scenarios in communication.

Introduction of “English-Only” Policies in Botswana’s school system

The EOPs are an innovation pioneered by individual schools to recognize, encourage and create more platforms for students to explore and practise their speaking skills. Since ‘practice’ has been identified as one of the important techniques for implanting knowledge and skills in the TL, suffice to advance that this principle might have been one of the leading factors underpinning the decision by English Departmental Management systems for introducing an EOP on the school premises’. A policy is “a set of ideas or a plan for action followed by a business, a government, a political party, or a group of people.” This plan requires some documentation to facilitate record keeping and monitor progress. The EOPs are however, an unwritten rule in Botswana’s school system. Implied is that they are not an official MoESD policy. Their main objective is to provide students with opportunity to practice the EL skills that have been taught abstractly in the classroom. In line with the idiom ‘practice makes perfect’, it seems reasonable to conclude that the inception of CLT as an ‘institutional methodology’ might have been interpreted by the schools management systems as being in tandem with the general principles and practices of the unofficial EOPs that the individual schools have been practicing for a long time.

Despite potential benefits that EOPs have in improving the students’ ELP, commentators (cf, Kalu & Alimi, 2003) have observed that such initiatives are naturally faced with hurdles because the development of skills in academic language is one of the most difficult undertakings ESL students have to contend with. Inadequate ELP of the teachers, combined with a tendency to often select and utilize ineffective teaching techniques, are some of the factors thought to contribute hugely to this problem. Mokgwathi and Webb, (2013) advance that teachers and students sharing a common L1, often encounter difficulties in keeping up conversations entirely in the TL. Mafela (2009) mentions that “in spite of the policy pronouncement on English as the medium of instruction, the teaching and learning context is characterised by various linguistic strategies, which include code-switching, code-mixing and translation,” (p.59). The phenomenon in which students alternately use the TL and their L1 within the same text has generated some debate. Two seemingly contrasting schools of thought have emerged in relation to the subject matter:

- a. ‘English only (correctionist) movement’ or Western view of ESL learning, propagating that English is a superior language that should be taught and learnt exclusively from the

interventions of other languages. Since, the student's L1 is regarded as structurally defective, incorporating it in classroom teaching is purported to impact the acquisition process negatively.

- b. Contemporary/constructivist philosophy, advocating that occasionally infusing linguistic elements from the L1 is advantageous in "semantization of L2 vocabulary through L1 equivalents" (Karahman, 2010, citing Butzkamn, 1976). Through this concept, difficult language items are explained through limited and judicious utilization of the L1. This helps to infuse the students' socio-cultural background in the classroom, thereby, engendering interest in the learning process by minimizing anxiety that students otherwise experience from learning the language entirely through the difficult TL.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The diversity of how language learning occurs led this study to utilize several instruments to collect and analyse data. Some major tools used included literature exploration, survey questionnaires, oral interviews, and an observation of live classroom teaching. In addition, the multi-method research (MMR) approach was used to reflect some possible variations in the subjects' responses. The approach integrates both the qualitative and quantitative methods, in order to minimise some weaknesses inherent in either method. Creswell, (1994:174), citing Grant & Fine (1992), describes the benefits of employing the MMR approach: it combines literature, ranging from observations, supplemented with structured quantitative observations, a mixing of ethnography and experimental research, as well as, the successful combination of survey research and qualitative procedures. Creswell further explains that using several methods in one study would neutralise any bias inherent in particular data sources such as respondents and investigators. The instruments used were:

Questionnaire – Students' responses were evaluated in accordance with the Likert scale, measuring their frequency of use in relation to each of the 10 structured items. The Likert scales are commonly used in various researches and have been found to be fruitful particularly in measuring aspects of behaviour and attitudes, (Croasmun & Ostrom, 2011: 19). The last two (2) questions solicited a closed response in the form of a dichotomous scale, 'yes' or 'no' answer from the students. The effectiveness of questionnaires is premised on the respondents' concealed identities which motivates them to air their authentic opinions. The same factor allows for personal questions to be asked hoping the respondents would be truthful under the guise of anonymity. Questionnaires can also generate a lot of qualitative data, making it possible to generalise findings to a multiplicity of situations. Kabir (2016:208) asserts that questionnaires are cheap to conduct when compared to other methods of data collection, and their standardised nature makes it easy to analyse data.

