



Exploring The Impact Of Classroom Activities On The Speaking Skills Of Pakistani ESL Introvert Learners

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to explore the impact of classroom activities on the speaking skills of Pakistani ESL introvert female learners. Teaching of English language in an ESL classroom has always been challenging for the non-native English language teachers and the presence of introvert female learners further magnifies this situation. The study was conducted on the ninth class female ESL learners of government girls high school located in Pakpattan Sahrif, Pakistan. Purposive sampling technique was used to select learners who had rating score of seventy percent or above on the Eys enck personality test administered under the supervision of an experienced clinical psychologist. The sample of the study comprised twenty ESL learners. One group pretest and posttest research design was used for the present study. The data was collected through English speaking tests and interviews. Quantitative data was analysed through SPSS by using descriptive statistics and paired sample t test while the qualitative data was analysed through thematic analysis. The results of the study indicate that classroom activities had positive effects on the introvert ESL female learners' speaking skills as well as increased their motivation towards learning English language. The findings also revealed that the classroom activities provided the learners with an interactive, independent and flexible language learning environment.

Keywords: English language learning, English as second language, speaking skill, classroom activities

Introduction

In an English language classroom, two styles of personality can be generally seen: extroverts and introverts where the former are more confident and expressive while the latter are less confident and shy (Hakim, 2015). Although both extroverts and introverts receive the same instruction from the same teacher, there can be seen significant differences in their English language performance in general and speaking skill in particular. According to Rahmawati and Nurmayasari (2014), the personality traits of the introverts have major impact on learning a second language because introvert learners interact with hesitation, can't talk fluently, can't work better in groups and cannot communicate in second language easily (Emirza & Sahril, 2021). Learning to speak English requires a lot of practice, motivation and attention especially in non-native settings (Pitura, 2021), as the situation gets worsened with the presence of introvert learners in an English language classroom.

English holds the pivotal place in the economic uplift of the developing countries like Pakistan. It has been observed that most of the ESL learners are unable to speak English language appropriately after matriculation (Abadi, 2015); even the high achievers are even unable to express themselves orally in English language (Sarwar et al., 2014). In the non-native settings, the primary motive of learning English language is to enable the ESL learners to use English language for communication in every day settings (Riazi, Shi & Haggerty, 2018), as the performance in English language for communicative purposes is highly desirable at all academic levels (Wongsa & Son, 2020). The basic reason behind poor speaking skills of the ESL learners may stem from the low or no emphasis on speaking skills; English language teacher's limited English proficiency as well as unavailability of audio visual facilities in classroom (Bashir, Azeem & Dogar, 2011). Out of the wide range of classroom activities, role play and drama-based activities have always remained significant among teachers to develop ESL learners' speaking skills and improve their motivation to learn the English as second language (Hulse & Owens, 2017). Therefore, English as second language teachers need to devise certain activities to make the class more engaging and lively, as there is not even a single assessment related to speaking skills in national examinations.

Motivation, the driving force that helps an individual learner achieve his or her goals, plays a fundamental role in learning a second language and can affect the learning process positively or negatively (Ahmad, Akram & Ali, 2021). Highly motivated learners toward learning a second language learn the second language easier than those who are less motivated (Lin & Chen, 2017). In a study, Do and Nguyen (2017) found that the use of drama-based activities had significantly improved the speaking skills of Vietnamese EFL learners and they had increased motivation towards learning the second language through implementation of activities in the class. Therefore, it is important that teachers create and provide

appropriate and supportive learning environments where learners can improve their motivation. Lamsaard and Kerdpol (2015) used drama-based activities to improve English communicative speaking skills of Grade 11 learners and the findings revealed that the learners' motivation was highly positive. In another study, Chang (2010) found that group activities improved learners' motivation. According to Tuan and Mai (2015), the psychological problems (fearful of committing mistakes, anxiety, pressure of peers and lack of confidence) have a negative impact on the speaking presentation of the ESL learners and these problems get doubled for introvert learners which ultimately results in the failure to speak effectively (Ariyanti, 2016)..

