Outcomes-Based Education in the English Second Language Classroom in South Africa

Gawie Schlebusch
Central University of Technology, gschlebu@wlk.tfs.ac.za

Motsamai Thobedi
Teto High School

Recommended APA Citation

Outcomes-Based Education in the English Second Language Classroom in South Africa

Abstract

This study focuses on the impact of race, and its intersection with gender, in influencing and/or preventing the development of disordered body image. Specifically, Black samples are examined to see the role that racial identity plays in the process of developing such attitudes. Using qualitative data analysis methods rooted in grounded theory, the study finds that race is intrinsically linked to the notion of self-esteem, non-internalization, and maternal support, and that in turn these factors serve to prevent the African American sample from the development of body image dissatisfaction

Keywords

African-American, Adolescents, Body Image, and Racial Identity

Creative Commons License

Outcomes-Based Education in the English Second Language Classroom in South Africa

Gawie Schlebusch
Central University of Technology, Free State, South Africa

Motsamai Thobedi
Teto High School, Thabong, South Africa

The re-birth of South Africa in 1994 has brought the implementation of effective educational policies. Simultaneously, the Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) approach has been introduced to advance the teaching and learning of the Learning areas in schools in South Africa. This article focuses on the learning of English as a Second Language (ESL) in Grade eight. The focus is furthermore on schools from the Black township areas, called "previously disadvantaged schools". The introduction of OBE in South Africa heralds an era of meaningful teaching. The use of OBE strives to root out the last vestiges of Apartheid education. With an OBE approach, teaching and learning activities have the aim of empowering learners to succeed in the real life after leaving school. One of the main aims of using a language, for example English, is to develop communicative competence. Communicative competence is the ability to linguistically apply the language correctly in authentic situations. English though is the first language of only 9% of South African citizens (Van der Merwe & Van Niekerk, 1994). The qualitative research method was employed for this study, using semi-structured interviews and observations as research tools. The research study on ESL teaching and learning for Grade eight classes has shown that deficiencies and ineffectiveness occur in most of the classrooms. The findings confirm that Grade eight ESL learners experience problems with ESL due to insufficient use of advanced strategies for teaching and learning by the educators. Key words: English Second Language, ESL Classrooms, and Outcomes-Based Education

Introduction

According to Kilfoil and Van der Walt (1997), the OBE approach promotes the effective use and integration of various teaching and learning strategies by the educator, as well as the learners. The use of the OBE approach in English Second Language (ESL) classrooms aims to develop learners' competency and the ability to use English in authentic situations, such as during formal and informal conversations. Heugh, Siergruhn and Pluddermann (1995) point out that educators and learners in the ESL classroom are involved in the communicative process when using strategies such as direct instruction, discussion, group work, co-operative learning, problem solving, learner research and performance activities effectively. Educators need to integrate these strategies in ESL teaching and learning. The language skills of writing, listening, reading and speaking are needed by ESL learners in order to complete the

task-based activities that forms part of the OBE approach. Learners in the Grade eight ESL classroom are to be given the opportunity to be actively involved in task-based activities such as debates, discussions and problem solving.

According to Leamnson (1999), learners verbalise thoughts via inventive language. Inventive language is when the ESL educator aims to activate the language senses of the learners in order to enforce verbal thought. This may lead learners to engage in activities that aim to improve English language skills. Such activities help to convert "fuzzy associations" in the brain into "firm verbalised ideas" (Leamnson, 1999, p. 116). Through participation in the ESL learning activities, learners become actively involved in their own learning.

Killen (1998) points out that teaching and learning strategies describe the ways in which educators apply skills, techniques and styles. Educators need to apply a variety of teaching strategies to allow learners to demonstrate the learning they have mastered. One such strategy is where learners engage collaboratively in pairs or groups in order to enhance the acquisition of ESL. The ESL educator should guide the process while learners provide outputs such as dialogues, role-plays and games. Such activities provide learners with opportunities to speak, listen, write and read (Storti, 1990). For instance, grammar knowledge involves not only the learning of certain set rules, but also entails learning how to manipulate language devices well in conveying certain meanings.

