

Linguistic Barriers in English Education: A Case of Harmonized Language Proficiencies

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Abstract

Learner equity as a crucial aspect and principle in the education sphere is explored in this paper, coupled with its role in promoting harmonized learner English language proficiencies. The main objective of this paper is to examine the significance of generating an inclusive learning environment addressing linguistic backgrounds in their diverse nature. A qualitative approach was employed. Embedded in this qualitative inquiry is Participatory action research (PAR). Semi-structured interviews containing open-ended question types were conducted with three purposely nominated participants to uncover how they perceived life realities, and this was done with close consideration of the major branches of applied linguistics, including, but not limited to, bilingual and multilingual contexts, where diversity in literacies becomes the bone of contention. It was discovered that (i) disparities in access and (ii) an inclusive curriculum design, when meticulously considered, could be beneficial in overcoming linguistic barriers impeding English language proficiency development. The study concludes that there is a need to emphasize harmonized language proficiencies that address individual differences during teaching and learning processes. Therefore, it is recommended that there is a need to target interventions that would aim to bridge the gaps in learner needs, be it in the form of learning approaches or adaptive resources, thereby enhancing and harmonizing learner-language disparities.

Keywords: equity, English language proficiencies, language learning, diversity, access

1. Introduction

A composite term that caters to ensuring equal access in an organizational or schooling culture, irrespective of learner diversity, background, identity, or needs, is known as learner equity. The current situation is that linguistic barriers seem to be impacting learner English language development. For this paper's context, harmonized language proficiencies refer to language skills and abilities that are distributed equitably to consider aspects of inclusion in linguistically diverse settings. To promote settings with harmonized education, Atkins et al (2020) argue that teachers, as recipients of teaching-learning processes, are faced with challenges of being able to identify learners who require supplementary support towards restrained language barriers that may have some effect on language development. Concurrently, Castilla-Earls (2020) articulate that it therefore becomes the task of English language teachers to ensure support provision strategies like language immersion programs. As well, individual, and small-group instruction need to be implemented as a means to curb lowered language proficiency challenges.

In line with the claims above, for most educational settings, it is noted that linguistic diversity has fast become a norm more than an exception when closely looking at the escalating globalization and interconnectedness. Nevertheless, it is reported by research (Blanchard et al, 2021) that challenges emerging from diversity imperatives versus learner language proficiency disparities still exist, thereby causing some concerns about what remedies could be put in place. This is noted in cases where the subjects underpinning the prescribed curriculum are offered in English medium as an additional language for learners who are non-English speakers. Considering concepts of social justice rooted in learner equity, there is an essential need to provide equitable and balanced access to educational opportunities and resources.

Regarding the statement of the problem, it becomes imperative to note the existing linguistic barriers as they seem to impact learner English language development. At this point in time, the author is unsure whether such barriers originate from learner diversity, linguistic constituencies, or learner cultural backgrounds. Henceforth, outlining a brief account of the underpinning Theory of Justice by Rawls (1971), it is worth mentioning that this theory underscores the essence of equal access to quality education by all learners, irrespective of race or culture. Access by all learners is renowned for its essential characteristic of excellence when academic attainment is measured.

This paper aims to investigate the impact of linguistic barriers on English language proficiency. In alignment with the main study aim, this paper has two objectives:

- To examine the significance of generating an inclusive learning environment, as well.

- To address linguistic backgrounds in their diverse nature.

Congruent with the main aim of the study, there was a research question to be answered: To what extent is the impact of linguistic barriers on English language proficiency?

Although scholars have conducted research within the premises of linguistic barriers in English education, this paper highlights two potential gaps: teacher training and pedagogical gaps, as well as a lack of harmonization in curriculum design. Little is articulated in the literature on how teacher training is limited regarding managing linguistically diverse classrooms. The current situation seems to be an overreliance on homogeneous teaching methods, which tend to fail to accommodate diverse language proficiencies. Henceforth, the prescribed curriculum also lacks gaps in considering linguistic diversity in classrooms, with a tendency to focus on a certain selected language group. Looking at this disjuncture, there seems to be no framework in place for balancing the focus on the English medium while respecting learners' home languages.

