

GRADE 10 ENGLISH FIRST ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS' COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN BOCHUM WEST CIRCUIT, LIMPOPO PROVINCE

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Abstract

English First Additional Language learners face challenges to develop communicative competence. Hence, this study explored factors that negatively impact on learners' communicative competence in enhancing their English First Additional Language (FAL) proficiency. The study used a simple random sampling to sample 16 Grade 10 learners from one secondary school in Bochum West Circuit. The qualitative approach was used in which semi-structured interviews were employed to collect data. The data was analysed thematically. The results indicate that learners are impacted negatively by linguistic and cognitive factors (lack of vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation, knowledge of grammar rules, and code-switching), and psychological factors (lack of confidence, anxiety, and shyness). The findings highlight that an overemphasis on formal aspects of language such as grammar and written skills often undermines learners' ability to participate confidently in spoken and social communication. In conclusion, improving EFAL learners' communicative competence requires a balanced approach that values both linguistic knowledge and the ability to use language effectively in context. The study recommends that teachers should design activities that require learners to negotiate meaning, such as discussions, debates, and problem-solving tasks. This aligns with the idea that language competence includes not only grammatical accuracy but also appropriate use in context. It also recommends that DBE formally introduce group presentations, dramatisation, and debate in various circuits in a form of competitions.

Keywords: Communicative competence, speaking skills, dramatisation, linguistic knowledge, code-switching.

1. INTRODUCTION

English is a global language that usually provides common ground for speakers who do not speak each other's native language (Maja, 2019). Therefore, learners should develop communicative competence to effectively communicate in English with people inside and outside the classroom. It is also crucial for them to communicate meaningfully in English as it plays a crucial role in the language teaching and learning process (Astiandani & Mustofa, 2021). Consequently, the

Department of Basic Education (2011, p.8) states that by the time learners enter Grade 10, they should be reasonably proficient in their EFAL regarding both interpersonal and cognitive academic skills. However, the reality is that many learners still struggle to communicate effectively in EFAL at this stage. The Grade 10 EFAL learners cannot use the appropriate vocabulary and correct grammar when they speak (Kristiani & Pradnyadewi, 2021). As such, they switch to their mother tongue when they cannot find the right word to use. These learners are also faced with problems in improving their speaking skills such as feeling shy and nervous when they are speaking in front of other learners (Kristiani & Pradnyadewi, 2021; Mogano & Motlhaka, 2023). These challenges then affect their pronunciation because they feel uncomfortable and pressured to speak. Moreover, the challenges faced by learners affect their academic performance.

To corroborate this assertion, results of a South African study conducted by Mpiti, Makena and Mpahla (2021) confirmed that first-year students entering higher education institutions with underdeveloped communication skills, restraining their ability to communicate effectively in English for academic purposes. The above-mentioned problems need to be addressed because they impact negatively on learners' prospects to successfully thrive in academic cycles and workplace environments. Teachers should build learners' vocabulary and language structures by allowing them to practise a variety of informal and formal spoken language forms in the classroom to develop their communicative competence (Department of Basic Education, 2011). Therefore, it is important that teachers regularly engage learners into interactive communicative activities to offer them ample time to develop communicative competence. Furthermore, Astiandani and Mustofa (2021) demonstrate that speaking is overlooked since it is rarely assessed through formal tests and examinations. Against this background, Holguin, Morales and Palacios (2021) and Dreyer (2017) claim that speaking is regarded as the most challenging skill to teach. Many non-English speaking learners attend schools where English is the language of learning and teaching (LoLT), and as such, they are significantly challenged in communicating using the language. They feel shy, anxious, and uninterested in classroom discussion topics. In collocation with these research findings, the researcher, as a teacher at the selected school has observed that teachers focus much on completing the syllabus as guided by the annual teaching plans, neglecting the development of learners' communicative competence in the process. Thus, this study intended to explore the factors that negatively impact learners' communicative competence in enhancing their English First Additional Language proficiency.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The English proficiency is undeniably on demand for various practical factors that broaden the horizon of opportunities for learners or graduates nationally and globally (Seraj, Mahbub, Hadina & Kamrul, 2021). Hence it is crucial for learners to acquire communicative competence in school as it helps them maximize their future learning and career opportunities. However, empirical evidence from the recent study reflects the growing problematic concerns about learners' communicative competence, which needs urgent attention (Naparan & Bacasmot, 2024; Chauke