Sakian (1997) uses radio programmes as a strategy to assist in the teaching of ESL. Radio programmes, such as talk shows on current topics and contemporary events that affect the community, provide opportunities for learners to openly make language inputs and meaningful expressions in the ESL classroom. Radio programmes also prepare learners for authentic communication, as well as independent language enrichment in the environment outside the class situation.

Brooks (1995) is of the opinion that English becomes standardized in any environment due to the situation in which its users find themselves. In South Africa, English is used as a language of instruction in all of the previously disadvantaged black schools. Learners must take the responsibility of developing themselves by communicating in English.

Ali (1995) says that ESL communication is a way of promoting growth of intelligent, creative and lateral thinking in order to emulate and enculture ESL learners with English values. Learners develop themselves when they use and communicate in English. The inability to exercise the use of English in the ESL classrooms will hamper learners' competency in communication.

The majority of learners from previously disadvantaged schools battle with ESL communication related activities because they are not proficient in English. ESL educators need to change from an educator-centered approach to a learner-centered approach. This change affects the strategies of ESL educators as they are used to the previously traditional teaching and learning strategies. Traditional teaching strategies in the languages, such as the use of the telling method hamper the learners' cognition and as a result lead to underachievement.

In South Africa, language has played an important role in shaping the socio-political history of the country. Language has shaped-up nationalism and has maintained a struggle for and against inequality. Prior to the new democracy that came into effect in 1994; English and Afrikaans were the official languages while all other indigenous languages were marginalized (African National Congress, 1995). Steyn (1993) and Unterhalter, Wolpe and Botha (1991) are of the opinion that English attains the national unity and is the lingua franca that links other languages, regardless

of the socio-economic status in South Africa. Above all, English fosters unity among different language groups in South Africa.

The Teaching and Learning of English Second Language

In ESL communication, educators and learners interact in a meaningful way. Van Schalkwyk (2001) defines communication as a two-way process in which feedback takes place when a certain medium is in use. The medium creates understanding not only to educators (the encoders of inputs), but also and most importantly to learners (the decoders of outputs). In teaching and learning, a meaningful interaction that takes place between educators and learners brings about effective ESL communication.

Effective communication also depends on what Cummins (1984) calls Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). BICS allow learners the skills to speak and cope between and with pronunciation and vocabulary in order to be able to use English in everyday life. CALP on the other hand enables the learner to become a competent academic communicator. The learner is capable to show various life skills such as the ability to be engaged in cognitively demanding and problem-solving tasks.

It is the ideal for learners in the ESL classroom to attain a CALP level of English proficiency in order to be successful academically. Language competence at the BICS level does not equip a learner to perform cognitive operations with adequate proficiency. Cummins (1984) is of the opinion that the cognitive aspects can be explained in terms of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives. On the conversational proficiency (surface level), knowledge (something you previously encountered or learnerd and remembered), comprehension (grasp of basic meaning), and application (use of abstractions in particular and concrete situations), are involved. The deeper levels of cognitive/academic proficiency would involve analysis (when a whole is broken down into its parts), synthesis (putting elements into a coherent whole) and evaluation (judging the adequacy of ideas).

Education in South Africa

Mothata, Lemmer, Mda, and Pretorius (2000) assert that the South African system of education has a foundation of the past and the present. The previous dispensation (before 1994) consisted of a tri-cameral parliament with each having its own education department (Whites, Coloureds and Indians). After the 1994 democratic general elections, the new government has restructured the education system. The provision is stipulated in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996. The present South African education system is divided into national, provincial, and local school levels. A new curriculum (Curriculum 2005) and a new teaching approach for South Africa-OBE-have been implemented.

