



Improving Students' Speaking Skills in English through Group Discussion and Classroom Interaction at Secondary School Level: Teachers' Perspective

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Abstract: This study aimed to investigate teachers' perspectives regarding improving students' speaking skills in English through group discussion and classroom interaction at the secondary school level in Bannu District. The population comprised of SSTs (secondary school teachers) of Government secondary schools of both genders (n=370) teaching English to grades 9 and 10. 119 male and 69 female teachers were selected through a stratified random sampling technique. Five-point Likert scale-based self-made instrument was used for data collection. It was a survey-type quantitative study. Mean and standard deviation was used as descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that teachers of both genders were in favour of group discussion and classroom interaction.

Key Words: Group Discussion, Classroom Interaction, Speaking Skills, Perceptions

Introduction

Language, as the most important communicative tool, is truly a gift to humans. As a result of globalization (Haidar & Fang, 2019), English has become more important as a second language than ever before. It is being taught in Pakistan as a second or foreign language in Pakistan as well as used commonly in government educational institutes and offices etc. (Abbas and Iqbal, 2018). For correspondence, all departments, institutions, courts etc. use it (Abbas, Ashiq, & Haq, 2018). It is a compulsory subject and is commonly used as a medium of communication in our educational institutions (Abbas, Jalil, Zaki, and Irfan, 2020; Abbas, Pervaiz, and Arshad, 2018). Language proficiency in English comprises

listening, reading, writing and speaking and refers to four basic skills of language.

Linguists and other experts have recently advocated that the primary goal of language training should be oral communication. Several strategies and procedures for identifying, practicing, and improving one's speaking skills should be used. Speaking skills are often neglected or inadequately taught. As a result, according to English teaching, English does not produce the expected results because obsolete methods of teaching are used by teachers (Nawab, 2012). The increased need for practical, communicative English abilities gives rise to an important global demand for non-native speakers of English (Mehmoodzadeh, 2012).

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For Pakistani students, the greatest difficulty is the absence of participation in the learning of English (Awan, Azher, Anwar, & Naz, 2010). Due to the majority of teacher-dominated classes, the students hardly have the opportunity to practice English. Considering the problem, there are a number of issues that may be found, including:

1. Students are hesitant about how to convey their views in English.
2. Students appear to be worried about English speaking.
3. Learners are scared about speaking English.
4. Do not use English daily in communication, whether outside or inside the classroom.

The Speaking Skills

In verbal form, speaking is a valuable ability (Bashir, 2011). It is just like the other skills and more difficult than it seems. It necessitates more than merely word pronunciation. Sharing, receiving and interpreting the information are all aspects of the interaction that results in the production of meaning, which is speaking. To generalize, it is the oral communication of an interactive meaning-building system that incorporates grammar and phonetic systems, as well as the ability to collaborate in speech management in order to supply thoughts and information. Individuals must also have excellent speaking skills to express, convey, and transfer their thoughts, ideas, and feelings, as well as exchange information and express meaning through utterances. Argawati (2014) defines speaking as "the act of engaging in conversation with others." Speaking refers to the ability to use words to communicate, convey, or share ideas. It occurs on a regular basis and has become established in society. When someone speaks, he or she engages in social interaction and uses language to express their ideas, feelings, and thoughts. He or she also exchanges knowledge with others.

Discussion Definition

In English Language Teaching, experts have presented a variety of definitions to discuss

(ELT). As per Argawati (2014), the first is a process in which two or more individuals discuss topics, especially face-to-face. It is a two-way English discussion in the classroom between students and teachers, as well as between learners (William, 2016).

Group Discussion

It is the face-to-face activity performed in the classrooms by the students. In this activity, the students share their opinions and ideas openly. They think critically and perform an active and creative role in the classroom. In a group discussion, the students' speaking skills are engaged effectively. It plays a key role in foreign language learning because during the students communicate with one another as well as with their teacher. It does not simply mean the collection of different individuals in one location which means that it is a technique where the students meet together, share their ideas and opinions in an oral mood, attain their goals in collaboration with one another, show more responsibility and to develop social skills and leadership qualities. Group discussion is an effective and useful technique to improve students' speaking skills in English (Serena, 2015).