Therefore, this paper felt it imperative to investigate how learner equity as a fundamental guiding principle can foster harmonization of language proficiencies to ensure that each unique learner efficiently navigates the curriculum, not specifically for academic success, but towards attaining holistic competence.

2. Literature Review

Despite numerous studies having been conducted on learner equity, little has been considered in the literature on cultural relevance in language education (Schwartz, 2022). This paper, therefore, advocates that there is an insistent need for gaps that would help to address cultural perspectives, diversity, and linguistic contexts to be identified. This could also be extended by examining whether the prescribed educational policies have a functional impact on learner equity versus learner-language proficiencies; hence, the currently existing language of teaching and learning remains an English medium for some institutions of learning (Hall, 2019). This is the reason, therefore, why this section explores and highlights educational institutions' critical role in ensuring that linguistic diversity is accommodated (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020; Bredthauer & Engfer, 2016).

Ushioda (2020) opines that there seems to be some relationship between learner equity, proficiency in languages learned, as well as strategies promoting synchronized language development (Duarte & Günther-van der Meij, 2018). Research proceeds to argue that it is a necessary juncture that different simulations of bilingual and multilingual education be examined as they help to showcase examples of schools or programs that effectively address language disparities. Concomitantly, Meier (2018a) reasons that it is therefore worth that those involved in teaching-learning processes for language learning be positive to engage in discussions prioritizing the essence of ethnically responsive functions of collaborating as peers as these have been proven to foster inclusive yet comprehensive learning environments (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2016; Prošić-Santovac et al, 2019; Savić, V., Rixon, 2019).

Accordingly, Wang and MacIntyre (2021) declare that conducting comprehensive assessments with an infusion of diverse questioning styles to accommodate varying abilities is recognized as an advantage in improving learner language proficiencies. For an all-inclusive understanding of language skills, it is worth employing assessment methods that vary, and these might include, but are not limited to, written and oral tasks (Kruk et al, 2021). In addition to that, the point of departure before the administration of the assessments is the sharing of content with learners through instructional approaches. It, therefore, becomes the task of the English language teachers to ensure they implement instruction that is differentiated, as such strategies, for instance, code-switching, would help towards the attainment of diverse language proficiency levels (Dewaele & Li 2020). For improved learner progression thereof, there is a need to instil collaborative learning environments that would accommodate learners who differ in language proficiency levels (Khajavy et al, 2018).

Be that as it may, some scholars perceive learner equity and the harmonization of language proficiencies in altered views. Such different views are embedded in the advocacy of standardized proficiencies. Some scholars concur that for language proficiencies to be harmonized, there is an assurance to cater for fair learner equity practices (Anyichie et al, 2023). For such practices to be achieved, there is an urgent need to situate reliable standards, permitting learners to engage with peers irrespective of diverse linguistic backgrounds. Such an approach is renowned for being a benefactor that addresses learner disparities and caters to the expected language learning outcomes (Gray et al, 2020). In line with the claims above, I can proclaim that when consistent linguistic proficiency standards are determined, learners are advantaged to attain just and parallel opportunities.

In addition to that, some writers view and perceive ideas for standardized language proficiencies as kind of having a discriminatory effect. Ladson-Billings (2021) argues that capturing differing linguistic abilities and learner cultural complexities is compromised by the nature of multilingual classroom environments. Multilingual classroom environments have an additive inverse to disregard the unique strengths of some learners who originate from diverse linguistic constituencies (Meier, 2018a; Meier, 2018b). For learners possessing learning styles and linguistic backgrounds that are distinctive, research has some concerns that proficiency standards are likely to relegate learners (Dignath & Veenman, 2021; Dewaele et al, 2018). This, therefore, means that language teachers are expected to display extensive teaching and assessment approaches that have the potential to sufficiently exhibit learner abilities (Paris, 2021). With these broad discussions, it is essential to consider inclusivity in education, with close consideration for diverse learners, thereby promoting outcomes that are impartial and non-discriminatory (Hecht et al, 2021). It is a fact that as education stakeholders vary in opinions, their involvement in the schooling environment's developmental stance might allow opportunities to suggest diverse perceptions to be put in place as learner support pillars.