The Department of Education (1997) and African National Congress (1995) maitain that the OBE approach was to be introduced into the South African schools in 1998. The OBE approach to education commenced with Grade one in 1998, and was introduced into Grade eight in 2001. C2005 provides for eight Learning Areas in the Senior Phase (Grade 7-9). These Learning Areas are: Language, Literacy and Communication (LLC); Human and Social Sciences (HSS); Technology (Tech); Mathematical Literacy, Mathematics and Mathematical Sciences (MLMMS); Natural Sciences (NS); Arts and Culture (AC); Economic and Management Sciences (EMS)

and Life Orientation (LO). ESL resorts under the Learning Area: Language, Literacy and Communication. It is also envisaged between by and Constitution of South Africa that all learners should be fluent in at least two of the eleven official languages.

As part of the LLC Learning Area learners have to enrol for their first language, as well as for a second language (ESL). In such instances one language (for example the home language, Sesotho) is offered as first language and the other (for example the additional language, English) as a second language.

Statement of the Problem

ESL acquisition emerges as a challenge to the vast majority of learners for whom English is not a first language. This problem also manifests itself in the previously disadvantaged black schools in South Africa. According to Schlebusch (2000), the problem is brought about by lack of English proficiency of learners before entering the Senior Phase.

Rossel and Baker (1996) maintain that in order to become proficient in a second language, learners need to be exposed to the second language under optimal conditions from six to eight years. Optimal conditions would imply excellent educators, a sound socio-economic background, efficient educational resources and prolonged use of the first language in educational situations. This is currently not the case in most schools in South Africa.

This study is undertaken to establish whether the communicative approach has been affected successfully in the teaching and learning of ESL in Grade eight. The research problem gives rise to the following questions:

- Is the communicative approach implemented successfully in Grade eight ESL classrooms in the Thabong Township in the Free State Goldfields of South Africa?

- Which effective teaching and learning strategies should form part of the communicative approach in Grade eight ESL classrooms to render it (the communicative approach) successful?

Research studies that are qualitative are normally designed to discover what can be learned about a certain phenomenon of interest, particularly social phenomenon where people are the subjects. The concern of this study is to understand people's experience in context. The qualitative method is therefore deemed appropriate for this study as subjects (Grade eight ESL educators) can be observed and interviewed in their natural settings (the ESL classroom).

Method

McMillan and Schumacher (1997) contend that research design is a plan for selecting subjects, research sites and data collection procedures to answer the research questions. Hence, the researchers have used the qualitative research design to capture relevant information. Consent for the study was given by the Free State Department of Education. The researchers are an educator in the learning area of language, literacy and communication in the Thabong Township in the Free State Goldfields and a university lecturer in the field of education. The researchers chose the roles of insider-

observer (LLC educator), participant observer (university lecturer) and interviewer (LLC educator).

Five secondary schools, situated in the previously disadvantaged black township of Thabong in the Lejweleputswa District, Free State Province in South Africa, were randomly selected for this research. Random sampling was used to allow each setting an equal opportunity to be selected. It was the researchers' goal to select settings that represent the range of experience on the phenomenon in which we are interested. We viewed the subjects in the research study as collaborators, who together with us mutually shape and determine what we come to understand about them and their situation.

Multiple methods of data collection increase the likelihood the phenomenon of interest is being understood from various points of view and lends credibility to the findings. Keeping this in mind, the research instruments used were observations and semi-structured interviews. Observation is accurate watching and noting of phenomena as they occur in nature with regard to cause and effect and interviews are used to discover the opinions and experiences of subjects. The researchers observed two Grade eight ESL classrooms from each school for a period of two weeks per school. The observation data was recorded as field notes. Each field note contained the date of the observation, the class observed and the context of the setting. The researchers wrote many "observer comments" in the field notes to identify themes and interpretations. Pattern-seeking was used to examine the data in order to try and understand the links between various aspects of the subjects' situations, beliefs and actions. In this study, the researchers were interested to observe the manner in which the Grade eight educators facilitate teaching and learning of ESL. However, meaningful teaching and learning also depends on the involvement of the learners. Learners are social beings, and need to be actively involved in their learning, in order to make teaching and learning meaningful.