Classroom observations are among the best ways of data collection since they enable researchers the opportunity to access first-hand information. Jha (2017) explains that observations are simple, quick and effective in collecting data with minimal intrusion. Respondents are observed in their natural environment, thus helping them to become relaxed and natural. Regarding this study, observations were of a non-participatory nature, examining behaviours that marked the students' participation in speaking activities using the EL. During the observation exercise, some notes were taken, recording the interactions between the teacher

and the students through questions and answers. Notes were also taken to reflect tasks that students were assigned, including small group discussions. During group tasks, the researchers moved around in order to interact with the members as and when necessary. However, to allay concern that the participants might be intimidated to not always act naturally when they know that they are being observed, and for that matter by strangers, “The Hawthorne Effect,” (Kenton, 2020) was adopted as the guiding principle. To that end, the researchers maintained only minimum interaction with the students.

Interviews consisted basically of interactive discussions during which, the researchers took down some notes (i.e., oral questionnaires). The flexibility involved in using this tool enabled some explanations to be provided, where necessary. As such, the one-to-one conversations were fruitful as both learners and teachers could voice out their opinions without the restrictions entailed in writing. The responses from teachers were obtained through interviews. The method allowed the researchers to pose follow up questions as well as, seeking clarifications (where necessary). Bell (1999: 178) highlights the primary benefits associated with oral interviews: “A major advantage of the interview is its adaptability. A skilful interviewer can follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings, which the questionnaire can never do.” Overall, the analyses focused on cross-referencing the subjects’ responses against insights gathered from literature and previous research findings to make a comparison.

Demographics of Respondents

A total of 193 students (ranging from 13-16 years) from 6 junior secondary schools in Gaborone completed the questionnaire. The sampling procedure was based on a purposeful arrangement made with the teachers of English whose lessons fitted the researchers’ scheduled visits. In each of the 6 schools visited, one class was selected for the research. Thus, the participating classes were coded A-F for anonymity. Twelve (12) teachers were chosen for interviews, on conditions of availability and interest.

Table 1: Number of students per school who responded to the questionnaire

School	Number of students
A	23
B	35
C	25
D	39
E	34
F	37
Total	193

RESEARCH FINDINGS**Data Presentation****Table 2: Coding respondents' answers to questions 1-10 of the questionnaire**

Statement	Always	Very Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	No answer	Total
1. I often speak English during lessons.	30 (15.5%)	22 (11.4%)	131 (67.9%)	3 (1.6%)	7 (3.6%)	0	193 (100%)
2. I do practise speaking English outside class	28 (14.5%)	28 (14.5%)	101 (52.3%)	7 (3.6%)	28 (14.5%)	1 (0.5%)	193 (99.9%)
3. All my subject teachers, with the exception of the Setswana subject, teach in English.	92 (47.7%)	39 (20.2%)	52 (26.9%)	4 (2.1%)	6 (3.1%)	0	193 (100%)
4. My teachers encourage me to speak English in school.	92 (47.7%)	22 (11.4%)	49 (25.4%)	17 (8.8%)	13 (6.7%)	0	193 (100%)
5. My teachers communicate to you in English?	32 (16.6%)	17 (8.8%)	125 (64.8%)	10 (5.2%)	7 (3.6%)	2 (1%)	193 (100%)
6. I confidently peak English during class.	79 (40.9%)	26 (13.5%)	68 (35.2%)	6 (3.1%)	12 (6.2%)	2 (1%)	193 (99.9%)
7. I can converse in English without switching to Setswana.	32 (16.6%)	29 (15%)	99 (51.3%)	8 (4.1%)	24 (12.4%)	1 (0.5%)	193 (99.9%)
8. I enjoy speaking English.	97 (50.3%)	19 (9.8%)	64 (33.2%)	3 (1.6%)	10 (5.2%)	0	193 (100%)
9. I think that speaking English more often can help me speak and write the language better.	135 (69.9%)	42 (21.8%)	13 (6.7%)	0	0	3 (1.6%)	193 (100%)
10. My School has an 'English-Only' Speaking Policy.	62 (32.1%)	26 (13.5%)	69 (35.8%)	11 (5.7%)	19 (9.8%)	6 (3.1%)	193 (100%)