& Motlhaka, 2021). This study also argues that despite the recognized importance of oral communicative competence, EFL learners still struggle to develop this competence. The review provides a thorough background for the study's exploration of the factors that negatively impact on learners' communicative competence in enhancing their English First Additional Language proficiency focusing on the following:

Factors that Negatively Impact on Learners' Development of Communicative Competence

a. Learners' Anxiety and Shyness to Speak English

According to Loan (2022), research has long noticed foreign language anxiety as one of the important barriers which cause various difficulties for language learners. It ranks high among the factors that prevent language learners from speaking the target language fluently and accurately. In agreement, most researchers (Shazly, 2021; Hermaniar & Azkiya, 2021; Amoah & Yeboah, 2021; Alshumaimeri & Alhumud, 2021; Islam, Ahmad, & Islam, 2022; Bukhari et al., 2022; Li, Noordin & Ismail, 2025) found that anxiety is one of the factors that negatively affect learners' development of communicative competence in the EFAL classroom. As such, teachers should find ways to alleviate learners' anxiety and encourage maximum participation in the classroom. There are many personal factors than teachers and classroom factors influencing learners' anxiety in speaking English. The personal factors such as learners' inability to express ideas in the form of speaking, worrying when face speaking test, negative evaluation, doubting themselves when speaking, fear of failure, difficult to make other people understand, and communication apprehension (Hermaniar & Azkiya, 2021; Loan, 2022; Thaba & Motlhaka, 2025). This shows that teachers have a huge responsibility to keep learners actively engaged in speaking activities and continuously encourage both classroom and outside the classroom communication. This active participation will improve their anxiety and gradually improve their communicative skills because when learners are affected by speaking anxiety it becomes difficult for them to effectively participate in the EAFL classroom.

Similarly, Amoah and Yeboah (2021) investigated the factors that inhibit learners' communicative competence. They found that learners struggle because of psychological factors such as anxiety, fear of mistakes, and unwillingness to participate in communicative activities. Their findings are supported by Islam, Ahmad and Islam (2022). They argue that some reasons why learners face problems in speaking English are not limited to linguistic factors but also personal reasons such as shyness to perform speaking. These learners need to be supported and motivated to believe in themselves. They should be made aware that consistent practice will be beneficial for them in improving their speaking skills. Moreover, Huon, and Em (2022) in their study discovered that the fear of speaking caused by anxiety strongly affect the learners' English-speaking fluency the most. According to Shazly (2021) and Bukhari et al. (2022), foreign language anxiety has been a perennial concern in language learning. It affects learners in many countries around the globe. Therefore, there should be effective ways to reduce foreign language anxiety in learners.

b. Lack of Vocabulary

There are linguistic factors that contribute to learners' challenges to develop communicative competence in the English FAL classroom. According to Amoah and Yeboah (2021), learners struggle with linguistic factors such as lack of vocabulary. They cannot use the appropriate vocabulary when they speak (Kristiani & Pradnyadewi, 2021). Thus, it becomes difficult to grasp the message or information they want to communicate. Similarly, many researchers found that learners' speaking ability is inhibited by several problems such as lack of vocabulary because they have little knowledge of the components of speaking skills (Islam, Ahmad & Islam, 2022). Halik (2021) also establishes that learners' effectiveness and fluency in communication are interrupted because they do not possess sufficient proficiency in English vocabulary. Therefore, teachers should introduce ways in which learners can accumulate English vocabulary to support their development of communicative competence.