Semi-structured interviews allow the researchers the freedom to probe further into responses if deemed necessary. Responses to interview questions were recorded by means of a voice-recorder, after seeking consent from the interviewees. In this way, the data-recording procedure used in the interviews does not interfere with the process of conducting the interviews (Wiersma, 2000). The researchers did make notes of nonverbal communication where necessary during the interviews. Complete transcripts were made of all interviews and field notes from the observations. The researchers also wrote interview elaborations of each interview session. This is self-reflections regarding the rapport with the interviewee, the interviewee's reactions and possible extensions of interview meanings. This activity allowed the researchers to establish quality control for valid data. Two Grade eight ESL educators per school were purposefully selected for the interviews. The researchers selected particular elements from the population that will be representative or informative about the topic of interest (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). Five schools with 2 Grade eight ESL educators per school were deemed sufficient for this study by the researchers to answer the research questions.

Observation and interviews were conducted towards the end of the academic year. The time for the collection of data was planned and executed during this period, so as to allow the subjects ample time to reflect on their ESL experiences during the year.

Limitations of the Study

This research does not consider the opinion of the ESL learners. Another study could investigate the learner aspect.

Most of the educators, for whom English is a second or third language, may also lack the ability to successfully explain the concepts to their learners.

This research should also be repeated in the other Learning areas.

Results

Observation in Grade Eight ESL Classes

Approaches of educators

At the beginning of each lesson and throughout most of the lesson presentations, most of the ESL educators have mainly used the traditional way of teaching, which is the telling method.

Most of the educators informed the learners beforehand what to expect in the lessons that were to be taught. Most of the learners automatically followed the instructions as were set out by the educator. According to the researcher, such a trend may let the educator to believe that all learners understand what was taught in the lesson. Learners have responded positively to most of the questions that were asked by the educators. In the majority of instances, learners responded by raising their hands in order to indicate that they know the answers. Learners who did not raise their hands were neither given a chance to try to respond, nor to ask for clarity on questions asked.

The learners were mostly told what to do, for instance when the learners had to perform certain writing tasks, the educators gave clues to learners on how to respond to the questions at hand.

Educators seemed to have preferred the use of the telling method as a teaching strategy in the lessons. Most of the ESL educators seemed to have overlooked the important issue of learner involvement. Effective questioning in order to ascertain the level of understanding of learners was minimal.

Classroom organization and management

Learners were sitting in groups of six to eight. Most of the classrooms had furniture such as tables and chairs and only a few had the traditional double desks. The space between the tables and desks was not conducive for effective educator-learner interaction. The educators were struggling to move around freely in the classroom. A major stumbling block towards effective teaching and learning is the over-crowded classrooms.

The observed classrooms had between 40 and 60 learners each. The only space that allowed free movement was in front of the chalkboard. Proper educator-learner and learner-learner interaction, as is envisaged by the OBE approach, could not be executed.

The use of learning and teaching support material (LSM)

Most of the educators consulted their textbooks on a regular basis during lessons. Although these educators did not read all the text from the textbooks, it seemed that they did not have the confidence to desert the textbook at all. Most of the educators did not use any other learning support material.

It was also evident to the researchers that textbooks were limited in supply in most of the ESL classes. The learners had to share textbooks – in some cases up to four learners shared one textbook. The only books that all the learners had in their possession were writing books for class-work and tests.

Learners were given little opportunity to write on the chalkboard, which is understandable given the class sizes. The chalkboard was mainly used as a support material to explain some of the aspects of the lessons.

In most of the schools, electrical connections are installed. However, no electrical support material was ever used by these educators. In almost all of the lessons observed, the only support materials that were used, were textbooks and the chalkboard.

It seemed to the researchers that educators do not want to buy or even create their own LSM. They most probably expect the Department of Education to supply them with all the material. This issue is raised again during the interviews with the educators.

