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South African Association for Language Teaching

English additional language student teachers' development of oral strategic competence and confidence during lectures

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ABSTRACT

Developing oral strategic competence along with discourse competence in English additional language student teachers is crucial in the South African context and globally, as the demand for English instruction increases. This paper argues that using English as a tool of learning interaction during lectures affects student teachers' oral strategic and discourse competence and confidence, both positively and negatively. Two data collection tools were used in this study, namely drawings and unstructured interviews. Drawings illustrated how participants perceived themselves during lectures when they had to speak in English. Unstructured interviews were conducted after participants completed their drawings. The analysis found that collaborating with fellow students in making meaning of oral communication during lectures, increased students' oral competence and their confidence because they were communicating in smaller groups. However, in certain situations, collaborating with students also decreased student teachers' confidence. Furthermore, reciprocal facial expressions and the body language of those who engaged orally with the student teachers, increased oral confidence as it served as an indication to students that they were understood. Based on the findings, recommendations are made regarding interactions during lectures for lecturers and lecturing practice in relation to its effects on the development of oral strategic competence and confidence in student teachers.

Keywords: communicative competence, English additional language speaking skills, interaction, oral confidence, oral strategic competence, oral discourse competence

1. Introduction

There is a demand for English as the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) in South African schools and thus a subsequent demand on teachers to be able to effectively teach in English exists (Gordon & Harvey, 2019). Student teachers from non-English schooling backgrounds are faced with learning and teaching in English. There is an indication that current programmes and modules and lecture practices do not prepare English additional language student teachers adequately to use English as a tool for learning interaction and a medium of instruction in their future classrooms (Deacon, 2016; Reed, 2014).

The focus on strategic and discourse competence caters to the needs of some of the challenges additional language student teachers immediately face when communicating with peers, lecturers, and learners. Communication might break down and strategic competence assists in repairing this by utilising various appropriate strategies. Discourse competence assists student teachers in meaningful communication appropriate for learning and teaching. Teachers are speakers, and a key objective of higher professional education is to cultivate the ability of aspiring educators to effectively communicate in the language of teaching and learning (LoLT) to address problems related to interpersonal and intercultural interactions (Baxrambek qizi, 2021). Being able to communicate effectively for educational purposes and informal interactions with learners is an essential professional competency for teachers. However, there may be instances where teachers face difficulties in articulating their thoughts verbally when interacting with students. It is necessary to employ effective methods to continue conveying ideas or thoughts by utilizing appropriate vocabulary and strategies (Octaviana, 2021). Octaviana's research on 14 senior high school students revealed that communication strategies are crucial for learners to identify communication breakdowns and seize this as an opportunity to learn and explore alternative means of communication. Although Octaviana's study focused on high school students, student teachers encounter similar types of interactions during lectures. Octaviana (2021) further suggests that teachers should support learners in the process of constructing meaning by creating opportunities for them to enhance their oral skills for more meaningful learning interactions. Likewise, it can be argued that lecturers have a comparable role to play when students encounter communication difficulties. Interactions and practices during lectures can affect the development of English additional language student teachers' oral strategic competence and confidence, negatively and positively. This study does not specifically focus on support measures implemented by lecturers or what specific strategies student teachers employ to be able to have meaningful oral interactions in English. The focus of this study is rather on factors that influence the natural development of all strategies that English additional language student teachers employ to communicate in a meaning-making manner as a tool for learning interaction. As will be seen later in this article, the student teacher

participants in this study were not necessarily aware of concepts such as strategic and discourse competence, yet they employed these notions and practices to interact during lectures and would employ them in their future classrooms. The purpose of this study was to explore how student teachers develop oral strategic and discourse competence and confidence in using English as their additional language, as a tool for learning by exploring how the lecture room environment influences competence and confidence in using English to learn and subsequently, to teach.