c. Lack of Confidence

Speaking fluently is the milestone of language learning (Qhobosheane & Phindane, 2022). However, Aprianto, Ritonga, Marlius, and Nussyur (2020) maintain that speaking is one of the challenging language skills, as it takes more requirements of the linguistics that the speaker considers. Hence learners struggle with self-confidence because they are not fluent speakers. In agreement, Hilao-Valencia and Cruz (2023) demonstrate that in dealing with factors that influence speaking performance, learners agreed that the highest factor is lack of confidence as they are not familiar with English and fear of speaking. To support the above notion, Li, Noordin, and Ismail (2025) establish that lack of confidence is a psychological factor that contributes to learners' lack of communicative competence. Again, several researchers affirm that learners' speaking ability is inhibited by lack of confidence (Dansieh, Owusu & Seidu, 2021). Similarly, in Indonesia, the problem that learners face is very low confidence in speaking English (Maca, 2020; Motlhaka & Sekete, 2025). Similarly, a study in Saudi Arabia by Alshumaimeri and Alhumud (2021) found that learners lack confidence in speaking English. Therefore, it is evident that low confidence in speaking English is not limited to one country, but impact learners in various countries. It can be caused by minimal practice of the language. In agreement, South African learners are from multicultural families, thus they only speak English in the classroom (Vukosi et al., 2021; Linake, Liziwe & Kleinbooi, 2023; Mahlaba & Ntshangase, 2023).

d. Code-Switching

Seraj et al., (2021) also argue that because of code-switching in the classroom, learners seldom feel the necessity of oral communication in English outside the classroom. For this reason, learners' oral English communication skills performance is unsatisfactory. Consequently, the problem in speaking becomes acute and visible when the learners enter universities where the medium of instruction is English (Islam, Ahmad & Islam, 2022; Motlhaka, 2021). Then learners struggle to communicate or to comprehend the lessons delivered because there is no code-switching as done in secondary schools.

However, Vukosi, et al (2021) support the use of code-switching in the South African classrooms as he maintains that it assists learners to understand foreign words that can impact their oral communication faster. In addition, Flores and Balmeo (2021) demonstrate that code-switching is needed in teaching and learning process and should be implemented to ensure learners' understanding. As a matter of fact, learners understand better when language teachers code-switch to explain further the information that seems new and complicated for learners to understand. But consistent use of it can lead to learners being used in speaking their native tongue, thus, weakening the chances to improve their skills in using the English Language. In support of the above, Makhwathana, (2023) asserts that when teachers resort to code-switching to explain new vocabulary, it places a stranglehold on learners' language development process. In other words, code-switching does not help learners to learn, rather it negatively impacts their speaking skills. Again, Seraj et al. (2021) report that the extensive use of mother tongue inside and outside the classroom by learners and teachers affect their English communication skills. Although they are based in areas that are monolingual, they should refrain from code-switching in the EFL classroom as this does not help learners. In other words, since learners rarely speak English outside the classroom, they should be fully exposed to the language in the EFAL classroom to close the gap they have.

3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite the central role of communicative competence in language learning, many learners of English as a First Additional Language (EFAL) continue to struggle with effective communication in real-life contexts. While curricula often emphasise grammatical knowledge and reading/writing skills, there is limited focus on the development of learners' ability to use English meaningfully in social and academic interactions. In contexts such as South Africa, where English functions as a key medium of instruction, learners are expected to demonstrate proficiency in speaking and listening; however, evidence suggests that many EFAL learners lack confidence and competence in these areas. To corroborate this assertion, results of a South African study conducted by Mpiti, Makena and Mpahla (2021) confirmed that first-year students entering higher education institutions with underdeveloped communication skills, restraining their ability to communicate effectively in English for academic purposes. Furthermore, there is insufficient research exploring how factors such as classroom practices, teacher strategies, learner attitudes, and exposure to English influence EFAL learners' communicative competence. This gap raises concerns about whether current teaching approaches adequately support the development of communicative competence, including linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic skills. Without a clear understanding of these factors, it becomes difficult to design effective interventions to improve learners' communication skills. Therefore, this study intended to explore the factors that negatively impact learners' communicative competence in enhancing their English First Additional Language proficiency.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is underpinned by Hymes' Communicative Competence Theory because Hymes' theory provides a holistic framework for understanding EFAL learners' challenges and highlights that effective language learning involves not only linguistic knowledge but also the ability to use English appropriately and confidently in diverse real-life situations. In this study, Hymes' theory is useful because it supports multilingual competence, encourages functional use of English, not just exam performance and addresses learners' difficulties in speaking confidently and appropriately. Considering the above, learners should have the knowledge of the social rules of language use; these rules include the rules of how to start interaction, how to close interaction, manners of communication with people of different ages or social statuses as well as rules associated with communication settings such as interaction in street, TV meetings, friendly meetings, and formal meetings (Ahmed, 2024). In this case, teachers should encourage learners to employ alternative ways outside of the classroom, such as viewing movies, using interactive software, and speaking with native speakers to improve their communicative competence (Retnowaty, 2022). In other words, Hymes' theory helps to frame communicative competence as multidimensional, identify gaps between knowledge and actual language use and justify the need for interactive and communicative teaching strategies.