Types of Group

Group discussion is divided into eight types (Center for Teaching Excellence, 2016).

Buzz Groups

In this type of group, the students are engaged in an informal or short discussion. The students have to respond to a particular question or sentence. They have to turn to 1-3 students to discuss difficulties, speculation, definition and key concepts etc.

Think-Pair-Share

In this activity, students first individually think about a specific scenario or question. Secondly, pairs are made for discussion in groups. Thirdly, in a larger group e.g. they share their ideas.

Circle of Voices

In this type, the students create four or five-person circles. The students are given a topic to think about and a few minutes to do so. The conversation then starts, with every student given three or four minutes to speak without interruption. No one is allowed to speak during this period.

Rotating Trios

This technique requires students to address problems with a large number of their classmates at the same time. Conversation questions are prepared ahead of time. Students form trios in class, and the groups are organized in a large square or circle. A question is given to the students and each student takes a turn to respond to it. After a reasonable amount of time has passed, it is told to assign a number to each of its members: 0, 1, or 2.

Snowball Pyramids/Groups

Students work alone at first, second, in pairs, third in fours, and so forth, in this practice of continuous doubling. Students usually get together for a general assembly after collaborating in fours to share their ideas or solutions. Therefore, provide a series of extremely hard assignments so that students are not bored by repetitive discussions at various stages.

Jigsaw

Students become experts on one area of a topic and then share their knowledge with others using this method. Organize a subject into a few key components. Form groups of 3-5 individuals and give each one a particular piece of the subject to work on. Each group goal is to gain competence on a certain subtopic through talking, formulating concepts, and when time allows, and conducting research.

Fishbowl

One group observes another group in this manner. The very first group makes a ring and discusses a topic, conducts short-term drama or a role play. The inner group is surrounded by the second group, which makes a ring around

it. The outside group can examine ideas, connections, and clarity of argument, depending on the task of the inner group and the setting of the course.

Learning Communities

In this type, at the start of the semester, the learners are divided into several groups. The students are directed by the teacher to form learning groups whenever he wants group discussion.

Classroom Interaction

Classroom interaction is extremely important in

language learning process. Indeed, scholars in this subject have been increasingly interested because it provides chances for the students to build knowledge and skills. Interaction is advantageous to language development in general, according to researchers such as Mackey (2007) & Ellis (2003), but to improve all skills of learning a second language is not known because skills can be improved in a variety of ways. Speaking is, without a doubt, the most important skill to master when studying a second language. In most circumstances, students who interact and perform well in oral communication than students who remain passive.

In a classroom interaction, two pupils at least work collaboratively face-to-face and interact with each other using language in a genuine context. It is one of the most significant strategies for students to extract knowledge and information while also allowing them to receive feedback from their lecturers and peers. Interaction and practice helps learners use accurate language when they communicate and work in pairs or groups. As a consequence, classroom interaction is essential for keeping students motivated and promoting language skills. Interaction between learners is beneficial to learning a language in general and speaking in particular. Numerous factors affect the interaction of students and, as a consequence, academic achievement as well as capacity to communicate. Inhibition issues such as usage of home language, fear of mistakes and criticism,

lack of subject understanding, and insufficient participation are the most critical elements that affect students' interaction and speaking ability (Tuan & Mai, 2015).

Characteristics of Interaction

It has two main characteristics, such as negotiation of meaning and feedback and without these two characteristics, good interaction-based learning is not possible.

Negotiation of Meaning

It is defined by Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) as oral interactions that occur when speakers are attempting to avoid communication problems. They go on to say that the basic discourse pattern means negotiation. The students then make the language output further clear for the other students by participating and interacting with them. Different processes might be worked on to restore the relationship if there is a lack of comprehension.