Assessment and reinforcement of performed tasks

Tasks given to the learners were limited to copying questions and writing answers either from the textbooks or the chalkboard. Group discussion and even frequent questioning by the learners rarely took place. Learners mostly completed the written work individually, either from the textbook or the chalkboard.

In some instances, the time allowed for learners to execute given tasks was limited. Most of the educators seemed inclined to treat as much content as possible in a given time frame as to ensure that all the content is covered.

A concern for the researchers was that little time was allocated for corrections to be made on performed tasks. This may have a huge impact on the assessment scores that these ESL learners will obtain in continuous and summative assessment.

Most of the time homework involved only writing tasks. Creative thinking was not stimulated by most of the educators, as many of the tasks asked only of learners to copy the work directly from the textbooks. In many instances homework succeeded incomplete corrected and sometimes uncorrected written class-work (tasks). Learners were also not given homework regularly after each task

The tasks that were not properly corrected may result in a lack of proper knowledge to build on. Working from the known to the unknown becomes impossible, as content that is assumed to be known, is not. Learners may experience problems in attempting any new tasks.

Assessment was mostly done towards the end of the lessons. Learners were asked to read questions from the chalkboard or their class-work books and had to respond verbally. Learners who appeared to know the answers indicated it as such by raising their hands. Most of the learners who responded to the questions had difficulty in expressing themselves in English. The construction of proper sentences seemed to be the major problem. It also happened that some learners raised their hands only to keep quiet when they were asked to answer.

Activities such as dialogues, debates, discussion or drama and singing were very rarely observed. These are the type activities that can actively involve the learners and should form part of the OBE approach to teaching and learning in the ESL classroom.

Interview Responses of Grade Eight ESL Educators

The data from the recorded interviews was analysed and grouped and are reported on descriptively.

Do you think that learners in your ESL class experience problems with English as a second language in general?

Most of the educators said that learners seem to understand English and are able to converse in it. They were of the opinion that the major problem that the learners encountered was to express themselves properly in English in a formal learning environment like the classroom. The ESL tasks that involved creative writing and creative thinking were a course of concern, as most learners seem to struggle with that aspect of the language.

It is the opinion of the researchers that these responses relate to the BICS and CALP level of English proficiency. Learners sometimes seem to be able to speak English in general conversations, but when the deeper cognitive levels of English are needed to complete certain academic tasks, they experience problems.

Most responses were in the line of:

Most learners do experience problems with ESL. They normally cannot say their sentences properly. They struggle to say what they are thinking. They want to speak English, but find it difficult.

Which methods/strategies and LSM do you use when teaching ESL? Explain.

Most of the educators responded by given preference to the use of the textbook and telling methods. They said that all the content are explained in the textbooks and therefore they cannot make mistakes. They feel that they should tell the learners about the content, because the learners need to get all the information.

A small number of the educators said that the introductory part of their lessons normally begin with reading and speaking activities. Learners did reading exercises from their class-work books, textbooks and narrate what they have been reading. Comprehensive dialogue regarding the content, therefore did not take place.

It seemed that some of the educators preferred to start their lessons with reading or some speaking "ice breakers". These educators say they teach in this way in order to discover the prior knowledge of learners before dwelling into the actual lesson.

Most of the educators said that there were no specific teaching strategies that they follow, because when learners read, they get a change to pronounce the words.

Some responses were:

Yes, I prefer the use of a textbook. It is easy to use in order to involve most of the learners. Most of the learners follow the flow of the lesson easily when the textbooks direct the tasks.

> I trust the use of the telling method in order to keep the learners on track. Language depends on how you use it and for what purpose is it used. It is not a subject where a specific structure is followed. When doing reading tasks, each learner gets a chance of making verbal pronunciations of words.

Do you think that your current teaching methods are successful? Elaborate.

Most of the educators were of the opinion that as long as the learners can understand the questions in the textbook or on the chalkboard, they are fine. These educators think that their ESL teaching methods are adequate. Some educators said that they wish they could find out more about strategies to help their learners more. These educators say that their learners struggle with putting words into context when making sentences. That is, internalizing words and making meaning out of words.

