

An Empirical Investigation into the role of Input in Improving Speaking Skills among the Postgraduate Students of the University of Balochistan

Naeem Nasir¹

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to determine the learner-learner interactive role, with 52 postgraduate enrolled students at the two Faculties-Science and Arts, at the University of Balochistan, Quetta. The English Language Center (ELC), established in the University of Balochistan conducted Functional English Language Compulsory, one-year academic program of studies, to cater to the English Language needs of these students. The research revealed that the interactive role among the students, plus the classroom setting did help the students enhance their language learning skills especially their speaking. Additionally, they also understood the intricate target structures and forms to improve the Foreign Language.

Introduction

English language is the lingua franca of the international community. More than 40 countries speak it as their First Language (Gordon,2005). The importance of this language cannot be denied as it is the only means of communication in the areas such as education, trade and business.

Rivers,1987 is of the opinion that the role play, the interaction among the students plays a tremendous role in getting students involved in the discussion and facilitates their understanding of the concept to be conveyed. They find it a real life situation, and this helps them learn the foreign or the target language, which is English in this case.

Keeping in view the above, it was intended to establish whether this interactive role among the postgraduates of the university of Balochistan who join English language classes, helps them improve foreign language or not?

¹ Lecturer in English, English Language Center (ELC), University of Baluchistan
Email: (naem481@ yahoo.com)

Statement of The Problem

One of the vital points for learning L2 and specially to improve the speaking ability, is the interactive role among the students, who join the classes to learn English language in order to perform their academic tasks and the practical needs including the interview skills, presentation skills etc. They want to meet the International speaking standards and improve their fluency of the target language (MacIntyre,2007).

(Mackey,2007; Yashima, et al.,2004) reiterate the fact that the stereotype teaching; the teacher being the only speaker, does not help the students become proficient in speaking skills required to be exhibited. They favor the active participation of the students in the conducive class room setting.

This type of teaching with Student-Centered approach unfortunately is neglected even by the English Language Teachers, who at least should know the fact that speaking cannot be improved unless the students are given ample chance to interact with their classmates. (Baily,2005; Goh,2007).

Hence, it was intended that a study be carried out with postgraduate students of the University of Balochistan, Quetta, in order to examine the effectiveness of interaction among the students, to evaluate the development of their language skills, particularly, their speaking proficiency; as these students are deprived of the opportunity to express themselves freely. Moreover, English language is not the medium of communication in their surroundings.

Research Questions

The researcher had in his mind to get the answers to the questions stated below:

- 1- To explore the factors that help promote interactive role in enhancing the language skills of the postgraduate students of the university of Balochistan.
- 2- Whether or not this interaction among the students improves their speaking ability.
- 3-The effectiveness of the classroom setting in developing English language speaking skills.

Study Objectives

The following objective was intended to be achieved:

Whether the interactions and the classroom setting are appropriate to facilitate L2 learning skills?

Significance of The Study

The role and the importance of English language in the modern world cannot be denied. All business, trade, industry, the academics are subject to be associated with this language, and a world without this language cannot be imagined. The matter of the fact is that this language has gained the international standards and hence, its learning has become mandatory, and achieving academic excellence without it is impossible.

This study would benefit the enrolled students at the university of Balochistan to have a panoramic view of the world and hence learn this language as per the international requirements. It would help the members of the Faculties to adopt this approach to help their students their academic goals, especially the speaking skills needed in their practical life.

Literature Review

For learning or acquiring L2 the receptive skills: reading and Listening, and the productive skills: speaking and Writing are essential. Their exposure especially of speaking, needs to be given so as to help the students to be able to face the real life situations (Thornbury2005).

Students are not unfortunately, given a chance to improve their communicative competence. They are exposed to linguistic items and as such cannot perform well in society where most of the speaking occurs (Allwright,1984).

(Swain,1993).is of the view that both-the communicative and the Linguistic competence can be developed more effectively only if the learners are engaged in the interactive sessions in the classroom. He encourages the Peer work, group discussions, conversational activities to be introduced by the English language teachers.

Another Linguist (Luoma,2004). argues that developing language skills especially speaking ability of L2 learners is not easy. It does take time to help student learn language skills and understand grammatical structures and the Patterns. But if the learners find their classroom settings as Student-Centered, they take language learning a fun activity and improve their skills rapidly.

The learning in the foreign contexts is challenging for the students, as with this little exposure they find it difficult to apply the target language outside the classroom (Harmer,2007).

Lack of interactive sessions and the traditional classroom setting does not make the L2 learners be fluent in the target language. They may face problems with vocabulary usage, syntax as they are not in an interactive environment. These students always are shy to speak freely in public (Hedge,2008).

The communicative approach in the classroom helps develop cordial relationship with the peers and the L2 learners feel free to express themselves in the presence of their instructors.

Research Methodology

In order to collect and analyze data quantitative research design was employed. A questionnaire was designed and administered among the postgraduates of the university of Balochistan was an adaption from Kouicem (2009) which primarily focused on the importance of interaction in developing language learning. The method was taken into consideration keeping in view the following:

As its cost is reasonable,

The research is unbiased,

The participants had ample time to record their answers and its reliability.

Data Analysis

A five-point Likert Scale was adopted keeping in view the four variables:

Exploring the factors that promote learner-learner interaction, the interaction and the development of language skills, the classroom setting, and the development of speaking skill.

This part of the chapter presents data analysis both in Tables and the Written form.

With SPSS (version19 Registered) the percentages, the mean scores of each item and the statistical descriptions were performed. 72% of students reported that classroom activities facilitated them to promote their speaking skills. Whereas, 68% of students reported that teacher was second most influential factor whose motivation encouraged students to speak English

language without being scared of committing mistakes. Positive attitude towards English language particularly on speaking skills emerged to be the third influential factor in which 64% of students reported that they love to command over English language particularly speaking skills. Finally, classroom setting turned out to be the fourth influential factor in which 61.5% of students expressed their views that they found many opportunities to practice their speaking skills in classroom.

Summery

The main focus of the chapter was to present the findings arising from investigating the interactive role among learners in enhancing language skills especially the spoken area, by answering the questions of research. The method of research was quantitative as it was consistent with Long's (1981) Interactive Hypothesis. The data measuring instrument was a questionnaire.

Discussion

The finding of the study revealed that the learner-learner interaction enhanced the speaking skills of the postgraduate students, and the provision of conducive classroom setting facilitated learning.

Hence, it can be summed up that learning language skills is not an easy task as the target language is rarely found in the society. Therefore, the primary focus of the study was to investigate learning through interaction with in the classroom.

The teacher's motivation, the selection of the language activities facilitated learning.it was found out that these factors are correlated and only this integrated approach can help learners improve their language.

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