Feedback

It is, according to researchers, the most crucial characteristic of interaction that enhances learning in a general way. Feedback is of two types e.g. explicit and implicit (Mackey, 2007). The former refers to any feedback the learners are not using the second language appropriately in their speech and the latter mentions corrective feedback such as a request for an explanation. Many studies have recently revealed that explicit feedback is more successful than implicit feedback, which indicates that in explicit feedback, the teacher calls the students' attention to the faults immediately so that they do not repeat them.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out perspectives of teachers regarding improving the speaking skills of students in English through group discussion at the secondary school level in district Bannu.
2. To find out perspectives of teachers regarding improving the speaking skills of students in English through classroom

interaction at the secondary school level in district Bannu.

Questions of the Study

1. What are the perspectives of teachers regarding improving the speaking skills of students in English through group discussion at the secondary school level in district Bannu?
2. What are the perspectives of teachers regarding improving the speaking skills of students in English through classroom interaction at the secondary school level in district Bannu?

Methodology

Research Design

The study was quantitative in nature and an analytical inferential survey research design was used. A survey is a tool a researcher uses to describe people's behaviours, ideas, and attitudes he collects from the sample or population as a whole (Creswell, 2002).

Population

All public secondary school teachers, SSTs (General), male and female, teaching English to grades 9 & 10 were the target population.

Sampling and Sample Size

The process of selecting a group of representative participants from the population is called sampling. A sample is the representative part of the population that is representative. Through an online sample calculator (<http://www.surveysystem.com>) at a significance level of 0.05 and a confidence level of 95, the sample was determined using a random selection technique (<https://stattrek.com/survey-research/simple-random-sampling.aspx>), 188 the participants were chosen. To select male and female teachers proportionally, a stratified random method was adopted.

$$\text{Male size} = n_1 = 234 \times 188 \div 370 = 119$$

$$\text{Female size} = n_2 = 136 \times 188 \div 370 = 69$$

Instrument

Data were collected through a questionnaire based on (group discussion and classroom interaction) on a five-point Likert scale.

Validation and Reliability

The validity of the self-developed instrument was determined with the assistance of researchers and language experts. Several of the questionnaire items, such as 6, 8, and 9, were slightly changed in response to their recommendations and input. For the pilot study, the questionnaires were distributed among 30 teachers of both genders to collect data in order to determine their reliability. Cronbach Alpha value was 0.776, which showed that the instrument was reliable.

Data Collection

The researcher got permission from the district education officer as well as principals to ensure compliance with moral standards. The data was collected from male teachers directly and from female teachers indirectly, keeping in mind local traditions.

Data Analysis

After collecting teachers' perspectives through a survey questionnaire, the data were organized and analyzed through SPSS.22. Mean and standard deviation was used as descriptive statistics to describe teachers' perspectives.

Table 1. Anne Joe (1999) Scale Range was Utilized to Make the Decision.

Range	Values	Options
5.00	5	Very high extent
4.00-4.99	4	High extent
3.00-3.99	3	Moderate extent
2.00-2.99	2	Low extent
1.00-1.99	1	Very low extent

Table 2. Group Discussion

S.No	Items	M	SD
1	Students' speaking skills in English increase when they participate in group discussions.	4.07	0.82
2	Students' participation in group discussions increases their ability to speak English well.	4.03	0.78
3	Students gain confidence in their English language speaking skills as a result of group discussions.	3.92	0.73
4	Students can participate in speaking activities as part of a group discussion.	4.07	0.77
5	Students acquire language that will be used during group discussions in a situation that will help them improve their speaking skills.	4.01	0.79
	Overall Mean	4.03	0.41

Table 2 points out the perspectives of teachers regarding group discussion. The mean value is 4.03 and the SD value is 0.41 and falls in the range (4.00-4.99) which means that group

discussion improves the students' speaking skills to a great extent according to the perspectives of teachers.