Table 3: Answers to Yes and No questions

Question	Yes	No	Uncertain	Total
11. As a student, do you find it easy to speak English in class?	128 (66.3%)	65 (33.7%)	0	193 (100%)
12. Are there any teachers in your school who teach non-Setswana subjects in Setswana?	121 (62.7%)	70 (36.3%)	2 (1%)	193 (100%)

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The study chose a ‘descriptive narrative’ to analyse data. As a result it was focused on exploring insights gained from the literature and previous researches in order to put the subjects’ responses into perspective. Since the phenomenon of ‘speaking English’ happens in the context of a real-life classroom teaching, implied is that a naturalistic study of actual teaching atmosphere in Botswana’s JSSs should be undertaken to obtain a holistic insight into pedagogic practices. Some sources (cf, Gall et al, 2003: 635), explain the appropriateness of qualitative approaches in describing the subjects’ behaviour, attitude and knowledge of the phenomenon being investigated. “[...] are broad-based aimed at studying the phenomenon in its totality (including how it’s social, cultural and political realities) influence the learners’ cognitive, linguistic and social development.” The study solicited some of its data utilising closed-ended questions. However, these were considered inadequate in helping to provide answers to questions requiring researchers to construct meanings, and make deductions through an in-depth study of the phenomenon in its natural environment, followed by an ‘analytical induction’. Thus, whilst descriptive statistics are important in guaranteeing validity and reliability of the findings, this study made minimal use of them because they inhibit the subjects from providing their real views by over-concentrating on one dimension of behaviour to the detriment of situational factors. Wragg (1987: 708) alludes to one major shortcoming of descriptive statistics “[...] oversimplification of human communication by concentrating on frequency of occurrence rather than concentrating on the subjects’ reasons for behaving the way they did”.

These researchers therefore, engaged in a speculative commentary, cross-referencing the subjects’ responses against research findings, on related subject matters. Overall, the description was focused on evaluating the degree to which the inception of the EOPs by individual Botswana JSSs, is compatible with Communicative-Oriented Language Teaching (COLT). Thus, the analysis was aimed at describing, interpreting and reflecting on the extent and rationale for the students’ reluctance to speak in English during lessons. The students’ responses showed varied analogies of events in the different schools. Hence, responses to the individual questions are analyzed below:

I often speak English during lessons.

The question was intended to highlight the degree to which the students made some independent efforts to speak English during lessons to acknowledge the practice as a pre-condition for improving their ELP. It was thus intended to establish the extent of students’ intrinsic motivation to use the EL without necessarily being probed into doing so. In addition, the question sought to gauge the students’ freedom to decide to speak English during lessons.

Overall, the responses indicated an irregular pattern, in which roughly 68% of the students revealed that they speak English 'sometimes', this implying that there are no hard and fast regulations making it essential for them to speak English on the school ground, leading one to conjure the question: How much EL communicative practice is afforded the students to exercise skills in the language?

I do practise speaking English outside class.

The desire to learn a language requires some intrinsic motivation as its effectiveness is dependent on situations where the students realise the need to continue speaking the TL even beyond the confines of a classroom. This gives them freedom to navigate situations that would require them to speak without the teacher's input. They also get to learn from each other through listening to peers and other users of the EL, including their parents and friends, without the pressures of getting things right, as is reminiscent of a classroom context. Some grave concern observed was that only 29% of the students reported to make efforts to speak the EL outside class. The bone of contention here is not that students should discard their native languages, rather that they should make some deliberate efforts to practice speaking English to boost their proficiency and confidence in the language, which would in turn be applied in the classroom. The problem of having a seemingly smaller number of English speaking models outside the classroom leads to the possibility of students largely being required to speak to people who have no strong compulsion to speak English over their L1. Some issues relating to students' cultural and familial background might have also negatively impacted this matter, with the same practice possibly having been transferred to the students' playground at the schools.

All my subject teachers, with the exception of the Setswana subject, teach in English.