Drama-based activities, including drama games, dialogues and role play, use active approaches to engage learners in active learning process (Göksel, 2020). These activities have the potential to enhance the speaking abilities of learners, improve their motivation (Man, Chau & Kong, 2020) and enhance their verbal communication skills (Mc Martin-Miller, 2014). Teachers should use such activities which aim to enhance the learning skills of the target language in a specific context (Guryay, 2016). According to Efrizal (2012), a speaking test can be a source of first step towards success, as there are many classroom strategies and techniques that can be used to test the speaking ability.

In the Pakistani educational scenario, English language learners often undergo stress, nervousness and anxiety during the speaking sessions (Fareed, Jawed & Awan, 2018), as the classrooms are not conducive for English language speaking (Channa, 2015). The syntax of Urdu and Punjabi being opposite to English (Gulzar et al., 2018), lack of vocabulary knowledge and inability to recall pertinent words often aggravate the factors affecting speaking skills of learners (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016). The problem exists among all learners but this situation becomes more chaotic in the presence of introvert learners. These introvert learners remain ignored especially in the public sector schools and as a result, they are wasted, their abilities are compelled to be dormant which often results in underperformance in the academic achievement tests (Bashir, Aleem, Parveen & Anjum, 2021). Several researches in Pakistan have been conducted to investigate problems of Pakistani ESL Learners in speaking skills and concluded that the learners face a lot of psychological, linguistic, and social problems while speaking English language (Ahmad, Pathan & Khan, 2017; Ali, Khizar, Yaqub, Afzaal & Shahid, 2020). In their study, Hussain and Ghani (2016) explored the impact of computer applications on the speaking skills of ESL learners and the findings revealed that there was a significant impact on the English language speaking performance of the learners. There are many activities that can promote speaking English language. According to Kayi (2006), the activities used for the introvert learners to promote speaking are named as discussion, role-play,

simulations, information gap, brainstorming, storytelling, interviews, story completion, reporting, playing cards, picture description.

Research Questions

1. What is the impact of classroom activities on the speaking skills of Pakistani ESL introvert ESL learners?
2. What are the experiences of Pakistani Introvert ESL learners towards learning English language through classroom activities?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Design

Theoretical framework for the present study employed active learning theory which provides learners the opportunities of active participation in learning activities and boosts learners' decision making skills in classrooms. The study adopted a mixed methods approach to collect both quantitative data and qualitative data (Creswell & Plano, 2007). Data collected from speaking tests and interviews provided insights into the participants' English speaking skills and motivation towards ESL learning. Both the pretest and posttest included a paragraph to speak on which was gauged on four parameters: content, pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. The selection of the paragraph was approved by a panel of experienced ESL teachers. One group pre-post experimental research design was employed for the present study. The classroom activities used in the study included role play, picture description, story completion and peer group discussion. The intervention lasted for six weeks where the learners were exposed to classroom activities for forty minutes a day for six days a week.

Participants

A sample comprised 20 learners participated in the present study. The learners were from ninth Grade at a mainstream high school in Pakpattan Sharif, Pakistan with an average of 14 years old. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the learners.

Research Procedure

Before the start of the treatment session, classroom activities were developed by in collaboration with ESL teachers at the school. The pretest and posttest comprised the five minute speaking task where the learners had to describe themselves in detail and the score of every learner was gauged through analytic rubric where the content, pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar were the primary constituents of the rubric. The classroom activities were selected from

the chapters of the textbook of the learners where they had to practice the dialogues. In order to know about the motivation of the introvert learners for enhancing speaking skills through classroom activities, three focus group discussions were conducted where each discussion session took around 25–30 min. The American Psychological Association (APA) code of ethics was followed during the course of the current study.

Data Analysis

The learners' pre-treatment and post-treatment scores on the speaking tests were compared in order to examine the effects of the different teaching methods on the learners' speaking skills. As far as the metalinguistic cues are concerned, the parameters of assessment of the learners included: (1) will to communicate; (2) confidence in communication; (3) eye contact; (4) facial expressions and (5) gestures. Mean score of metalinguistic and analytical rubric scores were combined to create an overall communicative competency score. Before and after the intervention, all the 20 (N = 20) learners appeared in pretest and posttest. At the post-treatment stage, there were significant differences between the scores of the learners on the speaking test as shown in table 1 and table 2 respectively.