5. RESEARCH METHOD

Permission to conduct this study was obtained from the Limpopo Provincial Education Department and the selected school. Informed consent was secured from learners and parents of underage learners. Ethical approval followed protocols consistent with institutional research ethics committees, ensuring participant anonymity and data confidentiality. The participants of this study were 16 learners wherein researchers used simple random sampling method to sample them from the population of 60 Grade 10 learners at the selected school to give every learner an equal chance of being sampled from the population. Thus, the researcher wrote numbers from 1 up to 60 as the total number of learners in the classroom and request them to pick one number each to give all learners the opportunity to participate in the study and those who picked number 1 to 16 participated in the study. This study used qualitative research method to examine the way people make sense of their concrete real-life experiences and analyse their understanding of their behaviour in educational terms (Cropley, 2022). The qualitative methodology was relevant to this study as it allowed the researchers to explore the factors that negatively impact learners' communicative competence in enhancing their English First Additional Language proficiency and determine communication strategies they use to overcome language difficulties during interaction. The data was collected using semi-structured interviews with Grade 10 learners to grasp the causes of learners' low proficiency in English, strategies and method applied in the classroom to assist them develop communicative competence. The interviews were audio-recorded to facilitate subsequent data transcription process and grasp the participants' views which is a primary data

than to use secondary data. The method allowed the researchers to actively interact with EFAL learners during semi-structured interview to answer the following questions:

- How do EFAL learners develop communicative competence in English in classroom and real-life contexts?
- To what extent do EFAL learners demonstrate grammatical and vocabulary knowledge when communicating in English?
- What communication strategies do EFAL learners use to overcome language difficulties during interaction?
- What challenges do EFAL learners face when using English in academic versus social settings?

The study adopted thematic inductive data analysis whereby the researchers generated codes from the data itself to allow emergence of patterns and themes from the real data (Naeem, Ozuem, Ranfagni & Howell, 2023). The researchers systematically analysed interview data by following the six steps espoused by Braun and Clarke (2006). In the first step, the researchers familiarised themselves with the data, secondly, the researchers organised the data into meaningful codes. Thirdly, the data extracts and codes were examined to identify potential themes. In the fourth step, the researchers observed the codes with each theme to ensure that they are aligned. In the fifth step, the researchers defined and created a narrative description of each theme. Step six, final analysis and description of the findings on learners' development of communicative competence was written. The direct quotations and representative data extracts are used in the report.

6. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study is to explore factors that negatively impact learners' communicative competence in enhancing their English First Additional Language proficiency and determine communication strategies they use to overcome language difficulties during interaction. The analysis of learners' responses is presented according to emerging themes from interview findings.

Factors that Negatively Impact on Learners' Development of Communicative Competence

• Learners' Anxiety to Speak

According to Loan (2022), language anxiety ranks high among the factors that prevent language learners from speaking English fluently and accurately. In line with the above, Bogodada, Thanmrin, and Mappewali (2021) establish that the factors that learners' anxiety in speaking English are from learners' fear of negative evaluation, lack of knowledge, and environmental factors such as unsupportive classmates. This is proven by the following excerpts:

Excerpt 1: No, people make me feel nervous.

Excerpt 2: I am shy. My English is not perfect. And I am scared that if I make a mistake they will laugh and make fun of me.