2. Theoretical orientation

2.1 Sociocultural perspective and the ideological model to literacy

Understanding that language is a social tool used for interaction and learnt socially, is fundamental to the study undertaken in this paper. Recently, in line with the sociocultural perspective, a shift in literacy has taken place. The ideological model (Gee, 1990) aligns well with the sociocultural perspective on language that is undertaken in this paper because it argues that language cannot be learnt outside of its context. The ideological model is not a new notion and academics are somewhat less directly concerned with this term today, yet the debates about ideology and its notions are still crucial (Gee, 2008). The ideological model shifts away from just focusing on reading and writing but rather understands the association of other modes, such as speech. Recognition must also be given to the body of work that Gee contributed towards, a term called New Literacy Studies (NLS). New Literacy Studies acknowledge that literacy is made up of social and cultural aspects that are not just about the neutral acquisition of skills by the individual (Gee, 1990). This shift in literacy aligns with the approach undertaken in this paper in relation to language learning and development, and specifically the development of oral skills. The study was thus situated in this understanding of language and language learning (Gee, 2008). Language learning is a social act. The ways in which teachers or lecturers interact with their students is already a social practice that affects the nature of language learning and the ideas of competence held by the participants of this paper (Street, 1995). From a sociocultural perspective, language learning cannot happen neutrally, where social effects are only experienced or added afterwards (Street & Leung, 2010). Effective speaking skill competence and confidence can only be truly understood and developed in their actual context. Drawing on Vygotsky (1962), it is through social interactions and mutual meaning-making efforts that language acquisition, learning, and development takes place.

2.2 Long's interaction hypothesis

Building on the above-discussed premise that language is learnt through social interaction, adopting Long's (1981) interaction hypothesis was found to be in line with the approach undertaken in this study concerning oral skill acquisition and development. Interaction is seen as an important tool in the facilitation process of acquiring additional language skills. In the case of this paper, it would be for student teachers to acquire and develop oral skills in their additional language, which was English. Long, along with other theorists like Hatch (1978) and Gass and Varonis (1994) believed that conversational interaction is an essential condition for the acquisition of additional language skills. This interaction creates opportunities for participants to acquire and develop their speaking skills as needed during lectures. When the participants of this study interact orally with fellow students and lecturers, opportunities for reciprocal meaning-making and collaborative language correction are provided. It is for this reason that Long's interaction hypothesis aligns with understanding and developing firstly, oral competence, and secondly, oral confidence in the student teachers of this study.

2.3 Krashen's affective filter hypothesis

Krashen's affective filter hypothesis is one of the underlying frameworks that evaluated how various variables influenced the language input and consequently comprehensible output of the student teachers (Krashen, 1982). In this theory Krashen referred to how various affective variables relate to the acquisition process of second language skills. He argued that if people's affective filter is low enough, it assists in the acquisition of language skills. If the affective filter is raised, it can serve as a mental block to the language input, making it challenging for the person to acquire the knowledge and skills communicated. The filter thus serves as a barrier to the acquisition of skills (Du, 2009). Krashen identified four affective variables that relate to success in second language acquisition namely, motivation, attitude, anxiety, and self-confidence. This hypothesis is effective in supporting the development of an answer to one of my research questions. Applying this theory to data found assists in understanding how student teachers' attitudes towards using English affected their competence and confidence in using English for oral interaction.

2.4 Communicative competence

Language is seen as a tool for thought and communication, enabling us to acquire knowledge, express ourselves, interact with others and "manage the working world" (DoE, 2011: 8). Applying these well-established notions of competence to current teacher training is relevant and will provide a new perspective on challenges student teachers experience in speaking in their additional language.

Four components of communicative competence were identified. These are linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence (Mariani, 1994). This study focuses on strategic competence and applying principles of discourse strategies in oral communication competence. Focusing on communicative competence, specifically on the sub-category strategic competence, as a category of understanding my participants' competence and confidence in using English, aligns well with the sociocultural perspective undertaken in this study. This subcategory is essential for understanding language learning, meaningful interaction, and effective communication in English, as an additional language. It focuses on competence within the context it takes place and builds on the notion that language learning is social in nature.

Strategic competence has to do with speakers being able to initiate, terminate, maintain, repair, and redirect communication. This also includes knowing verbal and non-verbal communication strategies which enable speakers to overcome difficulties when communication breaks down and enhance the efficiency of communication (Canale & Swain, 1980). Strategic competence in student teachers who are English additional language speakers is imperative. Speaking is an output and for teachers, oral interactions must be comprehensible.

To briefly refer to Long's (1981) interaction hypothesis, the focus was on what mechanisms can be used to make input more comprehensible. The focus in his later work was on repairing communication collaboratively. Swain (1985) extended this thinking when she referred to the importance of students being able to produce meaningful communication. She further stated that, in the same way, that reparative strategies are used and negotiated between speakers, for output to be comprehensible, collaborative meaning-making also needs to take place (Swain, 1985).

By developing strategic competence in student teachers, they not only possess the ability to repair their communication through their own internal processes but also through meaning making processes with their lecturers and fellow students. Student teachers thus find alternative ways to carry meaning across effectively (Lightbrown & Spada, 2006).

Aspects that focused on understanding the development of specific strategic competence in participants included strategies used at the word and sentence level, as well as the discourse level. Strategies at a word or sentence level include borrowing (code-switching), literal translations, interlanguage-based generalisation, paraphrasing, and restructuring (self-repair). Strategies at the discourse level suggest ways of coping with language challenges across sentences and across taking turns.