The issue regarding whether or not teachers conduct non-Setswana subjects in English elicited contradictory responses. Against some widely held opinion that in situations where they share similar L1 with their students, teachers in Botswana have displayed a tendency to conduct instruction in L1, the majority of students (67.9%) reporting that their teachers mostly teach in English. Conversely, 26.9% reported that their teachers exhibited some inconsistencies in this regard. In a question seeking to establish whether there were some non-Setswana subjects that were being taught in Setswana language, in contravention of expectation (question 12), the majority of students (62.7%), responded in the affirmative. From a follow-up question, English was surprisingly mentioned as among a coterie of such subjects, including, Science, Mathematics, Agriculture, Religious Education and Social Studies.

My teachers encourage me to speak English in school.

47.7% of students responded in the affirmative. Despite what appears a low percentage of teachers emphasising the desirability as well as, motivating students to speak in the EL, comparatively, this revelation demonstrates that some reasonable efforts were made towards sensitising students of the essentiality of speaking English in and around the school. Nonetheless, the fact that a small number of teachers encourage students to always speak English on the school ground, is a source of concern. This is especially taking into consideration that the teacher is regarded as a leading role model in the implanting of communicative skills among FL/SL learners, a spirit espoused in the communicative

movement of the early 1970s and late 1980s, that ‘every teacher is a teacher of the English language’.

Relatedly, in question 5, the number of teachers who consistently communicate with students in English all the time is reported to stand at only 16.6%, while the majority of teachers do it *sometimes* (64.8 %). Students tend to emulate their teachers; so the likelihood of them copying what the teacher does is very high. In this case they will speak Setswana, or any of their L1, and code-switch like their teachers who are reported as doing so most often.

I confidently speak English during class.

The minority (40.9%), explained that they are confident to speak English in class. Perhaps, these are representative of children from middle and upper echelons of the social ladder. According to literature (cf, Cummins, 2000: Webb, 2004), this group of students have been socialised into a ‘book-culture’ and unlike students commanding a working class background, are not intimidated by a formal classroom environment.

I can converse in English without switching to Setswana.

A total of 31.6% of the respondents informed that they are able to speak in English without having to occasionally infuse some L1 vocabulary items and expressions into the discourse. From this, it is clear that a lot of code-switching occurs during Botswana’s ELT lessons.

Teachers themselves admitted that they often resort to code-switching, but only under some essential circumstances; that, on the whole, they do not conduct their entire lessons in Setswana. However, it could be concluded that there is a lot of Setswana used during lessons which otherwise should be expected to be taught in the EL. In her findings, Thake (2004), observed that: “Because English is L2 to both the teachers and learners, it is not surprising to find teachers who are faced with the dilemma in which several times they resort to using a common mother tongue existing between them and their students, as well as, experiencing frequent lapses into code-switching during the course of their lessons [...]”

Teachers who admittedly, code-switch between English and Setswana during lessons, confirmed that they do so as a matter of necessity especially to help students to comprehend difficult aspects of their lessons. A possible challenge that is inherent in this practice is that learners from minority social groupings whose mother tongues are languages other than Setswana, would likely become disadvantaged. They would probably experience the negative impacts arising from a perceived failure to acknowledge their identities in the curriculum through, non-use of their L1 as part of the education system. As such, the students might feel marginalised and be led to resent the education system as representing an imposition of the culture of the dominant elites. In all, minority ethnic groupings whose L1 is not Setswana, including foreign students, would seem to be inadvertently left out during the lesson. Lanksheer, (1997), cited in Emmitt et al (2003: 35) echoes this sentiment (...) ‘language reflects and constructs power relations within and between communities’.

I enjoy speaking English.

Students overwhelmingly expressed their interest in speaking English during school time (i.e., 93%). From a face value, this response would seem to project Botswana students as strongly predisposed to using the EL. Presumably, what the students mainly need is some motivation and the opportunity to speak the EL without inhibitions. Notwithstanding, this conclusion leads to a question: How would students who reportedly enjoy speaking English simultaneously appear reluctant to speak it?