Table 1: Pretest and posttest Scores

	N	Mean	SD
Pretest	20	10.70	1.89
Posttest	20	14.95	0.67

Table 2: Paired Sample t test

Pair		Paired Differences					T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
1	PRE - POST	4.25	-1.22	.60	-9.06	-6.53	12.88	19	.000

Motivation

The findings of the focus group discussion revealed that most of the learners appreciated the usefulness of the activities for the enhancement of speaking skills as well as an increase in their motivation. The learners were relaxed and comfortable in speaking English with their friends and teachers after participating in the activities, as most of them had reported an improvement in their fluency in English conversations during the classes. Following are the excerpts from the responses of the learners.

“This class helped me speak more fluently because I had a feel of relaxation and less pressure. I think it reduced my stress during my studies”. (Learner 1)

“Using activities in learning the English language help me build confidence in my speaking skills because I am able to use more English conversations in the English language classroom”. (Learner 5)

“English is a very difficult subject. I don’t know how to express my idea but the drama-based activities provide me with activities through which I can improve my English speaking skills”. (Learner 7)

Learning the English language through activities made me feel that English is not stressful rather the learning experience can be enjoyable, as the learners reported that speaking English was not difficult and they were able to achieve their learning goals.

“I feel relaxed when I perform in my group with friends. I enjoy working with friends, so I think it is a good idea that we have more time to do activities together while we are in the classroom”. (Learner 9)

Discussion

The significant language gains of the experimental group on the speaking test scores support the view that the activities which involved preparing, rehearsing and presenting dialogues were the major inputs for enhancing the learners’ speaking skills. Presenting before the classmates boosted up the confidence and motivation of the learners for collaboration on projects even outside the classroom. There seem several reasons for their improvement. First, background knowledge with regard to word choices, grammar and expressions could be an obstacle for learners with lower language proficiency in general and introverts in particular, as they usually remained passive and were reluctant to talk and participate in communicative language activities. Third, the change in teaching methodology resulted in the level of interest in the subject matter. These results are consistent with the findings of Mills (2011) who reported that, after participating in class through activities, participants’ communication skills were improved. The results of the interviews indicate that all the learners showed more motivation to learn and were more willing to participate in the learning

activities. They were more confident when they performed or presented their work through the activities and could use English comfortably in general conversations with their friends and teachers. These findings are in line with the findings of the study conducted by Thorne, Black and Sykes (2009) who claimed that social networking encourages learner motivation and engagement. When the learners participated in the learning environment, they exchanged information and discussed the given topics before their class fellows. After learning through the activities, the learners' fear of embarrassment and loss of face decreased because the learning environment was more enjoyable. The learners were also able to perform better in nonverbal communication skills (e.g. making eye contact, using facial expressions, using appropriate gestures).

Conclusion

The study found that the use of classroom activities could enhance the speaking skills of Pakistani ESL introvert learners. The classroom learning environment provided the learners with interactive opportunities and encouraged the learners to work collaboratively with their peers for language practice. There can be several reasons behind the poor performance of the ESL introvert learners: unidentified personality types of learners in ESL classrooms, teachers' low or no knowledge of personality types and their specific requirements, limited focus on speaking skills in everyday classroom environment and no focus on speaking skills in the final assessment. Before the intervention, a few learners had the limited vocabulary which was a major contributory factor in the speaking performance of the learners. During the intervention session, every possible attempt was made to accommodate the weak areas of the learners and as a result there can be seen a remarked improvement in the speaking skills' performance of Pakistani introvert ESL learners. The findings revealed that the learners not only enjoyed the intervention but also made them confident which will be helpful in future to accomplish language related tasks in general and academic settings because adapting/using new vocabulary, speaking in a correct and confident way, and usage of grammatically correct sentences is the desire of every ESL learner in general and introvert learner in particular.

The present study aimed to gauge the impact of classroom activities on the speaking performance of Pakistani ESL learners. The findings revealed that the classroom activities had the potential to improve the speaking performance of the learners. The findings may reveal the contributory reasons of learners' low performance in English speaking skills which may be due to English language teachers' poor knowledge/interest in speaking skills, lack of knowledge of introvert personality types, low emphasis on learners' speaking skills in curriculum, low or no assessment of speaking skills in the formal examination. in such an ESL classroom, the presence of introvert ESL learners is not less than a

challenge for the classroom teacher who are reluctant to use any new and innovative activities that could be helpful in making them confident speaker. Therefore, it is time to empower Pakistani English language teachers with the latest classroom approaches so that they may engage learners by using different classroom activities like picture description and storytelling. Presence of overcrowded classrooms is not less than a bigger challenge for the teachers. Learning a second language has never been an easy task in non-native settings. Our teachers need to strap up the incredible learning capabilities of introvert learners.