The challenges that my participants might face at the discourse level could be endless because this level covers the general ability to manage interactions. Thus, managing interactions is a

complex process because not only does strategic and pragmatic skills need to be considered, but also sociolinguistic and sociocultural conventions (Mariani, 1994). Strategies at the discourse level would include the ability to successfully open and close conversations, to keep conversations going, to express feelings and attitudes, to manage interaction (handling a topic or discussion), and to negotiate meanings and intentions. Specifically, while negotiating meaning and intentions, cooperative strategies are often used because communication here does not just involve the speaker but other participants too. They share in the communication process of attempting to agree on the meaning in situations (Mariani, 1994).

The above categories of oral strategic and discourse competence, therefore, formed the basis of the analysis of data that were collected in this study and served as a theoretical framework of the type of communication competence that is important for student teachers to have – especially those who must use their additional language to interact and teach.

3. Literature review

The literature reviewed as a background for this study focuses on the classroom and lecture environments in relation to competence as well as studies on attitudes towards English and how it may influence confidence and competence in students. Perceptions from the lecturer and of student teachers can be identified as a factor that influence the confidence of student teachers in communicating orally. Kurnia (2019) found in her study that student teachers' perceptions of how teaching and learning take place under the control of the lecturer were one of the factors that contributed to the willingness of student teachers to interact orally in English. The way that the lecturer teaches influences whether students feel a desire to speak. Thus, how lecturers establish communication patterns in student interaction will influence students' confidence in speaking. Furthermore, Kurnia (2019) found in her study that the perception that the lecturer had of student teachers' willingness to interact orally can influence the teaching and learning process. Lecturers must thus encourage student teachers to engage during lectures, by, for example, creating an environment where student teachers feel confident and competent to communicate orally during lectures. Kurnia (2019) additionally found that certain student teachers' perception of their lecturers increased their confidence to communicate in English. In interviews with Kurnia (2019), student teachers reported that they felt comfortable speaking English with their lecturer because they found their lecturer to be more considerate of the challenges that they might have with interacting orally and focused rather on deriving meaning from what the student teacher was trying to say. Based on a study by Trila and Anwar (2020) conducted on 54 students from an Indonesian university, the most influential factor was the lecturer's traits. When the lecturer presented themselves as friendly, approachable, and supportive during lectures, students felt encouraged to engage orally. Similarly, Kang (2005) and Riasati (2012) explored the perceptions that learners had of the classroom concerning their willingness to interact orally in English. They found that participants felt more confident and

competent to interact with someone with whom they were comfortable and familiar and by whom they felt understood. At times this would be the teacher and at times this would be their classmates.

The topic or content discussed during lectures, can be identified as a factor that can influence the confidence of students to engage orally during lectures. Cao (2011) and Kang (2005) found that certain topics participants were faced during class sessions created increased confidence to give an oral contribution to the discussion. Additionally, Trila and Anwar (2020) found that a major factor that influenced oral participation was the type of content being discussed. Students were more willing to participate if they were interested in the subject matter. In contrast, Cao (2011) moreover found in her study that students were reluctant to speak on topics they found uninteresting or believed that they lacked knowledge on a topic discussed. Cao's study undertook a multiple case study approach at a university in New Zealand. Phase one of her study had 6 participants and phase two had 12 participants. Participants' home languages were diverse, with 8 different home languages recorded. Her study explored variables that influence the willingness of students to communicate during lectures. Cao's findings are useful in that they draw attention to the fact that certain variables in the study can be seen as global variables, experienced by many additional English-speaking students. Her findings validate findings in this study because of the diverse language background also found with the participants in this study. Global commonalities can be identified. Individual characteristics like self-confidence and personality are two factors that influence students' willingness to participate and have been found also to have an emotional impact on the use of English. Tulgar's (2018) participants communicated that they were concerned about making language mistakes and being judged when engaging orally with students. Though Tulgar's (2018) study focused on Turkish and my study on English as the additional language of participants, her study holds significant findings that resonate with my study. In contrast, Tulgar's (2018) study also showed how adopting a certain approach to communicating with home language speakers can make a difference when engaging orally. Participants of this study also indicated that their speaking anxiety was reduced when they reminded themselves that being with home language speakers gave them the opportunity to develop their speaking skills. Thus Tulgar (2018) adopted an approach that allowed participants to view an immersive home language environment as an opportunity to develop competence in oral engagement. This change in approach also demonstrates the important role collaboration plays during lecture interactions and how it influences students' confidence to communicate. Additionally, their oral competence develops because they are working together to make meaning of content. Kang (2005) and Riasati (2012) further found that learners' confidence and competence increased when they could collaborate in making meaning of oral communication and support one another. According to Trila and Anwar (2020), students were more likely to engage orally during lectures when they completed activities with supportive classmates. Kurnia (2019) found in her study that student teachers were more confident to orally engage in English when they felt that they understood what was being discussed, and when the topic was interesting to