In line with the altered views by some scholars on standardized language proficiencies, the diagram below demonstrates different proficiency levels, and such linking skills are meant to provide a structured framework that assesses development in language proficiency (Anyichie, 2018). Teaching and learning strategies outlined in this diagram, distinct as they are, are essential to maintain the multilingualism benefits of the schooling environment, and when efficiently implemented, these practices are contributors to holistic, cognitive, and cultural enrichment. For diverse learners to be equated is parallel to academic attainment, intertwined with intercultural underpinnings. Consequently, these intersected factors influence language acquisition with fundamental advantages of socioeconomic factors to tackle equity gaps (Jones et al, 2021).

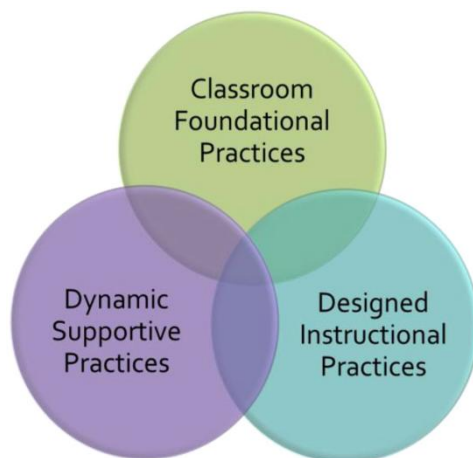


Figure 1. A Culturally Responsive Self-Regulated Learning Framework (Anyichie, 2018)

3. Theoretical Framework

For the underpinnings of this paper to provide some theoretical foundation upon which investigation and analysis are exhibited, a Theory of Justice by Rawls (1971) has been provided to shape the research question, thereby informing the interpretation of the study findings. Social Justice Theory proposes unbiased and equal distribution of resources, privileges, and benefits among members of society. This theory disputes practices of gender inequality, discrimination, and racism; instead, it advocates for fairness, inclusion, and the establishment of a set of ethical principles for creating and maintaining a just society.

The Theory of Justice is valuable for social imperatives with its principles inclusive of access, equity, diversity, participation, and human rights. This depicts the theory emphasizing that any resources belonging to society need to be equally available and accessible to render success opportunities for all stakeholders, with disregard for any form of past systemic discrimination (Gkonou, 2017). Additionally, Darvin (2017) proposes that those communities in their minority must be reasonably represented in public institutions to counteract discrimination of any form, be it class, cultural groups, or language constituency. This calls for diverse participation toward informed decisions by all. By so doing, people within a society would pride themselves on having a voice in the formulation of public policies. This might as well link to formulating policies that allow for translanguaging curriculum documents that cater to both the English language and any identified home language, as specified by the school's geographical location. Finally, one of the most fundamental principles of social justice is human rights with observance to respect each other as unique, worthwhile human beings (Martins, 2018).

Consequently, applied to the education systems, this theory underscores the essence of ensuring that all learners are specifically given equal access to quality education that would lead to excellence in academic attainment, extended to success opportunities as lifelong learners aiming at treasured future careers that also add an effective throughput rate in the rise of the world's economy (Hall & Cunningham, 2020). This theory has an educational implication in that it provides a lens through which recipients to teaching and learning pedagogies, in this instance, learners, teachers, and policymakers, to assess learner equity as one of the crucial principles that assist in addressing English language proficiency inequalities, thus promoting inclusivity in the education sector (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017).

4. Methods

This is a section that outlines the research methodologies that underpin this investigation (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The learner equity concept, encompassing achieving harmonized language proficiencies, was explored by employing a qualitative approach with its nature to possess probing when researchers interact with the study participants (Yin, 2011).