The answer to the above question could partly be found from research (cf, for example, Tomlinson, 2005), observing that human beings naturally seek to maintain stability. As a result, the subjects of research are often inclined towards pleasing the investigators by pre-empting and giving information that they think investigators are actually looking for, instead of expressing their truthful opinions regarding the subject being investigated. Second, respondents to a study resort to supplying inauthentic answers owing to the desire to prevent portraying their personal and professional integrities negatively.

I think that speaking English more often can help me speak and write the language better.

A total of 91.7% responded in the affirmative. The findings could mean that despite the challenges associated with learning EFL/ESL, such as limited vocabulary, being culturally-embedded, et cetera, the students are aware that using the TL more often is an essential pre-condition for improving their ELP.

My School has an 'English-Only' Speaking Policy.

37% of the students reported that they were ignorant about the existence of the EOP for their schools. They also indicated their limited knowledge of the existence of EOP as only 45% could attest to a familiarity with the existence of such policies. This could indicate limited provision, motivation and opportunities afforded students to practice speaking English by the schools. Interestingly, 14% of the students suggested that policies in respect of English speaking must be introduced in the schools, thus further suggesting that there is ignorance of the existence of EOPs in their respective schools.

All the 12 teachers (100%) informed that they are conversant with the EOPs in their schools, even though they could not confirm whether or not the said policies existed in documented form. Seven (58%) of the teachers confirmed that the school management and the English Department in their respective schools have made attempts to encourage students to speak English at all times. Despite neither being documented nor fully implemented, EOPs appear to be a genuine and legitimate initiative by the schools. This scenario therefore, presupposes that for these policies to gain increased ownership, there is an urgent need for them to be documented. Evidence also indicates that the EOPs have received a mere partial acceptance and implementation by teachers. This finding is evident from, among others, an assertion by 125 students (64.8%) that their teachers only occasionally speak to them in English during lessons (Ref. Question 5). It was thus highlighted that for purposes of full ownership and effective implementation, the policies deserve to be hugely revised and committed to documentation.

Investigation into the efforts undertaken by the students to practice speaking English, depicts a mainly erratically conducted enterprise, with 67.9% having reported to speak English on the school grounds only sporadically. Just above half the students, (52.3%), admitted that they speak English only *sometimes*. A mere 54.4% reported that they are confident to speak English, while 35% were uncertain of their confidence in the ability to use the language.

In respect to open-ended questions, most students (66.3%) indicated that they find it easy to speak English in class. A variety of reasons were advanced, including a realisation that speaking English regularly would improve their ELP. A limited number even purported that they found it easier to express themselves in English than in Setswana.

These seemingly contradictory answers may have been intended to please the researchers, whilst in actual fact, the students continue to face difficulties communicating in the EL.

The findings reflect a liberal attitude that schools' management system has adopted with regard to enforcing the EOPs. The measures hitherto adopted to help promote an 'English language speaking culture' appear somewhat cursory and indicative of a system that only pays lip-service to the matter, taking into account that the EOPs are neither documented nor are being earnestly implemented.

Although the schools reported that students were encouraged to speak in English as much as they could, (including outside the school premises), notice boards in the various parts of some schools bearing the message "English Speaking Zone" could easily be interpreted as meaning that the policy is enforced within the school premises only. Further, a perception was created that the policy has been widely publicised to the rest of the school, in order for everyone to take ownership of it. But upon careful observation especially during class discussions, it dawned on the teachers, especially those that chose to religiously supervise the enforcement of the EOPs that students only resort to using English when they realise that the teacher was within hearing distance.

Interviews with teachers

As mentioned before, although descriptive statistics have been used as part of the data collection methods from their restricted range of questions and scales, this study considered them to be an inadequate means of analysing and depicting the subjects' authentic opinions and attitudes regarding the state of a reluctance to speak English by the students during lessons. Cognizant of this weakness of descriptive statistics, data obtained from the teachers were analysed basing on a descriptive narrative, cross-referencing their responses against perspectives gathered from related literature findings. The preference of a descriptive narrative derives from literature findings revealing that quantitative analyses of the subjects' answers are often marked by several inconsistencies. Through a speculative commentary, this method was anticipated to help the researchers gain additional information about the probable causes of those inconsistencies.