Most of the educators seemed to be comfortable with the methods that they use and do not feel that they should alter anything. It is the opinion of the researchers that little time seemed to have been given to learners to express their ideas. That may be a reason why learners seem unable to think and reason on their own, without consulting textbooks and the chalkboard.

Responses were:

> Learners are induced to listening rather than doing the tasks themselves. They rely on my narrations and instructions on how to carry out tasks more than making interpretations out of what they have to do.
>
> Teaching reading is interesting. When learners have to read out of the textbooks and chalkboard, it becomes easy for me to check mistakes and pronunciation. The learners read individually or in groups. In instances where pronunciation of words becomes bad, I delay reading for a while and clarify the meaning of that specific word.
>
> I want to learn more about the new strategies that will help my learners.

How would you describe the learner involvement in your ESL lessons?

Most of the educators said that in certain tasks the learners copied tasks from hand-outs. Exercises in the forms of class-work and homework were done from these hand-outs.

Some of the ESL educators said that they preferred to involve the learners through the use of task-based activities such as writing comprehension, doing dialogues and a bit of debating. In comprehension for example, the learners' understanding of meaning is assessed. Learners internalize words so that they can derive meaning out of what they say. This did not happen often though, because of time constraints.

Some responses from interviewees:

> I sometimes use dialogues and debates to treat tenses. Activities which advance the learners' use of words force individual creativity of sentences. I prefer to give learners writing tasks as part of enhancing creative skills. Learners also practice composition and letter writing.

In what ways do you provide learners with opportunities to apply new knowledge?

Most of the respondents said that learners did written tasks, following specific instructions given to them by the educators. Sometimes learners made responses to questions asked on the chalkboard. These educators seemed to believe that these opportunities are enough for their learners.

Some educators said that they let their learners speak the new words or tenses they have learned. In that way they apply the new knowledge. The researchers were not convinced that these opportunities are enough to facilitate ESL properly.

Most educators were inclined to tell learners what to do rather than showing learners skills on how to apply new tasks. Learners are given tasks with specific instructions, and therefore are not allowed to provide their own thoughts, ideas and initiatives. Learners need to be given time to apply their knowledge in order to reinforce their understanding.

Responses:

Learners are instructed to complete the sentences with appropriate words.
I usually ask the learners to read and answer questions based on the previous reading.
I let my learners speak the new words or tenses, then they practice it.

How often do you use English outside the class with both learners and educators? Elaborate.

Most of the ESL educators said that they rarely use English outside the class. They do not see the necessity to speak English inside and outside the classroom. Learners are used to speak to the educators in their mother tongue outside the classroom. One of these educators said that learners feel more comfortable in using their mother tongue in conversations with educators outside the classroom. One of the educators said that English is sometimes spoken with learners outside the classroom, but in such cases the conversation deals with a topic that was raised in the classroom.

Some of the ESL educators said that during conversations outside the classes, learners had problems with "the self" when speaking English. The learners did not feel confident enough to speak English outside the classroom. These educators said that the communities in the townships were not well conversed with the use of English, and therefore they are used to speak to members of their community in the mother tongue.

From the responses it is clear that English is rarely spoken outside the ESL classroom. The researchers feel that this may contribute to the lack of confidence in ESL learners to meaningfully participate in ESL classes.

Some responses:

I usually interact into English conversations when treating language aspects originating in class. It is in rare instances such as during informal talking that I exchange words using English outside classes.
When the learners question using English, I reply in the same language.

What do you think can be done in order to make the teaching and learning of ESL more effective?

The educators were aware of how they approached ESL teaching and learning. Most of the educators have said that they have taught in the traditional way of using textbooks and the telling method since they started teaching.

Some of the educators have said that they prefer strategies where learners were taught in groups as a method that would allow learners the opportunity to talk. The problem that these educators have encountered was that they have no thorough understanding of the strategies on how to accomplish and maintain proper group-work.

