Developing English Discourse Skills: An Exploratory Survey of Communicative Competence of Pakistani Learners of English

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Abstract: Discourse insights link language with real life and society. This ultimate connection has been underlined by some experts of language teaching who prefer comprehensive development of communicative competence. In this background, through an exploratory survey, this study tries to assess the communicative and discourse skills of Pakistani learners of English. Itdiscusses the importance of imparting discourse skills to Pakistani learners of English which can help them process and produce English discourses effectively. Theoretically based on distinction between atomistic approach and holistic approach in English teaching, the study stressesthe need to use a holistic approach for comprehensive development of English discourse skills among Pakistani learners. The study concluded that by learning discourse skills, students can learn better to integrate the communicative skills needed for effective communication.

Keywords: language, communicative competence, Pakistani learners of English

I.   INTRODUCTION:

The current government of Pakistan is trying to introduce unprecedented changes in education all over the country under the slogan 'one nation, one curriculum' (Abbasi. K. (December 15, 2020). Orientations and consultations are being held at school, college and university levels to promote single national curriculum. It seems that the new policy may require ELT practitioners to rethink their practices. It has been observed that in Pakistan new governments introduce new policies to improve the quality of education in the country. For instance, 2011 was celebrated as a 'Year of Education' in Pakistan. This announcement was part of efforts made by the then government to transform education in Pakistan. According to a news report published in those days, Pakistan suffered from 'an education emergency that threatens tens of millions of children'. The report stressed that 'It's time to think again about Pakistan's most pressing long-term challenge'. (Education Emergency Pakistan 9th March, 2011). Certainly, we need to rethink our education system if we want to bring in an educational transformation .Being teachers of English; we have to play our roles in this transformation. Dar (February 11, 2013), is of the view that Pakistan lags behind other countries in English competence. He argues that 'among those in Pakistan who claim to be proficient in English, only one in 10 is actually good in written and spoken English, the remaining 90% cannot speak more than a sentence or two of correct English'. (para 1). Thus, We have to rethink our ELT methods and approaches currently used by us.

Pakistan is a multilingual country where several languages are spoken. In Pakistan English enjoys the status of second-cum-foreign language. It is a language of wider communication. English is the medium of instruction in higher education in Pakistan. But, despite studying English for years, most of the students seem to have underdeveloped communicative competence.Before we further go into the study, let us discuss the term 'communicative competence'.

What is communicative Competence?
Competence means specific ability and 'communicative competence' means ability to communicate well. Ability to communicate well implies knowledge of language and skill in using that knowledge. The term 'communicative competence' was coined by Dell Hymes in 1972. Hymes observes that 'competence is dependent upon both (tacit) knowledge and (ability for) use' (as cited in Pachler, 2005, p.24). O' Grady (1996) defined it as 'a speaker's underlying knowledge of the linguistic system and the norms for the appropriate socio-cultural use of language in particular speech situations' (as cited in Renner 2008, p.7). Thus, in order to develop communicative competence, learners need to go beyond knowing about forms of a

language. They have to develop communicative skills as well. Renner (2008) distinguishes 'four areas of communicative competence: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence' (p.7).In the light of this observation, then, in order to have communicative competence in a language, a learner needs to be good in these four areas of communicative competence. Discourse skills are part of communicative competence and this is precisely what this study focuses on--- the need to develop discourse skills among Pakistani learners of English. We shall come to discourse skills later. First of all, let us look at the observations of ELT researchers about the communicative competence of Pakistani learners of English.

Communicative Competence of Pakistani leaners of English

When we survey the observations of ELT researchers about the communicative competence of Pakistani learners, we come to know that there is lot to be done in ELT in Pakistan. Warsi (2004) argues that 'it is a fact that despite studying English in schools and colleges for about 6-8 years, students, especially coming from rural backgrounds, are not able to communicate in English with relative ease and success'(p.1).Thus, the desired objective of ELT in Pakistan is the development of communicative competence among learners. He emphasizes that teachers should use a method in which 'language is learned through social interaction' (p.5).His emphasis on learning English through 'social interaction' is significant. In other words, the prescribed cure seems to point towards the development of discourse skills. Warsi's observation seems to carry weight becausethere are educational settings in Pakistan where English is learned through grammar translation method and rote learning. In such educational settings, processing and producing English language discourses becomes difficult for the students. Students prepare for exams by cramming important questions from key books because the exams don't require much analytical work. Ahmed (April 6, 2012) mentions the observation of an owner of a bookstore who reported that two of the most demanded books are the five years old question papers and guess papers. He said that he had sold around 200 copies of solved exam papers that cost between 90-120. He further explained that student usually do not buy reference books (p. 6).