Table 3. Classroom Interaction

S. No	Items	M	SD
1	When students engage in face-to-face discussion, classroom interaction encourages them to use proper language.	3.65	0.72
2	Classroom interaction is an efficient approach to developing pupils' speaking skills.	3.64	0.79
3	During class interaction, students are required to put their communicative skills to the test.	3.65	0.89
4	When students communicate with their classmates and teachers, they gain confidence in speaking.	3.71	0.82
5	Classroom interaction encourages students to apply their English in real-life situations and improves their speaking abilities.	3.70	0.88
	Overall Mean	3.68	0.44

Table 3 points out the perspectives of teachers regarding group discussion. The mean value is 3.68 and the SD value is 0.44, which falls in the

range of (3.00-3.99). It means that classroom interaction improves students' English speaking skills to a moderate extent

Table 4. Group Discussion

S. No	Facets	M	SD
1	Group Discussion	4.03	0.41
2	Classroom Interaction	3.68	0.44
	Overall Mean	3.92	0.25

Table 4 illustrates the perspectives of teachers on (group discussion and classroom interaction), with a mean score of 3.92 and a standard deviation of 0.25. The mean score ranges between 3.00 and 3.99, indicating that both group discussion and classroom interaction improve students' speaking skills to a moderate extent in English.

secondary school students' English speaking skills to a moderate extent.

Discussion

The key objectives of the present paper were to find out the perspectives of teachers regarding improving students' speaking skills in English through group discussion as well as classroom interaction at the secondary school level. In this section, the results are discussed according to the research questions and objectives. This study is different from other studies due to its different methodology. As most of the previous studies are observational and experimental conducted on the topic but the present study is a type of survey and, for the first time, conducted in district Bannu. Moreover, the researcher developed a self-developed research instrument, validated by research experts and

Results

1. Teachers who are teaching English to secondary school students as a subject is of the opinion that group discussion improves English speaking skills to a great extent.
2. English teachers perceived that classroom interaction improves

added a new instrument to the literature. Moreover, most of the research on the topic of improving the students' speaking skills has applied a single technique and the present study combined two techniques e.g., group discussion and classroom interaction. So, the study enhances the current literature by adding knowledge for stakeholders on the subject and provides guidelines as well.

What are the perspectives of teachers regarding improving students' speaking skills in English through group discussion was the first research question? To answer this question, the findings showed that group discussion improves the speaking skills of students in the English language to a great extent. Serena (2015) determined from the data interpretation of the experimental and control groups the effectiveness of group discussion in improving the speaking skills of students and considered it highly effective. So the findings of the study are consistent with her study.

In response to the second question, the study revealed that students speaking skills in English are moderately improved through classroom interaction. The findings are consistent with Taghilou (2019), who concluded that teachers, as well as learners, agree that classroom interaction, willingness to communicate and risk-taking capacity to initiate are highly effective in improving the speaking skills of students. The current findings are partially in agreement with those of the previous study. The results of both classroom interaction and group discussion revealed that the former is used less for improving students speaking skills in English than the latter.

Conclusions

The teachers were of the opinion that group discussion and classroom interaction improve students' speaking skills in English, and teachers used group discussion to great extent and classroom interaction to a moderate extent in their classrooms.

Recommendations

1. It was noticed that group discussion improves students' English speaking skills to a high degree and classroom interaction to a moderate degree. As a result, it is suggested that teachers concentrate more on implementing classroom interaction in their classrooms. English teachers should involve students in activities such as group activity, pair work, practical exercises, role-playing, debates, and dramas, to provide opportunities for students to speak.
2. Secondary school level teachers should be frequently given chances of training during their service regarding English teaching. DPD (Directorate of professional development) should also initiate continuing professional development (CPD) programs for teachers teaching English at a secondary level, just like at the primary level.
3. Formal assessment of speaking skills in English may be conducted, which does not presently exist.
4. In different parts of Pakistan, more research at different levels should be conducted, such as observational, experimental, qualitative, and quantitative, for the verification of the present result.

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