Excerpt 3: I am shy, I get nervous and confused. Sometimes I don't know what to say when I speak. Some words are difficult to pronounce and some I don't understand them.

Excerpt 4: No, I am shy and nervous.

Excerpt 5: No, because English in class, you feel shy and nervous. When I speak to people I make many mistakes because of being scared.

The above responses show that learners are struggling to develop their communicative competence because of psychological factors such as being shy, nervous, scared, and confused. This suggests that they are affected by the unsupportive classmates because their classmates laugh or make fun of them when they speak English. These challenges limit learners to practice English speaking. Excerpt 2 mentioned that he is shy and does not know English well. Excerpt 5 mentioned that he is shy and nervous to speak in front of people. These challenges need to be mitigated to encourage learners to practice English for their development. Loan (2022) confirms that learners who experience English speaking anxiety face difficulties as they are asked to present their ideas. This shows that learners' anxiety is a problem that needs urgent attention to ensure that they practice speaking before they face more challenges in the next grade. Rao, Rao and Zakaria (2025) concur that learners can overcome shyness through support, motivation, and psychological training through meaningful support from their teachers.

- **Lack of Confidence**

Self-confidence plays a crucial part in speaking English because many learners are still less confident when speaking because they are afraid to make mistakes, feel uncomfortable to speak and insecurities of their friends who have the good ability more than them (Ananda & Hastini, 2023). All these challenges were found in this study and cause learners not to engage more in speaking activities as indicated below:

Excerpt 1: Like when I ask questions or speak, I feel nervous. I also think that the answer I have given my teacher is wrong. I always feel like people are better than me

Excerpt 2: Outside, eh! I don't feel confident. Because outside when I speak English my friends laugh me. And many people outside the school do not know English and do not love to speak in English.

Excerpt 3: No, eh I am shy to speak outside and inside the class because other learners laugh, and I don't know it very well.

Excerpt 4: It is the same as in class. I try but I don't feel comfortable because if I use incorrect words, they will laugh at me.

Excerpt 5: No, because I feel shy and nervous. I can speak alone but around people I make many mistakes because of being scared. They also laugh at us and when they do I become discouraged.

The above excerpts show that learners lack self-confidence because they compare themselves with others, believe they are not better, and are concerned about their classmates' attitude. For instance, excerpt 5 indicated that he thinks the answer given to the teacher is wrong. This proves that the learner has self-doubt. Excerpt 8 mentioned that she is not comfortable speaking as she believes people will laugh at her when they make language mistakes during communicative lessons. They stated that this discourages them from speaking. Therefore, when learners are discouraged to practice speaking, they will not improve their communication competence. The other reason is that they are from the community that speak Sepedi thus, they hardly communicate in English. The reason was that many people outside the school do not know English and do not love to speak in English. In accordance with the above, Mahlaba and Ntshangase (2023) establish that learners find it difficult to speak English because they do not speak English as their home language. They are only exposed to it at school during the English lessons. Therefore, there must be ways that could encourage or motivate learners to practice English at home. This suggests that the community could be engaged learners' learning to assist their English language development.

- **Pronunciation**

Correct pronunciation has a great impact on English speaking skills, and it is challenging for learners to have proficiency in pronouncing foreign language well (Ramzan & Javaid, 2023). Thus, learners who struggle with pronunciation would not be fluent in speaking. In agreement, Kobilova (2022) establishes that having incorrect pronunciation causes learners not to be understood, even if their grammar is perfect. In this study, learners indicated that their pronunciation difficulties make them uncomfortable to speak English. Below are the responses from participants:

Excerpt 1: I don't feel comfortable because I can't pronounce words. And I am shy

Excerpt 2: I am shy, I get nervous and confused. Some words are difficult to pronounce.

Excerpt 3: There are big words I can't pronounce, and it makes me feel uncomfortable to speak.

Excerpt 4: Ehh! ...some words that are difficult to pronounce, and learners laugh when you make a mistake.

Excerpt 5: Some words are difficult; some I don't understand or pronounce them.