An analysis of the oral interview sessions with the teachers follows:

Of the 12 teachers interviewed, 5 taught subjects like Agriculture, Mathematics, Development Studies et cetera, while 7 taught English. With the exception of one, whose L1 was Ikalanga but could still speak Setswana fluently, all the teachers spoke Setswana as their L1. Although

2 teachers of English (16.7%), reported that they do not use Setswana during their lessons, upon further probing, they admitted to occasionally code switching. Ten teachers (83 %) admitted that, often they use Setswana because at times students do not understand concepts when explained in English. Science and Mathematics teachers reported that sometimes it is difficult to reach out to the students if they are taught entirely in English. Students were also described as responding slowly when asked questions in English. The problem appears more pronounced in JSSs and possibly exacerbated by factors such as fear, lack of confidence, inadequate motivation and others. At the level of junior secondary education, students are usually in the adolescence stage, characterised by self-realisation, fear, shyness to name but a few. An adolescent who is still undergoing the process of self-discovery would retreat upon encountering criticism from either the teacher or peers.

Findings from Classroom Observations

Some reluctance to speak English by the students was identified. A section of them, for example, felt that the decision to choose to speak in English or anyone of the several indigenous languages was a matter of personal choice or preference. They surmised that this problem emanated partly from what seems a lacklustre attitude towards enforcing the EOPs within schools. Several other factors were advanced as also contributing towards students' reluctance to speak English in the classroom.

a) Fear of being ridiculed by peers

A Concern was raised that JSS students especially, have a tendency to display a derogatory attitude towards those who try to speak English regularly. Apparently, such are labelled high class or given disparaging names denoting one thinking highly of themselves. The tendency appeared to drag down those who were genuinely interested in communicating in English freely: they could not withstand becoming the laughing stock of their peers or being smeared with some demeaning labels.

b) Teachers for subjects meant to be taught in English often teach in Setswana.

The mal-practice is reported to be widespread, leading to teachers for subjects like Sciences, Mathematics and Design & Technology being involved. Teachers to whom this discrepancy applies often maintain that students do not understand English, as a result, they are compelled to explain concepts in the language that they felt students would understand better. To that end, an intermittent resort to using the interlocutors' L1 in a lesson meant to be taught in English was observed in a number of classes visited. The same problem was identified by other researchers like Mokgwathi & Webb (2013), Mafela (2009) and Lekgatho (1996). These researchers have highlighted the extent to which the problems emanating from code-switching have become prevalent in Botswana's ELT. Relatedly, walking past a class doing Mathematics, one of the researchers observed a teacher who could not be bothered by teaching in Setswana even after an appeal from the English Department that the teachers themselves should help encourage the speaking of English by communicating in the language to the students.

Logically, therefore, teachers who communicate to the learners in their L1 in class should not expect the same students to have developed effective communicative skills in the

English language by the end of their tuition period. It is incumbent upon individual teachers to realise their contribution or lack thereof in the progress of students' language resources even beyond their areas of teaching.

c) **Lack of cooperation among teachers**

Within schools, some initiatives aimed at improving the students' ELP, both inside and outside the classroom, are mainly regarded as falling within the purview of English Departments. As a result, teachers of subjects other than English are reported to have shown little or no cooperation in taking ownership and assisting in the effective implementation of such innovative schemes, including the EOP. This often caused the initiatives to be portrayed more as ad-hoc measures destined to yield very little of the intended objectives.

d) **Inadequate English language proficiency-**

Despite the notion of "practice makes perfect", findings revealed that some students are uncomfortable speaking English. They harbour discomfort that they are not fluent in the language and subsequently fear making mistakes if they were to take part in communicative practices, leading to others spiting them. Probyn, (2009:130) mentions that teachers had to switch to L1 in class so that learners could understand them better, making reference to the learners' "*limited English proficiency*". Some teachers informed that when questions are asked in English, there was usually no immediate response from their students, but when questions are posed in the L1, the students would respond instantly. In support of this claim, Lekgatho (1996) mentions that "teachers are frustrated because most students barely speak or understand English." The study may have been conducted many years back, but the problem identified still persists as the same scenario was encountered in the JSSs visited for this research. The teachers expressed frustration with the situation in which students demonstrated an abjectly low levels of ELP. Other researchers like Adeyemi & Kalane, (2011), echoed the same sentiments.