In a situation where students focus their efforts on cramming 'the five-year solved papers', analytical and discourse skills are likely to remain underdeveloped in case of most of the students. Cook (1990) explains that 'traditionally language teaching has centered on pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary and while these remain the basis of foreign language knowledge, discourse analysis can draw attention to the skills needed to put this knowledge into action and to achieve successful communication' (Intro). Thus, discourse analysis is relevant to the teaching and learning of languages. There are sociolinguistic studies on discourse analysis done by Pakistani researchers. For instance, Hussain, Hammad-ur-Rahman and Naveed (2012) have talked about the discourse of the 21st century peace protests. Then, there are a number of theses that have been written on the discourse analysis of the speeches of political leaders in Pakistan. But there seems to be few studies in Pakistan that look at the use of discourse analysis as a way of enhancing the communicative competence of Pakistani learners of English.

Our students seem to lack discourseskills. An instance of the students underdeveloped discourse skills is a study conducted among M.A. English students in the Punjab by Hussain (2012). In the study, the students were asked about how they processed English discourse in the form of English language newspapers and English language TVprogrammes of English language TV channels. The study shows that '66% of the students use the strategy of mental translation in processing the aural input of English language' and '60% of the students use the strategy of mental translation in processing their reading input in English language'. The study shows that '80% of the students regard the strategy of mental translation as a helpful strategy' (pp.133-134). Some researchers have argued about the usefulness of mental translation strategy. Butthere are other researchers who point out that mental translation strategy may be useful at early levels of learning. Upton & Lee-Thompson (2001) argue that 'the data indicate, furthermore, that reliance on the L1 declines as proficiency in the L2 increases' (p.48). In addition, Abutalebi,Cappa&Pareni (2005) show in their neuroimaging study that low proficiency in foreign language causes greater burden on mind. Thus, Pakistani learners' use of the strategy of mental translation in processing the written and spoken discourses of English newspapers and English language TV programmes shows that Pakistani learners seem to face problems in processing English language discourses. As we have already mentioned, there appear to be few studies conducted exclusively on English language discourse skills of Pakistani learners.

One way of looking at the English discourse skills of Pakistani students is to look at the expressive skills of Pakistani students. Pakistani students may be good at writing skills because of the examination system, the writing exercises given as class work and homework appear to enhance students' formal writing skills.

However, spoken skills of Pakistani students seem to have problems. Pakistani students don't have to use their speaking skills outside the classroom in day-to-day real-life situations. Job interviews, academic presentations and English language classrooms are some of the exceptions in this respect. Consequently, the English language speaking skills of Pakistani students appear to remain underdeveloped. This deficiency in spoken English has given a boost to businesses based on the teaching of spoken English in Pakistan.

Spoken English courses may be seen as solutions to the problem of English language discourse skills of the students. But, they too have their own limitations. Institutes offering spoken English courses are mushrooming in Pakistan. We see ads of these courses in newspapers and on various business sites on the Internet, as the following collage shows:

Figure: 1

A collage of ads (collected from various sources) of spoken English courses

The thriving market for these spoken courses appears to point towards the underdeveloped discourse skills of Pakistani students who learn English for years at schools, colleges and universities. This is why these courses offer an opportunity for the students to develop their discourse processing and discourse producing skills by offering them spoken English courses. But in these courses too we cannot say that it is the discourse skills which are the main focus. Even these courses seem to fail to help the students achieve English discourse skills. A recent news report shows the poor discourse skills of Pakistani students who appear to have gone through these courses. The report talks about a pilot study conducted among the students going to the UK for educational purposes. Watt (February 13 April, 2012) of the Guardian reports that 'the pilot study, which was carried out by the UK Border Agency, suggests that 40% of applicants for student visas from Pakistan are likely to prove ineligible for the document. The main reason will be their inability to speak English' (para. 5).These are the students who usually take spoken English courses to meet study-visa requirements. Thus, this report reveals that even students who have done IELTS in Pakistan may have discourse problems with regard to English language. These spoken courses seem to do little to improve the discourse skills of the students. Instructors make the learners repeat and learn certain expressions which the learners can use while talking on telephone, greeting people, giving directions, giving opinions, giving advice, agreeing and disagreeing and the like. But, here too the language is controlled in the form of sets of expressions compiled in the form of hand-outs for the students. The students can practice these expressions in the spoken classes in the form of role play. But, as we shall see in the pages to come, developing spoken skills does not mean developing discourse skills. The word 'discourse', according to the definitions given by researchers in the field of discourse analysis, refers to language used in real life and not to certain sets of language expressions

repeated and learnt in the classrooms. The phrase 'real life' is important in the definition of discourse. Let us discuss what discourse and discourse skills mean.