them. Kurnia (2019) concluded that the emotions student teachers experienced had a direct impact on whether they would actively engage in oral communication. She further stated that when student teachers felt happy, relaxed, and comfortable, there was an enthusiasm and desire to engage orally in English. A study by Messouab (2022) found that lecturers play a crucial role in changing students' attitudes toward communicating in English and encouraging them to engage meaningfully. If these "positive" emotions have such an effect, the opposite emotions could lead to feelings of apathy and disinterest. Factors that contribute to the confidence and competence development of oral engagement within the lecture environment is both internal and external. Internal factors include perceptions of interaction during communication processes and external factors include the lecture environment created by the lecturer, collaboration strategies practised during lectures, topics discussed, and communication patterns created during lectures.

Research findings discussed in this section indicate that certain factors are global and may not be unique to the South African education and language context.

4. Methodology

This study operated in an interpretive framework that matched the qualitative approach adopted. The case under research focused on a group of student teachers English additional language speakers. This study explored how student teachers' oral competence and confidence developed by evaluating how various factors influenced this competence and confidence concerning interactions during lectures and used students' perceptions and the emotions they experienced during oral interactions. The thematic approach to analysis afforded the emergence of main themes and categories that answered the research questions for this study effectively.

In this study, participants describe their experiences in the lecture room environment during oral interactions with fellow students and lecturers. The experiences of the participants were nuanced because of the two major groups identified, namely, participants who indicated that they were confident and competent speakers contrasted with participants who indicated that they were not.

The participants in this study were eight first- and third-year Intermediate Phase student teachers studying at a private higher education institution. Critical for the sample selection was that students needed to be English additional speakers as this study focused on understanding the development of oral strategic and discourse competence and confidence in using English as an additional language. In addition, participants needed to range in their ability, confidence, and competence in using their additional language. In this study, participants were Afrikaans or isiXhosa home language speakers. In terms of anonymity, participants selected their own pseudonyms with preferred gender pronouns, and these are used throughout the study and especially when referring to their comments and the data collections tools. Furthermore, once

interview transcriptions were completed, they were emailed to participants. This was done so that participants could review the information and correct it if necessary. Participants also had the opportunity to indicate what sections they no longer felt comfortable sharing or sentences that they preferred to be rephrased. Once participants confirmed that they were satisfied with the transcriptions, it became the final copy for data analysis.

All steps taken in this study, including how data were analysed and reported, were taken with careful consideration of the ethical implications for firstly participants, the research site, the institute where I was completing my study and my integrity as a researcher.

5. Data analysis

Data was generated from eight participants and collected from a drawing and an unstructured interview. Data analysed from these data collection instruments will be presented in the following section along with supporting literature. Participants selected their own pseudonyms with preferred gender pronouns, and these will be used when referring to comments and quotes from them. The legends for the data methods used will be the following: I-1 – interview 1; P1-8 – participant 1-8.

Discussions on emergent main themes take place under this section. Self-reported data from participants and the emergence of two main themes that were categorised through the frequency with which they appeared in participants' responses. All participants referred to aspects of interaction as a factor that influenced their oral competence and confidence during lecturers. These aspects of interaction are, Lecturer interaction, and Peer interaction.

5.1 Lecturer interaction

Lecturer interaction emerged as the first of the main themes from the self-reported data from participants concerning lecture room experiences. This main theme focused on their engagement with the lecturer during lectures. Participants referred to what lecturers did and said during lectures and how they perceived the lecturers' approaches to accommodating their English additional language status in the lecture room. The main theme of 'Lecturer Interaction' has been divided into four categories that either decreased or increased oral competence and confidence in the lecture room. They are:

1. The way instructions were given by the lecturer
2. Lecturers' approach to teaching and learning
3. Lecturers' reciprocal facial expression
4. Lecturers' accommodation and awareness of English additional language speakers

These are discussed in greater detail below.