This study deemed it appropriate to use Participatory Action Research (PAR) as this is a qualitative research design entangling both researchers and participants to collaborate for the purpose of better understanding the overwhelming social issues, thereby bringing about actions to interact for social changes regarding learner equity and language development imperatives (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017). Participatory action research design is regarded as effective as it emphasizes that there should be action and participation among

community members directly linked to the problem under investigation (Gioia, 2013).

The way PAR was operationalized is that as the interviewer and the interviewed engaged in robust discussions, the problem of linguistic barriers was collaboratively identified. This outcome would not have been attained if not for the open dialogue centered around linguistic barriers in English education as a case of harmonized language proficiencies. During these discussions, mutual trust and respect were fostered as the researcher ensured participants that ethical issues would be considered a priority. As participants shared their lived experiences, this helped the researcher to collect valuable data for the problem investigated. As a means of ensuring active involvement, participants were not considered as subjects, but rather as co-researchers. I treated participants as equal partners as I considered their contributions, as well as their critical inputs, as valuable knowledge because of the experiences already incurred in their field of work.

Subsequently, qualitative semi-structured interviews as data collection instruments were administered to the nominated study participants (Smyth, 2016). The population of this study became all university teachers offering language-related modules in various faculties, levels, and programs offered by the university curriculum (Morse, 2000), consistently restructured to suit the current societal needs, as well as encompassing close consideration of diverse learner needs and varying learning styles. The identified cohort was composed of five purposely nominated participants who were university teachers offering the English language to learners originating from diverse socio-economic and linguistic backgrounds and enrolled for their first year at university. As Malterud et al (2016) allude to, the main reason to purposely categorize this cohort was the number of years they have been involved in English language teaching, therefore, the study already believed that insights into their perspectives and experiences on critical issues of learner equity versus language proficiency would help towards attaining rich and relevant data. Another cohort was formed by two student participants who were directly affected by the identified challenge, totalling up to seven participants.

As articulated by Bhandari (2023), ethical considerations as guiding principles when undertaking research practices were adhered to. These ethics are a code of conduct worth considering when researchers collect data from the studied subjects. Consideration of these ethics helped in various ways as they protected me as the investigator to maintain scientific integrity, as well as protecting participants' rights. All the nominated study participants were provided with consent forms to read the text contained. When they felt satisfied that they clearly understood the content, they all indicated a willingness to participate in the study (Goertz & Mahoney, 2012). Thereafter, there was an eagerness to append personal signatures to the supplied consent forms. In addition to that, they were happy to learn that, as potential participants, it was also their freedom to withdraw from the study when they no longer felt interested, and for such a stance, there would be no negative consequences likely to jeopardize their jobs.

Validating the interview protocol

For the context of this paper, with a special focus on linguistic barriers in English education, it became necessary that the interview procedure be validated. This strategy helped to ensure that the data gathered contained preciseness in how participants perceived the investigated problem. Pilot testing was conducted prior to the actual interview process being administered. In this way, the researcher could test the interview questions to be used, whether they were clearly understood, and whether such questions had some cultural relevance or not. As two identified pilot members interacted with the interview process, the researcher was awarded an opportunity to refine some of the questions prior to the data collection process. Throughout this process, as transparency was maintained as one of the crucial elements of ethical considerations, challenges encountered were shared openly. Such a research practice is essentially contributing to trustworthiness, as opined by Thirsk & Clark (2017).

For this study to have comprehensively reviewed literature, the intention was to obtain a better understanding of the prevailing research when learner disparities are equated to foreign language learning, regarded as an additional language, together with underlying teaching-learning pedagogies. Afterward, with this being the ultimate section in research methodology, all data collected through systematic reviewing of academic literature that relates to learner equity and language proficiency were then analysed.

Data Analysis

A method that was used to interpret gathered data is called thematic analysis. Timonen et al (2018) define thematic analysis as a data analysis research method that identifies patterns, trends, or themes within the data. What assisted a lot in directing the analysis for this research study were the research questions, which mainly focused on aspects of diversity and access for enhanced English language proficiencies. For this investigation, the main research question posed was: To what extent is the impact of linguistic barriers on English language proficiency? Embedded in this main research question were two study objectives that aimed to examine the significance of generating an inclusive learning environment, as well as to address linguistic backgrounds in their diverse nature.