e) **Fear due to lack of confidence**

Fear originating from shyness can be a factor that heightens the students' affective filter leading to reluctance to speak in English as often as they should. There seems to be fear of being ridiculed for making mistakes, rather than the fear to make mistakes. For instance, the response of both students and teachers to the mistake could negatively affect the student's confidence and make them refrain from ever trying again. As such, the implications of making mistakes in this case, serve as a deterrent from participating in communicative practices.

Low confidence in the language of instruction contributes to the students' anxiety which according to the concept of affective filter, reduces their chances of acquiring a sufficient body of language. The high affective filter also interacts with confidence and as such, students with a low confidence will not be receptive to the input they receive.

f) **Lack of motivation among students**

Motivation is a very important factor in learning as it digs in the inner drive of an individual student. A naturally motivated student, will have a higher drive to achieve their set goals. Krashen's AFH embodies the "affective variables" as including learner motivation to

facilitate the learning of L2, (Schütz, 2019). Teachers participating in this study identified lack of motivation as a factor in the students' unwillingness to speak English in class. This finding resonates well with the AFH which regards low motivation, or lack thereof as a barrier to learning a language. A possible question that comes to mind in this regard is whether teachers and the curriculum do enough to motivate the students to want to speak English in the classroom. Do class activities actively involve the students in ways that trigger self- motivation? Perhaps curriculum developers need to go back to the drawing board to interrogate effective implementation of recommended English speaking activities.

g) Preference of L1 over English by students-

Generally, most students are fluent in their L1 by the time they commence schooling and their competence in the language flourishes as they grow older. These researchers established that in Botswana, students prefer communicating in their L1 against English because it (L1) enables them to express themselves better. The finding is not peculiar to Botswana students as in her studies, Evans (2007), observed a preference of L1 among Northern Sotho grade 12 students in South Africa, whose educators would occasionally strongly advise them against using their L1 rather than English. She mentions that some of the students she interviewed constantly transitioned from English to Northern Sotho, even though they confirmed awareness of having to use English. Her conclusion was that the students preferred their L1 though they were familiar with the benefits associated with using English, especially for post-matric purposes. This scenario illustrates that given the opportunity to exercise a choice in respect of a language to use in the classroom, students would, most probably, select the one they feel comfortable in using, which is their L1.

Since social interaction plays an important role in language acquisition/learning, such a platform should be availed to L2 learners to utilize. In a situation where the society values their L1, partly because they possess superior proficiency in it, the likelihood is that it will always be their language of choice. Thus in Botswana where communities command proficiency in local languages like Setswana, students are destined to face a dilemma in which they will most probably exude a preference for L1 rather than English. As observed by some of the respondents, there exists a perception among some Botswana that speaking English creates an aura of esteem around the interlocutors. However, despite the benefits that accrue as a result of having developed a culture of speaking English instantaneously, to some extent, this practice could be viewed negatively by students in public schools wherein several of them originate from the lower level of the social stratum. Their familial background and limited proficiency in English, could have influenced them not to put a lot of premium on speaking the language outside school.

CONCLUSION

The conclusions arrived at serve as the basis for offering some possible solutions to the major findings of the study. Probable reasons have been advanced by the researchers as to why students are not willing to speak English during lessons, these including fear of being ridiculed by peers, as well as a disclosure of their inadequate proficiency in the language of instructions. Limited ELP was discovered to be partly the reason students do not want to speak English at will, fearing possible embarrassment that would emanate from the mistakes they commit during

communicative practices. Informants have described this deficiency as ‘speaking broken English’, leading to them keeping quiet in class to avoid being disparaged by others.

Some students felt that since most of their teachers were not using English as frequently as they should, there was no strong necessity for them to speak in the language. Generally, the students are not reluctant to speak English: they just lack adequate motivation from their teachers, and the platform to use the language more regularly. The problem is exacerbated by the little encouragement they get from their teachers. Another inhibition identified relates to the utilization of ineffective strategies that are meant to create opportunities for students to use the TL more freely.