5.1.1 The way instructions were given by the lecturer

This theme relates to how the lecturer communicated instructions to students and the self-reported effects it had on their oral competence and confidence in the lecture room. The first category mentioned had a consequential effect on certain participants. Thandi indicated in an interview that some lecturers gave ambiguous instructions for activities and as the time to respond was limited, the lecturer added more instructions and statements that sometimes contradicted the initial instructions. Thandi explained that this significantly affected whether she understood the instructions, which created uncertainty about comprehensible input and consequently comprehensible output. This in turn made her uncertain about whether her response would be accepted by lecturers and peers and if her answer was appropriate. April described her experience in the lecture room concerning interacting with the lecturer as follows:

> I think that when in the lecture room, when there's times of explanation and when you at the same time have to give a response or formulate your own opinion and there are lots of people talking over each other and you are trying to formulate your own opinion. And the lecturer is just carrying on with work and you might not understand a specific concept or a specific word, then your concentration span is hindered in terms of formulating your own thoughts. (P5, I-1)

The last two statements related to the sub-topic of classroom management, where time management and classroom discipline is vital. April illustrated the ineffective management of time, in this instance, not giving students enough time to formulate answers to questions posed and activities given during lectures. Secondly, the last two statements made by April alluded to ineffective lecture room management, particularly regarding noise levels during discussions. In April's account, ineffective classroom management skills possibly added to impaired concentration, which in turn could have decreased her ability to respond to the lecturer, possibly decreasing her confidence to engage orally with the lecturer and peers.

On the other hand, Thandi comprehensively explained her experience and the effects of clear and systematic instructions given by the lecturer. She stated:

> There was another lesson I enjoyed because I was confident in that because the instructions were clear and systematic, so already when you know what you need to do, I find that it already creates a space where, it kind of makes things easier because then you already think 'Okay, this is the line to follow, and you can easily find interpretation in what you're doing. And if you can easily interpret what you meant to do in the instruction, then it's easier to communicate it as well' … because the whole challenge becomes, trying to first find interpretation, and then you got to find the words and then you got to think. (P8, I-1)

When the lecturer provided clear instructions and guidelines, it became easier for Thandi to understand concepts and what was expected of her, increasing the possibility of engaging orally with confidence.

5.1.2 Lecturers' approach to teaching and learning

Whether the lecturers allowed practical engagement emerged as a category that firstly, possibly increased the competence of the participants to communicate orally. In this case, students believed that they had a good understanding of the theoretical concepts explained by the lecturer. Secondly, the confidence level of the participants increased because they believed that they were competent in the content which they had to present orally. In some instances, the lecturer could further develop students' confidence by providing an opportunity for the student to illustrate their understanding of theoretical concepts practically. Thandi reported in an interview: So, it's taking content and creating relevant perspective, so contextualising it into what I can easily relate to. There are lessons where I found that our lecturer allowed us to engage practically with the content and apply it practically to our situation. (P8, I-1) Additionally, Thandi elaborated in an interview that certain lecturers' interactive approaches assisted her with confidence in using English orally during lectures. The lecturers thus provided an environment that encouraged oral interaction.

Kurnia (2019) found in her study that student teachers' perceptions of how teaching and learning take place under the control of the lecturer were one of the factors that contributed to the willingness of student teachers to interact orally in English. Thus, the way that the lecturer teaches, influences whether a desire is evoked to speak. In this study, the perception that some participants had of how the lecturer presented information and instructions, strongly influenced their willingness to interact orally in English. Lecturers have a key role in establishing communication patterns in students (Johnson, 1995).

5.1.3 Lecturers' reciprocal facial expression

One participant indicated that the facial expressions and body language of the lecturer contributed positively to their ability to speak in English in the lecture room environment. In an interview, Ashley stated:

> Sometimes when we have to explain something in the lecture room, the lecturer, while I was explaining, would show a facial expression that gives me an indication that they are getting my message. They are understanding what I am trying to say. (P4, I-1)

It can be concluded that the lecturer's facial expression and body language indicated to the participant that she was understood, suggesting that she was communicating successfully. This in turn created confidence to communicate further. Ashley explained further in the same interview that the idea of being understood by the lecturer when communicating orally increased her confidence to engage. She stated:

> We had to come up with something new and nobody had an idea, and I had an idea and I just spoke, and the lecturer was actually impressed with the idea I had. And that was an indication to me that the lecturer understood what I was trying to say, and the idea was a good idea. (P4, I-1)

Comments on the combination of the lecturers' approach and their reciprocal facial expressions suggested that lecturers' willingness to understand what students were communicating was crucial to encouraging students to speak in English in the lecture room.