Thematic analysis for this paper entailed a kind of multi-step process, and this was administered to warrant thoroughness and transparency when applying the qualitative data analysis procedures (Creswell et al, 2018). Inductive reasoning was incorporated to closely examine the intricacies of linguistic barriers in English education. Navigating this process, I first familiarised myself with the gathered data by consistently reading the field notes. This was done to ensure identification of frequent ideas related to linguistic barriers and harmonized language proficiencies. As the process was unfolding, I started by collating key ideas with their impression that seemed to influence linguistic challenges and strategies for harmonized language proficiencies. These ideas laid the foundation to categorise some crucial aspects that subsequently led to the identification of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2019). During this phase, themes started to emerge as similar and related responses were grouped together. As I had sufficient time to read and re-read the way the data collected has been analysed, I wanted to double-check whether there were any themes that were consistently represented. As well, this is

the stage where I discarded a few themes that lacked supporting evidence. In addition to that, there were no participant claims that seemed to contradict one another. All the interviewees had similar and related opinions towards linguistic barriers affecting English language education. Henceforth, such themes have been discussed as findings of this study in the succeeding sub-section: (i) disparities in access and (ii) an inclusive curriculum design.

5. Findings and Discussions

With the essence of seeking responses intended to provide insights into challenges and gaps encountered by participants, semi-structured interviews were conducted, and data relating to learner equity in opposition to harmonized language proficiencies were gathered. It emanated as the main findings that disparities in access and an inclusive curriculum design, when thoroughly considered, could be remedial factors for overcoming linguistic barriers impeding language proficiency development (Li et al, 2021b; Martins et al, 2018).

As participants were asked questions centered around methods currently used to assess language proficiency, accessibility of language learning resources, adequacy to reflect diverse cultural perspectives, consideration of standards for linguistic diversity, as well as the effectiveness of current pedagogical approaches towards addressing language proficiency gaps, varying responses were shared (May, 2019). Questions and responses became a strategy that allowed for the sharing of responses, feelings, and personal perspectives, thereby contributing beneficial insights to the manuscript.

S1: To my opinion, assessment methods for English language-related subjects are biased as they tend to disregard some language backgrounds. I regard this as a challenge for diverse learners, as they are not permitted equal opportunities to showcase their personal language abilities. Furthermore, handling learners from differing communities who speak diverse languages causes hassles, which somehow impairs teaching and learning during English lessons. This has also lowered academic results and progress because of the gaps in successfully measuring success for unique learner abilities, as English is a non-mother language and foreign to most learners.

S3: Let me comment on what you asked about resources. There are limitations of access to English language learning resources. This leads to uneven playing in the field of language acquisition, specifically for learners emanating from non-dominant language backgrounds. Additionally, what I have been noticing is a huge gap in cultural significance as those materials lack representation, making it harder for learners with different cultural backgrounds to effectively align with the English subject content. With the curriculum transformation strategies brought on by the recirculation processes, I hope and believe that by constructing documents like Student Module Guides, normally written in the English language, to be also transcribed to home languages, linguistic disparities are going to be curbed.

In line with S1, S4 argued:

I have since devoted myself to administering inclusive approaches when rendering assessments, either summative or formative. This strategy has proved essential to address diverse learner language skills. Another important factor is that some approaches we use as English language teachers at times seem not to accommodate all learners needs because some teachers were never trained on how to cater to diverse learners in aspects of culture, language, and inclusivity in a holistic manner. I am among those untrained teachers myself.

S2: The way I see things is that, as English language teachers, we lack the necessary knowledge as we never received any training whatsoever on how to handle learners with diverse language backgrounds. I am among the teachers lacking skills, tools, and strategies that can help tackle linguistic diversity in the classes where I teach. Even the curriculum and quality units have never invited us to attend such training. For me, spending most of my time code-switching from English to my home language consumes time. This seems beneficial for most learners, although it brings some negative impacts of not finishing the intended work within a short space of time.