It is evident that learners' poor pronunciation impact negatively on their development of communicative competence. This makes them to be reluctant to speak English. Confirming the above, Tsang (2022) found that different aspects of pronunciation were negatively correlated with anxiety to different extents. This relates well with the finding of this study, as Excerpt 1 and 2 stated that they are shy to speak English because they struggle with pronunciation of English words.

- **Lack of Vocabulary**

According to Jaya, Petrus and Pitaloka (2022), learners struggle with linguistical related problems such as vocabulary which is caused by fear of mistakes, and lack of word usage. As reported by learners in the following excerpts:

Excerpt 1: I think I use incorrect words when I speak.

Excerpt 2: When I speak English sometimes, I stutter. It is because I feel scared and I don't know which words to use.

Excerpt 3: No, aah! ... I think if I try to speak and use incorrect word, they will laugh at me.

Excerpt 4: When I don't know some words, other learners correct me.

Excerpt 5: I get confused or forget what to say. The more I forget, the more I get scared because I don't know what to say in front of people.

The above responses show that learners struggle with lack of word usage. Excerpt 1 mentioned that he thinks he uses incorrect words when he speaks. Thus, this makes them not to practice speaking as expected. This means that they get confused about which words to use during the conversation. The findings are supported by the study undertaken by Kristiani and Pradnyadewi (2021) which reported that learners cannot use the appropriate vocabulary when they speak. In other words, learners are challenged with vocabulary knowledge.

- **Code-Switching**

The extensive use of mother tongue inside and outside the classroom by learners and teachers affect learners' development of communicative competence (Seraj et al., 2021). In this study, learners struggle to speak English fluently and they depend on Sepedi as their mother tongue. This has been proven through the following excerpts:

Excerpt 1: No, we speak Sepedi during English period.

Excerpt 2: Yes, we speak English and add Sepedi.

Excerpt 3: Yes, we use Sepedi and English when the teacher asks questions, and when we discuss.

Excerpt 4: I switch to my home language when I speak.

Excerpt 5: Yes, we speak English and mix it with Sepedi.

The above excerpts reveal that learners code-switch when they struggle with word choice and their reliance in L1 impede their development of English communicative competence. In addition, the findings of this study concur with the study conducted by Rengur, et al. (2025) which reported that excessive reliance on code-switching reduces learners' opportunities to practice English, foster dependency on L1, and impact negatively on the development of fluency and communicative

competence. For instance, excerpt 2 and 5 mentioned that they code-switch to L1 when they speak English. While excerpt 3 stated that they code-switch when they speak English during discussions and when answering questions in the English lesson. Therefore, it can be concluded that teachers allow learners to speak Sepedi during their lessons, which negatively impact their development of communicative competence.

- **Lack of Grammar**

In a study conducted on EFL learners' difficulties in speaking English by Normawati et al. (2023) found that the first-year students face three major difficulties as grammar (48%), pronunciation (27%), vocabulary (12%), and the other aspects less than (10%). Their study shows that many learners struggle with grammar. As such, it can be concluded that learners failed to be competent in English at high school level. Moreover, this study also revealed that Grade 10 learners struggle with grammar, which affects their speaking ability. This is evidenced in the following excerpts:

Excerpt 1: No, because people they laugh at us.

Excerpt 2: No, but I try to speak even I feel like I use incorrect words. And it is difficult to try speaking in class because they always laugh at other learners. So, others feel discouraged to speak.

Excerpt 3: Like when I ask questions or speak, I feel nervous. I also think that the answer I have given my teacher is wrong. I always feel like people are better than me.

Excerpt 4: Yes, because when the teacher ask me questions, they must be answered in English.

Excerpt 5: No, because English in class, you feel shy and nervous. When I speak around people I make many mistakes because of being scared.