The ability to speak English fluently is not only the manifestation of knowledge of language but also the capability to process information on the spot. Although performance in English language speaking is very beneficial, the introvert ESL learners were not geared up due to the teachers' inappropriate understanding and limited knowledge of the specific learning needs of Pakistani introvert ESL learners. As a result, these introvert learners had to endure psychological pressure of teachers and fellows. The limited knowledge of English vocabulary and grammar of introvert ESL learners made them shy and hesitant which leads to difficulties in listening and comprehending English language.

There is a lack of standard classroom activities which could have been very helpful in enhancing the learning experience of introvert learners. It is quite obvious that the effect of different classroom activities on the development of introvert learners learning speaking skill. These classroom activities can improve student's fervor and enthusiasm. In the teaching and language learning session, a teacher must be capable to select a proper classroom activity, such activity that can involve the introvert learners to join actively in the classroom activity, it will not also sustains the learners' enthusiasm, but also they enjoy the learning process. Every activity and technique has its own power and function so it is demanded from the teacher that he has to remember every activity that is used in the classroom. Generally, a teacher should be creative enough to select the activity for the introvert learners and to make learners feel relax and join actively in the classroom activities, so the learners will be eager enough during the classroom activities. It is very important for English language teachers to about the psychological impact of the different kinds of activities on the learning performance of the introvert learners. Therefore, it is very important for the modern English language teachers to be fully aware of the potential of the classroom activities accompanied with loving and favorable learning circumstances to improve the speaking performance of Pakistani ESL introvert learners. They should give opportunities to the introvert learners to practice English learning speaking through different types of classroom activities. It is a fact that well designed speaking lesson encourages the introvert learners, so the teachers must design and plan such classroom activities that may motivate the

introvert learners. Therefore the teachers should their active role in the guidance, supervision and facilitation of the introvert learners' English speaking. They just need to provide few pronunciation points during the activity to help building their fluency. It is also recommended that the teachers should assume a dynamic, not static. Furthermore the English language teacher should not scold the introvert learner, as the learner is unable to speak correct English due to his reluctance and shyness. Therefore English language teachers should design the relevant classroom activities that may trigger and evoke learners interest to participate actively in the classroom activities. The feedback and correction that the teacher may give should be fruitful, and helpful.

It was also observed that the classes were too large in size and overcrowded which makes it difficult for a teacher to have knowledge about the student's psychology especially the introvert learners. The English language classrooms are not designed to develop the speaking skills of introvert learners. Moreover, Pakistani classrooms are not equipped with modern learning aids as well as language laboratories. The teachers are very much competent but large classrooms and other hurdles hinder the way to judge the learners. During research it was observed that no teaching aids or other helping materials were seen, which were being used to aid the introvert learners' learning English speaking skills.

The learners are also expected to participate keenly and actively in the classroom speaking activities such as story completion, storytelling, picture description, peer group discussion and so on so forth. In addition to this, they are also recommended that they must interact with people around outside the classrooms settings as well. The learners should use English language in real life communication on regular basis. A language laboratory must be established in the school to provide the introvert learners the chance to use the English language for expressing their thoughts and feelings.

Positive selection of sources play vital role in developing introvert learners English speaking skills. It is highly recommended that the teachers should have to select and use apt teaching aids that may endorse the speaking skills. Thus they should use different classroom activities to aid the introvert learners learning English speaking skills. The English language teachers should use the existing materials to support the introvert learners so that they may learn without any stress and use English language in daily communication as much as possible. The teachers should be fully aware of the specific English language learning skills of introvert learners. On the other hand, the learners should be clearly informed that they need to be very careful about their learning which will lead them to a prosperous future. Moreover, the learning environment must be supportive which is possible only with the availability of audio visual aids in English language classrooms.

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