Most of the educators seemed to be worried about the lack of learning support material. However, these educators preferred the use of textbooks instead of using learning support material, such as charts and transparencies. Some of these ESL educators said that they were struggling with material when they had to integrate it with the knowledge that they presented to learners. They prefer to use ready-made materials such as textbooks rather than improvising their time in making their own teaching and learning materials, as this is time consuming and may be expensive.

Some of the educators said that the funds that the Department of Education provided for learning materials were not sufficient. That is why they were unable to buy charts and transparencies to enhance their lessons. One of these educators mentioned that a requisition was made to obtain charts, but nothing came from it. These educators seemed a bit afraid to make these comments, as if they were scared to criticise the Department of Education.

Some of the ESL educators preferred the use of dictionaries. ESL educators said that learners were instructed to look for difficult words in the dictionaries. These educators seemed to think that dictionaries should be bought for every learner by the Department of Education, in order to enhance the understanding of English concepts.

Learning support material was a common factor that educators regard as possibly helpful in their ESL lessons.

Another problem that was mentioned by a small number of educators is that they often have electricity failures. The electrical equipment they can use in the classroom will then be rendered useless. The researchers were not convinced that this problem should refrain them from using electrical equipment.

Responses were in the line of:

I taught the way I do from the beginning. I am not sure whether there is a better way.

I want to use group work, but I am not sure what they should do there.

Learning support material makes teaching and learning meaningful. At the moment I use textbooks and dictionaries in order to bring a change in English teaching.

We need to be provided with enough textbooks for every learner.

There are number of days where I had to make requisition at the principal's office to buy charts.

We have a lot of power failures in the township, so I do not use the electrical equipment.

Do you think it is important that ESL educators receive continuous training on OBE teaching strategies?

Most of the ESL educators envisaged that the teaching and learning of ESL would be a success only when all ESL educators can receive thorough in-service-training regarding OBE principles. These educators expressed the wish that OBE training be delivered on a continuous basis to allow them to stay abreast of any changes regarding alternative approaches to teaching and learning.

All the ESL educators felt that the OBE method of teaching will be good and would bring about satisfactory results in ESL. The problem with some of educators is that they have not received advanced OBE training on how to elevate the level of ESL teaching and learning with relevant strategies, and they subsequently reverted back to the methods they know best.

Some of the educators have lamented on the manner in which the learning facilitators have guided the OBE workshops they attended in the past. The information that the learning facilitators provided at these workshops was not disseminated in a way that would make it comprehensible for educators. The ESL educators said that it seemed as if the learning facilitators were not passionate and had some uncertainty around OBE and its principles themselves.

Some responses were:

Yes, it is vital that ESL educators receive special OBE training as more
 learners experience difficulties in placing their expressions into context and
I want to help them.
Formal English usage is different from casual talking, it needs an
individual to adhere to certain language principles. So, it is necessary that
educators receive training in OBE.

Some educators said the following:

The forty-hours workshop of OBE was not sufficient for a thorough
training in new skills.
The problem is worsened by the learning facilitators who are not clear and
certain on their stands in promoting OBE.

Discussion and Conclusion

The research study on ESL teaching and learning for Grade eight classes has shown that deficiencies and ineffectiveness occur in most of the classrooms. The findings confirm that Grade eight ESL learners experience problems with ESL due to insufficient use of advanced strategies for teaching and learning by the educators.

The ESL educators confirmed that education in South Africa has transformed and that the OBE approach heralds meaningful change in South African schools. However, most of the ESL educators are still using the traditional way of teaching. The problem is highlighted by the fact that ESL educators do not seem to have a thorough knowledge of relevant teaching strategies that can be used in the teaching of ESL, especially when working with large groups of learners. Continuous in-service training in OBE is of vital importance for all educators in order for efficient teaching and learning to take place.