This study found that learners struggle with grammar. The findings are supported by Prasajo et al., (2023) who found that learners tend to ignore the grammatical rules instead of learning about it. The study also revealed that almost all the learners agreed that they struggle to arrange the words into sentences when they speak in English. Majority of them agreed that they have an inadequate understanding of spoken grammar. This is also evident in this study Excerpt 1 said "people they", which shows that she used a noun and a pronoun next to each other. Excerpt 2, said "...try to speak even I feel" ... She should have included a subordinating conjunction in her statement. Excerpt 3 stated her response with "like" and said, "*I have given my teacher is wrong*", she should have included a preposition 'to' in her statement. Again, excerpt 4 struggles to differentiate between singular and plural in a conversation. He said, "teacher ask" instead of 'teacher asks.' Lastly, excerpt 5, said "when I speak around people", instead of 'speak to people'. These grammar mistakes identified in learners' responses prove that they struggle with grammar and their mistakes make their message unclear. According to Normawati et al., (2023), grammar is an essential aspect of communication as it is closely related to mastery of language skills, such as speaking. Therefore, EFAL teachers should teach grammar focusing on developing learners' speaking skills. Again,

learners at high school should be assisted with grammar and ensure that it does not affect their speaking skills.

Ways to Mitigate the Challenges Faced by Learners in Developing Communicative Competences

- **Group Presentations**

Group presentation is a way to keep learners active in the classroom while improving their speaking skills (Crisianita & Mandasari, 2022). This will allow learners to practice speaking fluently and to learn from others as they collaborate. In this study, learners were asked which interactive activities help them to improve their communicative competence. They responded as follows:

Excerpt 1: When I do unprepared speech. That is when I present things from my mind.

Excerpt 2: Presentations in class, when I do unprepared speech. That is when I volunteer and speak. It helps me to face my classmates and improve speaking English.

Excerpt 3: Sometimes we sit in groups, and they give us pictures when we do cartoons. Then we describe what is going on.

Excerpt 4: When we do cartoons, the teacher ask us to discuss in groups and present to the class.

Excerpt 5: Presenting in groups help me not to be shy. Because we discuss the topic and prepare ourselves before we present to the class.

The results indicated that learners are motivated to speak when they engage in presentations in the classroom. This concurs with the findings of Murad, Sakhnin, and Assadi (2021) which indicate that collaboration helps to develop self-confidence and motivation, cooperation and mutual respect, tolerance, and gaining new vocabulary. For instance, excerpt 1 mentioned that unprepared speech allows them to speak their mind. This means that they get opportunities to share what they know instead of preparing before presentations. Excerpt 2 when they present in English, meaning that classroom presentations allow them to speak more and get used to communicating with others in the target language. Therefore, teachers should encourage learners to collaborate and share ideas as this helps them with self-confidence, development of new words, grammar and overall improved communicative competence.

- **Role-Playing**

Role-playing is a pedagogical strategy that influences and improves learners' speaking skills (Ishak & Aziz, 2022; Rao, Rao & Zakaria, 2025). When learners are engaged in role-playing, they get an opportunity to learn new words, improve pronunciation of unfamiliar words, learn grammar and practice speaking with others in the classroom. Thus, the participants in this study perceive role-playing as an active strategy to improve their speaking skills. Their responses are as follows:

Excerpt 1: Dialogue. When we do a play in class in groups.

Excerpt 2: Role-playing in class.

Excerpt 3: To use English in an interview in class

Excerpt 4: In class when the teacher gives us a topic to research, we discuss do a role-play.

Excerpt 5: The teacher gives us a topic to read about and where we don't understand, we ask her. Then we do role-play in class. We use verbal or nonverbal.

It is evident from the above excerpts that role-playing is considered by the participants as a strategy to develop their communicative competence. Excerpt 1 mentioned that doing a role-play in groups can help them to improve their speaking skills. In accordance with findings of this study, Ishak and Aziz (2022) assert that role-play boosts learners' confidence and increases their ability to communicate in English. It is a good strategy that allows learners to act in real life situations in the classroom. As such, incorporating role-playing in the EFAL classroom can improve learners' lack of vocabulary which is a challenge in developing their communicative competence.