S5: Yes, I agree. Many curriculum policies are issued, but they are not directly linked to addressing the unique learner needs when it comes to language learning. I issue this statement because even the assessment policy is silent on issues of translanguaging; as such, teachers use the English medium to administer both summative and formative assessments. This calls to say that policy implementation contributing to inequities has a gap that needs to be closed.

As another participant cohort, P1 raised an argument regarding teaching and learning resources:

As diverse as the student component may be, due to our differing home backgrounds, we are troubled by factors of limited teaching and learning resources, like computers. Yes, the computer laboratories are in place, but we are compromised due to a huge number of non-functional equipment. This really compromises us as we fail to interact with such gadgets as maximally as we intend to.

Concurrently, P2 declared:

It is important that some non-funded students are taken care of. The bone of contention is that all those who are not funded lack the finances to purchase the desired equipment. Meaning, we are two groups that cannot necessarily be compared. The funded ones managed to purchase personal gadgets like tablets and laptops, thus giving them better access than others. These disparities impact academic achievement.

Disparities in Access

In line with disparities in access, findings denoted by participants' responses as tabled above reveal that indeed there are substantial disparities in access to quality language learning resources. Teaching and learning resources include, without limiting to, technology, reading material, and qualified teachers (Elahi et al, 2021). For workshops not to be organized for English language teachers to attend raises some alarm bells, as they handle learners with disparities in language proficiencies. This might impede progress as learners were reported to be infusing home language concepts into English-written academic texts (Macaro et al, 2020). Simultaneously, findings also revealed that some barriers were encountered by learners who emanate from disadvantaged backgrounds due to a lack of exposure to some educational gadgets. These reported challenges were noted to be hindering not only proficiency in English language development but also negatively impacting the overall learner's academic accomplishment (Jaekel et al, 2017). This, therefore, depicts that learners have exposure and access to technology and resources for English language learning is worthwhile for holistic learner development, as stated by (Pawlak et al, 2020b).

Alongside, the study findings divulged that when personalized learning is closely administered and functionally utilized, this is considered a promising approach that would curb individual differences as learner diversity is a compound concept aimed at addressing unique and varying preferences, learning styles, and learner-centeredness (Brummer, 2019). To accommodate learner diversity, some aspects were identified as functional strategies, including variety in teaching, learning pedagogies, adaptive technology, and personalized learning pathways. Murphy (2014) believes that if these crucial aspects could be implemented efficiently, the schooling environment would succeed in tailoring learner inclusion.

An Inclusive Curriculum Design

Looking closer at an inclusive curriculum design, responses by the participants above denote that a curriculum design that depicts inclusivity is aligned with respect for linguistic diversity that is infused within the commonly known English language instruction (Huerta et al, 2021). Teaching and learning practices that are inclusive, like pedagogies culturally responsive with indicators of being universal in their design, are renowned for having characteristics of inclusivity and supportive language-learning environments (García-Mateus & Palmer, 2017). These characteristics are stunning because cognitive and cultural barriers impeding language proficiency development are overcome by such linguistic factors. The ultimate result becomes an organizational culture with highly valued multiethnicity and equity (Pit-ten Cate et al, 2018).

Upon critically engaging with opposing viewpoints or contrasting studies, it becomes worth highlighting that there are scholars, as denoted by literature, who speculate that implementing fair learner equity practices could be the best means to achieve harmonized language proficiencies in English language education. Pit-ten Cate et al (2018) accentuate that as equity and inclusivity are essential to empower underrepresentation in English language education, it becomes perilous to ensure standardised pedagogical strategies as remedial strategies that ensure learner capacitation irrespective of cultural identities. For learners to be awarded exposure, access, and opportunities to quality educational resources, language proficiencies would be harmonised, especially for diverse teaching and learning communities. Henceforth, claims by these authors indicate an important perspective that underscores inequitable learning environments likely to hinder learner academic progress, yet intensifying linguistic disparities, which is rather opposed by the democracy imperatives.