Findings from this research have indicated that despite English being designated as the predominant language of instruction in all subjects other than Setswana, not all teachers teach in English to the expected levels. However, respondents surprisingly, identified English among a list of subjects that are often taught in Setswana, an anomaly that might be a direct factor in the low ELP among students.

A culture of speaking English consistently on the school grounds has been found to contribute significantly towards students' increased ELP and, by extension, engenders successful performance in their studies. This will also add on to build their capacities in both speaking and writing skills. Languages are learnt through speaking first then reading and writing. Practice in speaking impacts positively on the other two skills. Besides, employers in the global recruitment market are looking for prospective employees with good a command of spoken and written English.

Lastly, this study has highlighted that despite the perceived value attached to the EOPs in improving the students' communicative capacities, the policies in question have remained a relatively quasi educational policy instruments even with their numerous years of existence.

Recommendations

Any problem needs a solution, thus respondents were asked to suggest possible ways of overcoming the challenges uncovered by this study. Below are some of the suggestions:

- a) **Reviewing effectiveness of EOPs:** These have been part of the school systems for numerous years now. The onus rests with the school authorities to take measures and evaluate the effectiveness of such policies, in terms of their statuses, rules governing their implementation, and mechanisms for monitoring their effectiveness. The policies place accent on oral communication skills, which are a part of the EL syllabus that is not currently properly situated in the school curriculum. For purposes of developing speaking skills among students, some EOP objectives could be specifically and deliberately highlighted to gain official recognition from MEoSD, and possibly formalize the EOPs as part of the national education system.
- b) **Empowering learners' communicative capacities.** There is pride in being competent in doing something. Most often Botswana students decline invitations to make presentations in class because they lack confidence in their ELP. In the light of the negative communicative influence that students are reported to be receiving from emerging technologies, and their peers, requiring learners to practice their EL communicative skills would appear to be a necessity. Initiatives such as compelling students to speak entirely in

English on the school ground would therefore, seem most appropriate. However, to help guarantee efficacy of implementing such schemes, policies such as the EOPs ought to be made official in order to leverage on the teacher's capacity to implement them. In addition, some respondents suggested that despite being regarded as a dereliction from responsibilities, the use of quizzes, crosswords, and monopoly are possible means of empowering the students' ELP, especially vocabulary building.

- c) **Alleviating challenges caused by students' dissatisfactory ELP through collaborative action.** The mandate of implanting high levels of ELP among learners could be realised if teachers could work collectively, irrespective of their parent departments. Invaluable motivation could thus be teachers consistently speaking to students in English, both inside and outside the classroom. In the process, teachers would have an opportunity to mentor their students' ELP. Maxwell and Meiser (2001:97) mention that "not all students share the same level of competence in oral language; in fact, some students enter the school impoverished by lack of verbal interaction in the home." These authors also mention that teachers should realise that students need to talk. Implied is that activities involving speaking must be used more often in the classroom. As such, implanting English communicative skills among students, should be viewed as an inter-departmental goal. The long-term benefits would be immense as with respect to the development of academic discourse, for example, students would find it easier to understand examination questions and respond to them appropriately.
- d) **Incorporating speaking skills as part of classroom activities-** Teachers along with the Department of Curriculum Development, need to concretize the inclusion of speaking skills as part of the syllabus. The current syllabus has speaking activities for English lessons, but teachers have admitted to not using the activities to the maximum. In addition to inadequate provision of resources, some teachers have attributed their insufficient utilization of speaking activities to the students' reluctance to participate in oral communicative practice through the medium of English, alleging that such lessons take up a significant part of the time allotment. Maxwell and Meiser (2001) substantiate this point "we tend to forget that oral language is an important instructional area in the English language arts, and that at the secondary level, the responsibility for oral language skills development has most often been relegated to the speech course [...]" (p.96). Teachers concentrate more on the writing skills than speaking, possibly because writing is easy to assess (Moremi et al, 2018:108). But they have to realise that the two skills are equally important in learning a language and are interdependent.

On the whole, there is a lot that schools need to do in order to help the students gain more competence in speaking the English language with dexterity.

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