5.1.4 Lecturer awareness of the needs of English additional language speakers

This section focuses on data gathered on the perceptions participants had when it came to engaging orally with lecturers which were based on how accommodating and aware lecturers were. Students linked this awareness to a perception that lecturers were aware of the needs of English additional language speakers. In this regard, Noah made a statement in an interview on how he perceived lecturers' expectations when having to speak English in the lecture room. He stated, "The high expectations of lecturers. The lecturer wants us to answer the questions, to give high standard answers for the questions they ask" (P6, I-1). It can be deduced that in this instance, Noah perceived the engagement with the lecturer as one in which there was no understanding that he comes from an English additional language background. The lecturer made no accommodation for his additional language status, and this was problematic for Noah. This seems to have left Noah feeling under pressure to communicate at a level that he perceived as appropriate. Consequently, Noah's perceived performance was inhibited. In contrast, Noah also shared in the same interview about a moment where he felt that the lecturer was accommodating and understanding of his background of being an English additional language speaker. He stated:

> I had a private conversation with one of my lecturers where I just spoke fluently and confidently. I didn't realise it at that moment. Later in the day, I realised that I didn't stutter or nothing like that. So, I felt good, and I think that what contributes to that is that I knew that they would understand that English was my second language. And the fact that I know that they would not judge me, made it easier for me to just speak English, regardless of how I am speaking it or how I am struggling. (P6, I-1).

A conclusion can be drawn that in this case, Noah felt at ease and did not have to overthink about how and what he was communicating because he believed that the lecturer did not have expectations of him to communicate at a level of English beyond his current ability. One can further conclude that Noah thus felt comfortable and confident because of the decreased expectations and the lecturer's understanding of his additional language background. The lecturer thus ignored any language errors to negotiate meaning with Noah who felt affirmed by this. This category can also be related, like the two previous categories, to the willingness of lecturers to understand and accommodate language and to focus on meaning. Even if the information communicated under this category was based on a perception Noah had, it shows the importance of feeling understood or of experiencing a willingness from listeners to derive meaning from communication. As this data suggests, the lecturer plays a key role in how communication patterns develop in the educational environment (Johnson, 1995). This aligns with other research in the field. For example, Kurnia (2019) found in her study that the perception that the lecturer had of student teachers' willingness to interact orally can influence the teaching and learning process and student teachers' development. Thus, the approach undertaken by lecturers to encourage student teachers to engage during lectures is pivotal. The education setting created by the lecturer can influence whether student teachers feel confident and competent to communicate orally during lectures. Furthermore, Kurnia (2019) found that certain student teachers' perception of their lecturers increased their confidence to communicate in English. Student teachers reported in interviews with Kurnia (2019) that they felt comfortable speaking English with their lecturer because they found their lecturer to be more considerate of the challenges that they might have with interacting orally and focused rather on deriving meaning from what the student teacher was trying to say. Kurnia's (2019) findings align with the findings emerging from the data collected and analysed in this paper.

5.2 Peer interaction

Peer interaction emerged as the second main theme from the self-reported data of participants concerning lectures. This main theme focuses on the reported experiences of participants in their engagement with peers during lectures. This engagement can be further described by referring to how participants interacted with their peers, whether they participated in one-on-one communication, pair-, or other collaborative work, talking or presenting in front of peers and finally, how participants perceived peers' responses to them being English additional language speakers. The main theme of 'Peer interaction' has been divided into three categories that possibly decreased/and or increased oral competence and confidence in the lecture room.

These are:

1. Engaging with peers in the lecture room
2. Communicating with English home language peers
3. Peer collaboration

These are discussed in greater detail below.

5.2.1 Engaging with peers in the lecture room

Antas explained in an interview that he did not feel comfortable engaging with peers because he did not know them well enough. He further explained that he was also unsure about how his peers would react to the way he spoke English, which was perceived by him as different to how most of his peers spoke English. Antas conveyed that because he did not know his peers well enough, he was afraid that he would be judged for the way he spoke English. This made it difficult for Antas to speak in front of his peers and he found it difficult to make eye contact. In contrast to Antas, Aubrey described in an interview, "I drew myself confident because this is how I feel when communicating with peers and educators" (P2, I-1). The contrasting experiences of the two participants indicate that how one feels around others, in this case, engaging with peers in the lecture room, can possibly influence confidence to engage orally. Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis links well with the data gathered from the two above participants. Krashen (1982) referred to how various affective (emotional) variables relate to the acquisition process of second language skills and identified three variables that relate to success in second language acquisition. Self-confidence is considered as a variable that influences whether speakers acquire skills effectively and, in this case, use them effectively. In the case of Antas, his self-confidence was low and hindered the use of effectively interacting orally with peers and speaking in front of them. Opposing Antas' experience was that of Aubrey, who exhibited high levels of self-confidence that supported the acquisition and use of their speaking skills.