Another important factor to consider is the lack of usage of English outside the ESL classroom. English is mainly used inside the ESL classroom and not in informal communication outside the ESL classroom. The importance of English, however, is beyond doubt. It is seen as the lingua franca in most areas of the world. Although English is not the first language of either the learners or the educators in most of the schools in this study, educators should take it upon themselves to promote the usage of English in all spheres of the school.

Possible future research in this area may include:
- Designing ESL learning programs to assist ESL educators in the planning of lessons
- The effectiveness of OBE in-service training for educators

References

African National Congress (ANC). (1995). *A policy framework for education and training.* Manzini: Macmillan Boleswa Publishers.

Ali, S. (1995). Teaching literature in a Malaysian ESL context: Reflections and recommendations. *English in education, 29*(1), 53-65.

Brooks, G. (1995). Black english. *English teaching forum,* 38-40.

Cummins, J. (1984*). Bilingualism and special education: issues in assessment and pedagogy.* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Department of Education (DoE). (1997). *Towards a policy framework for assessment in the general and further education and training phases in South Africa.* Discussion document.

Heugh, K., Siegruhn, A., & Pluddermann, P. (1995). *Multilingual education for South Africa.* Johannesburg, South Africa: Heinemann Publishers.

Kilfoil, W. R., & Van der Walt, C. (1997). *Learn 2 teach: English language teaching in a multilingual context.* Pretoria: J. L. Van Schaik.

Killen, R. (1998). *Effective teaching strategies.* Australia: Social Science Press.

Leamnson, R. (1999). *Thinking about teaching and learning: developing habits of learning with first-year college and university students.* Sterking, VA: Stylus.

McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (1997). *Research in education: a conceptual introduction.* New York, NY: Addison Wesley Longman.

Mothata, S., Lemmer, E., Mda, T., & Pretorius, F. (2000). *A dictionary of South African education and training.* Johannesburg, South Africa: Hodder and Stoughton.

Rossel, C., & Baker, K. (1996). The educational effectiveness of bilingual education. *Research in Teaching of English, 30*(1), 385-419.

Sakian, S. M. (1997). The radio in the classroom. *English Teaching Forum, 35*(2), 54.

Schlebusch, G. J. (2000). *Functional lesson designs for Free State Goldfields grade ten Economics learners with limited English proficiency.* Unpublished doctoral thesis, Vista University, South Africa.

Steyn, H. J. (1993). International opinion on minimum requirements in the South African education system. *South African Journal of Education, 13*(4), 182-187.

Storti, C. D. (1990). Teaching grammar to children communicatively. *English Teaching Forum, 28*(2), 31-32.

Unterhalter, E., Wolpe, H., & Botha, T. (1991). *Education in a future South Africa: policy issues for transformation.* Houghton, Johannesberg: Heinemann Publishers.

Van der Merwe, I. J., & Van Niekerk, L. O., (1994). *Language in South Africa: Distribution and change.* Stellenbosch, South Africa: Stellenbosch University Press.

Van Schalkwyk, M. J. (2001). *Communication management and secretarial students.* Parow, Cape Town, South Africa: M J van Schalkwyk.

Wiersma, W. (2000). *Research methods in education: An introduction.* London, England: Allyn and Bacon.

Author's Note:

Dr. Gawie Schlebusch is a senior lecturer and Programme Head of Post Graduate Education in the School for Teacher Education of Central University of Technology, Free State in South Africa. He has 12 years experience in the teaching of commercial subject methodologies and Education management. His interests include English as language of instruction to limited English proficient learners. He has read papers on this burning issue at a number of national and international conferences in South Africa and abroad. Dr. Schlebusch may be contacted at Vista University, Box 1881, Welkom, South Africa; Fax Telephone #: (27) (57) 396-3331; E-mail: gschlebu@wlk.tfs.ac.za

Mr. Motsamai Thobedi is an educator in English second language (ESL) and has obtained a MEd degree in the field of ESL in Education. He has a keen interest in OBE and its implications on the teaching and learning of ESL in previously disadvantaged schools in South Africa.

Author's Citation