Both findings on the disparities in access and an inclusive curriculum design for proficiency and excellent academic progression are in line with the Theory of Justice (Rawls, 1971) that underpinned this investigation. In English language learning, the application of the Theory of Justice, as denoted by the study findings, can lead to a wide range of transformative effects on curriculum design, learning outcomes, and policy imperatives. Regardless of diverse linguistic backgrounds and learner socio-economic status, the study denotes the importance of access to educational resources by all learners. In this instance, policymakers and institutions need to ensure sufficient funding, learning resources, and qualified teaching staff. Also, it is accentuated by the theory that there is a need for designing curricula catering to diverse learner needs.

Therefore, these findings have implications that for fostering harmonized proficiencies in language learning environments, it is worth considering how essential learner equity as a powerful force could be, with revisions of curriculum policies thereof (Smit & Schwarz, 2019), despite varying learner linguistic constituencies coupled with diverse learning aptitudes (Love & Beneke, 2021).



Figure 2. A conceptual diagram depicting linguistic barriers

In summary, the diagram above, with a central idea of "Barriers to Communication," can be connected to a wide range of contributing factors like cultural differences, lack of resources in an organisation, interpersonal language constituencies, linguistic differences, and physical or diverse learner home backgrounds. If such factors could be synthesized, a functional and harmonized language-proficient cohort of learners would be a positive outcome.

6. Conclusions

The main objective of this paper was to examine the significance of generating an inclusive learning environment addressing linguistic backgrounds in their diverse nature. As divulged by the study findings, there is a need to target interventions that would aim to bridge the gaps in learner needs. For equitable language proficiency development, fundamental factors to curb the situation could be personalized learning and inclusive instruction. The study concludes that identifying gaps that would assist in catering to diverse learner needs can be remedial yet substantial factors for pedagogical approaches that would effectively address language proficiency gaps.

7. Recommendations

Emerging from the conducted investigation on linguistic barriers and harmonized language proficiencies, practical implications for policy and educational practice indeed impose some approaches that have that sense of political grounding. This is one of the vital reasons why this study recommends that there is a need to cater for linguistic diversity; henceforth, multilingual language policies should be put in place by the educational systems. With the current situation, that of a one-size-fits-all English-medium approach, an immediate intervention must be done, more so that the Bill of Rights, as per the South African government's perspective, diverse language use is highly considered as a prerequisite to stabilize the characteristics of the rainbow nation. Therefore, it becomes crucial that the so-called local and minority languages be integrated alongside the English medium. This study already believes that an equitable learning environment, taking cognisance of diverse linguistic constituencies, when the medium of instruction is measured, the academic outcomes could be heightened and reinforced, thereby mitigating issues of social justice and inequalities within the institutions of learning. Henceforth, this paper highlights a need to target interventions that would aim to bridge the gaps in learner needs, be it in the form of learning approaches or adaptive resources, thereby enhancing and harmonizing learner-language disparities. This becomes a wake-up call for the education system to redefine teaching pedagogies that cater to diverse learner preferences, thus revamping enhanced, harmonized learner-language disproportions.

8. Future Studies

For future studies that focus on learner equity as a case for harmonized language proficiencies, various areas could be explored. It becomes worth investigating and then analysing how language learning prescribed policies at either local, national, or global echelons are influencing learner equity. Henceforth, the succeeding step would be to recognize probable gaps together with the intended extent for improvement. Furthermore, studies could explore educational settings by digging deep into the implications of linguistic diversity versus learner equity dimensions. Such an inquiry could be better achieved by examining disparities in home background dialects, as learners originate from diverse linguistic constituencies and complexities. As these practices are adhered to, there would be a vital need to closely consider the rate at which the currently used assessment methods align with equity principles, cultural prejudices, and linguistic diversity. By so doing, strategies divulged would tentatively promote social responsiveness as well as a nurtured inclusive learning milieu.

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Authors' contributions

As this manuscript is solo-authored, I had to be responsible for the drafting and consolidation, meaning, I was responsible for study design, data collection and revising. It was solely on my shoulders, exclusively, to read and edit as required by the review reports, until the final manuscript was granted approval.

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