5.2.2 Communicating with English home language peers

During interviews, four participants described how knowing that many of their peers were English home language speakers, made them more aware of their oral engagement. This had different effects on their oral confidence and competence during lectures. Enrico described his experience in an interview, stating, "they sometimes use words that I know the meaning of, but I don't use it in that manner. And sometimes they speak so fluently English, and I put myself down" (P3, I-1). Enrico wanted to use the same or similar words to those his peers used, even though they were not in his normal vocabulary. Similarly, Noah communicated in an interview that he felt that English home language students expected that English additional language students must be able to speak English well and on the same "level" as they do. Noah suggested that there was no accommodation or consideration made by some English home language students towards English additional language speakers and that this decreased his confidence when he must engage orally with peers in lectures. For this reason, he engages less. One can

deduce that Noah was more comfortable and confident with communicating with peers who were English additional language speakers. Similarly, Antas mentioned in an interview that it was easier to communicate in English with peers who were also English additional speakers. With Noah and Antas, a deduction can be made that communicating with other English additional speakers takes the pressure off communicating at a perceived "higher level" and they feel less judged on how they speak English. Both these participants stated in interviews that they felt judged by peers when they have to speak English during lectures.

5.2.3 Peer collaboration

Peer support on topics discussed in the lecture room environment increased firstly, April's strategic competence, and secondly, her confidence in interacting orally in the lecture room environment. April, in an interview, described her experience with peers as follows, "If a specific sentence is said once and there's sometimes a bit of confusion between my peers and me. The sentences can be rephrased so that better understanding can be grasped" (P5, I-1). Peer collaboration and support possibly increased students' strategic competence and consequently their confidence to communicate orally during lectures. In a previous section, I discussed the sub-category of oral strategic competence that fell under 'Communicative competence'. Strategic competence has to do with repairing communication when it breaks down or attempting to negotiate meaning by collaborating with others (Canale & Swain, 1980). In this instance, communication is repaired, and meaning is negotiated between peers to enhance meaningful communication. Kang (2005) and Riasati (2012) explored the perceptions that learners had of the classroom concerning their willingness to interact orally in English. They found that their participants felt more confident and competent to interact with someone with whom they were comfortable and familiar and by whom they felt understood. Furthermore, participants' confidence and competence increased when they felt that they could collaborate in their efforts in making meaning of oral communication and supporting one another. Certain participants in their study felt that this "someone", was at times their peers and at other times their lecturer. The work of Kang and Riasati confirms the finding that emerged from the data in this study, that lecturer and peer interaction are two factors that can influence the confidence and competence in student teachers to communicate orally in English for the purposes of meaningful interaction.

6. Discussion of main findings

Broadly speaking, this research confirms other research into the difficulties additional language speakers experience when they must interact in the target language, as mentioned under the literature review sections. It also confirms research which suggests that oral confidence is

influenced by many factors, in particular the personal attributes and attitudes of speakers as well as their interactions with fellow students and lecturers. In terms of their interactions with students and lecturers, the first aspect which this study underlines, highlights the role of the lecturer. Interactions between the lecturer and the participants, as well as how these were perceived by the participants, influenced their oral competence and confidence. Some participants' confidence in engaging orally increased and others' decreased based on their perception of the lecturers' understanding of the challenges that they faced as English additional language speakers.

Furthermore, the teaching and learning approaches that lecturers adopted, and whether they created an engaging environment and used strategies that encouraged oral engagement, increased the oral confidence of the participants. Kurnia's (2019) study confirms how student teachers' perceptions of how teaching and learning interactions take place under the control of the lecturer, contributes to the confidence of students and their willingness to engage orally.

The second aspect that increased participants' competence and confidence in English oral engagement highlights the role of other students. Participants' ability to collaborate with other students in making meaning of oral communication and supporting one another during lectures was particularly important. Conversely, oral confidence might decrease when student teachers do not feel comfortable communicating in front of or with their peers. One reason for a decrease in oral confidence emerging from this study was participants' discomfort when communicating with English home language students. Student teachers who felt insecure about using their additional language during oral engagements might feel uncomfortable or ridiculed, and as a result overthought correct sentence construction, vocabulary, and academic language usage when they had to work together on tasks in lectures. Kang (2005) and Riasati (2012) confirmed that student teachers felt more confident and competent when they could collaborate in making meaning of oral communication and felt supported by one another. In these situations, student teachers' oral competence increased. The opposite can also be deduced when student teachers do not feel comfortable or confident about collaborating orally. The nature of the interaction can either increase or decrease, firstly, the level of confidence students have when engaging orally, and secondly, that the type of interaction with lecturers and peers can influence oral competence.