- **Dramatisation**

The EFAL learners are faced with lack of confidence which contributes to low speaking ability. Thus, researchers recommend the implementation of dramatisation in the classroom (Kumar et al., 2022; Mardiani & Hanifah, 2023; Luo, Ismail, Ahmad & Guo, 2025). Kumar et al., (2022) demonstrate that using drama technique to teach English as a foreign language has a substantial impact on the acquisition of fluent speaking abilities and results in improvements in the target audience's communication skills. In line with the above, Ceneciro, Estoque, and Chavez (2023) confirm that language fluency allows learners to express their thoughts in a clear and concise manner. In this study, when learners were asked which, fun activity can be used in the classroom to improve their speaking skills, the majority indicated drama. Respondents indicated the following:

Excerpt 1: When doing drama. When we discuss with classmates.

Excerpt 2: Drama, I think it will make English lesson fun, and we will understand.

Excerpt 3: Drama in English. It will help us to get used to speaking.

Excerpt 4: Drama helps us to learn from each other. Because we listen we other learners speak well in English.

Excerpt 5: Drama. Talking and correcting each other. It will help us to improve our speaking skills.

The study found that drama is the most interesting activity to develop learners' communicative competence. Learners believe it will help them to use verbal and nonverbal communication and help them to get used to speaking English. Mardiani and Hanifah (2023) concur that drama helps

in terms of cognitive aspects such as pronunciation, clarity, fluency, and vocabulary enhancement. It also motivates them to practice speaking as it creates an active environment in the classroom. Again, Mugiraneza et al., (2024) recommend that teachers be aware of the importance of using drama to increase their learners' motivation in speaking skills and initiate clubs of speaking competitions through drama.

- **Debate**

Debating is a strategic way to enhance learners' speaking skills. It reduces learner passiveness in the classroom and fosters active engagement and increases confidence in learners' ability to contribute to class discussions. As learners participate in argumentation, conducting research, analysing data, and questioning assumptions, they develop the ability to think critically and express their thoughts effectively (Ceneciro, Estoque & Chavez, 2023; Majidi, Graaff & Janssen, 2024). Moreover, the results of this study show that learners also prefer debate as a good strategy to develop their communicative competence. Below are the responses from participants when asked to mention a strategy that could improve their speaking skills:

Excerpt 1: I think debate. Because we will research and speak with our classmates in class. It will help us to learn.

Excerpt 2: We can speak English during English lesson, use dictionary to find words, and debate.

Excerpt 3: When we discuss in groups to prepare for a debate. My groupmates help me by rectifying my mistakes.

Excerpt 4: When people debate in class, I learn new words, and it encourages me to read more and improve how I speak.

Excerpt 5: Debate helps us to work together, research and learn new words. It also helps us to become confident in speaking in front of many people.

The above responses show that learners believe that debate will not only assist with developing speaking skills but also researching skills. Therefore, teachers should allow learners to have meaningful arguments to improve their speaking skills and build their confidence in public speaking. In agreement, Ceneciro, Estoque, and Chavez (2023) establish that exposing learners to competitive debates fosters critical thinking skills; reduces their fear in public speaking which then helps them understand their weaknesses in terms of grammar, structures, and vocabulary. As learners in this study struggle with grammar and vocabulary, debate could help them to improve. In support of using debate to improve learners' speaking skills, Ban, Pang, and Em (2023) maintain that learners with experience debating in English tend to have good English-speaking skills. For this reason, debate should be effectively implemented in schools.

7. CONCLUSION

The aim of this study is to explore factors that negatively impact learners' communicative competence in enhancing their English First Additional Language proficiency and determine communication strategies they use to overcome language difficulties during interaction. The findings of this study revealed that learners are negatively impacted by linguistic and cognitive, psychological, educational and environmental factors. This means that learners' inadequate communicative competence can be improved when the above challenged are mitigated strategically. This study also revealed that the implementation of role-play, dramatisation, debate, and increased instructional time can boost learners' self-confidence, reduce their anxiety and shyness to speak English, increase vocabulary and knowledge of grammar. When all these are effectively improved, learners can speak fluently, confidently and meaningfully. They will also help them with good public speaking skills, to become critical thinkers and acquire problem solving skills. The study recommends that teachers should design activities that require learners to negotiate meaning, such as discussions, debates, and problem-solving tasks. This aligns with the idea that language competence includes not only grammatical accuracy but also appropriate use in context.

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