Here, Long's (1981) interactional hypothesis upholds the above finding that language is learnt through social interaction. Interaction with others helps with the acquisition and development of skills, which in this study, was oral skills. What is important to mention, is that Long (1981) was clear that the focus is on how interaction is used, that is, as a vehicle to ensure that meaningful interaction takes place between speakers. From the above discussion on collaboration, how meaning is negotiated plays a pivotal role in the acquisition of oral

competence. This is not an unimportant aspect of language learning as students who withdraw from interactions miss out on opportunities for collaborating on repairing communication and meaningful oral interactions. Furthermore, the pivotal role that collaborating with peers and lecturers play in both the confidence and competence of participants to communicate, emphasises that language is learnt socially and when speakers feel confident, language is a tool used for interaction.

A factor common in this study is that reciprocal facial expressions and the body language of those who engage orally with the student teachers increase their confidence in speaking. Reciprocal facial expressions suggest a willingness to understand what is communicated by the student teachers and signals to them to continue communicating, thus increasing their oral confidence. Here one can refer again to Long's interaction hypothesis. Long (1981) created modifications that are involved in negotiating meaning. Some of the interactional features he referred to are as follows:

- clarification requests – "Any expression that elicits clarification of the preceding utterance";

- confirmation checks – "Any expression immediately following the previous speaker's utterance intended to confirm that the utterance was understood or heard correctly"; and

- comprehension checks – "Any expression designed to establish whether the speaker's own preceding utterance has been understood by the addressee" (Ellis, 1991:5).

This negotiation of meaning thus takes place continually between speakers and for these three features, an "expression" which is used to elicit clarification or that the speaker is understood would also include any non-verbal communication, especially facial expressions, and body language. The importance of non-verbal affirmation when communicating with additional language speakers should clearly not be underestimated. The social nature of language development embedded in the sociocultural approach to language is evident and the significant role interaction plays in developing the confidence to engage orally. Consequently, this provides opportunities for the development and consolidation of oral competence.

This study sheds light on the global importance of reciprocal facial expressions and how it can be identified as a tool of meaning making that can be adopted cross culturally, thus making it a global tool for meaning making and interaction. In the review of literature, this aspect of reciprocal facial expressions has been underrated. Lecturers can use this tool to enhance interaction, in turn student teachers can use this tool for meaningful interaction in their future classroom. The third factor relates to lecture content. This study further suggests that some participants' oral confidence increased when the content discussed or explained in a lecture was found to be interesting and enjoyable. On the other hand, finding content too difficult to

understand or being unable to relate to it, decreased some participants' oral confidence and their engagement during lectures. The works of Kurnia (2019), Cao (2011), and Kang (2005) support my finding, as their work indicated that topics under discussion influence the confidence and willingness in students to engage orally.

7. Significance of the study

Through this study, a greater awareness can be created in understanding how English oral strategic and discourse competence and confidence developed in a specific group of student teachers within a South African context. The findings of this study provide some insights and information to student teachers on how their oral competence and confidence in using English as their additional language develops for the purposes of learning interaction. The findings of this study were shared with the participants; consequently, they will be able to further develop and improve their oral competence and confidence. For the group of student teachers who participated in this study, it is invaluable to be able to use English confidently and competently. Researchers may also find the conclusions of this study useful for future studies in understanding how different environments and student perceptions may influence the development of competence and confidence among student teachers who will have to use English as a tool for instruction and learning interaction.

8. Recommendations

Recommendations based on the above findings and discussion would be for tertiary institutions to create initiatives that support student teachers who are English additional language speakers in becoming competent and confident in using English as a tool both for learning interaction and as a medium of instruction.

Another recommendation for teacher training courses is for lecturer training. Lecturer interaction during lectures emerged as the main theme under the factors that contributed to the development of oral competence and confidence in participants. Data revealed that the lecturer played a pivotal role in firstly, the willingness of participants to engage orally, and secondly, their ability to do so competently and confidently during lectures. The recommendation here would be for lecturers to re-assess the teaching and learning environment that they create and manage. Aspects of re-evaluation include the teaching approach adopted and the way instructions are given. Some of these aspects influence the perceptions student teachers have about their lecturers and the level of support they feel is given to them. Perceptions are also created by how lecturers accommodate the challenges student teachers face who are English additional language speakers. In this study, collaborating with peers increased both the

confidence and competence in participants to engage orally because of working together and supporting one another to derive meaning and tackle the difficult content matter. A teaching approach that uses strategies that encourage collaboration and engagement could be useful, such as using a cooperative learning strategy, i.e., groupwork.

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