What are Discourse Skills?

Discourse skills are the skills that help language learners produce and process a discourse or discourses. In order to understand the concept of discourse skills, we have to understand the concept of 'discourse'. Spencer (2006) explains that 'discourse is much more than just language' (p.100). Spencer's observation refers to the role of context in discourse. This is precisely what Paltridge (2006) means when he argues that discourse analysis 'looks at patterns of language across texts and considers the relationship between language and the social and cultural contexts in which it is used' (p.2). Yule (2010) talks about two types of contexts: 'co-text' (textual context of words, phrases and sentences) and 'physical context' (situations in real world). When we process and produce discourses, we have to deal with both types of contexts. Cook (1990) defines discourse as 'language in use, for communication' (p.6). 'Language in use, for communication' is different from language used for pedagogical purposes. Thus, developing discourse skills includes dealing with co-text, context, mistakes, linguistic deviations, pronunciation variations and corruptions that occur in everyday life when we interact with educated and uneducated people. Cook (1990) further argues that 'discourse treats the rules of grammar as a resource, conforming to them when it needs to, but departing from them when it does not. It sometimes does the same with conventional meanings too' (p.7). Developing discourse skills also includes dealing with how words change their meanings from context to context. Thus, discourse is different from the formal language that learners learn in a formal setting. Cook calls formal language 'abstracted' and 'artificially constructed' language. The formal language contrasts with the language used in real life communication which is not 'artificially constructed' (p.6). In the light of these definitions, we may say that discourse skills are the skills that help learners deal with 'language in use for communication'. This 'language in use for communication' poses certain challenges for English language learners. Processing a discourse in real life may involve skills which students did not develop in formal educational setting.

The Challenges of Real-Life Communication and Language Teaching Approaches

What is real-life communication like? What challenges does it pose for the learners when he or she has to deal with it in real life? How is real life communication in English different from English communication we learn in our classroom? It is important to get answers of these questions before we move further in this study. Cook (1990) explains that communication occurs as a whole in real life while we study communication in parts in our classrooms. He argues that 'communication is so complex an interaction of mind, language and the physical world that it can be disconcerting to try to deal with it at once. Yet we should not forget that communication does involve handling everything together, usually at a high speed, and this is what a successful language student must eventually be able to do' (p.83). What are the things that a learner has to handle in real life? In order to further explain the concept of dealing with communication as a whole, he refers to two approaches: bottom-up approach and top-down approach. The following figure explains the two approaches:
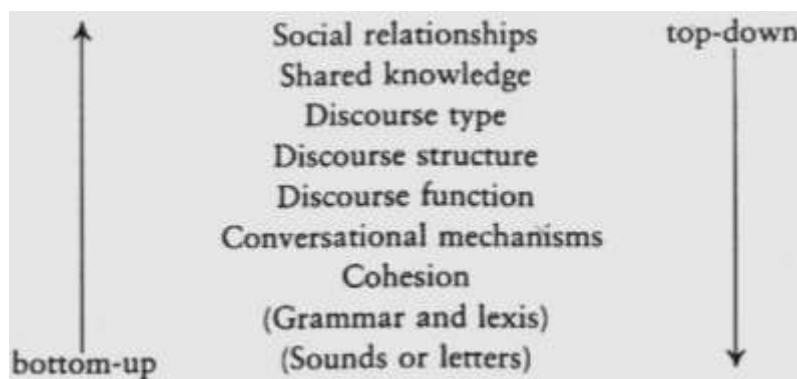
Figure: 2

Bottom-up & Top-down Approach to Language (Cook 1999, p. 80)

Cook (1990) explains that 'a top-down approach to language regards all levels of language as a whole, working together, while a bottom-up approach divides communication into discrete levels, which can be dealt

with separately'. According to Cook (1990), a language teaching approach based on the development of discourse skills among the learners follows 'top-down' approach or 'holistic' approach. On the other hand, language teaching in traditional setting follows a 'bottom-top approach. Cook (1990) argues that 'bottom-up approach may well be a very fruitful way of trying to understand what language is and how it works, but that does not mean that it is the best way to teach a language, or that it is the way we use a language when we don't know it' (p.79). According to Cook (1990), a top-down approach is a natural approach in processing a discourse.

He further argues that 'infants developing competence in their first language, experience it as a working high-speed whole, yet acquire native speaker competence without any formal instruction, apparently without effort, without any conscious formulation of rules, and without any splitting down into manageable areas (although the features of adult speech to children may provide some help)' (pp.84-85). He concludes that holistic approach is 'the best way of approaching discourse at any level of language development' (p. 86). He explains that 'some schools of linguistics have sought to understand language by isolating it from context: something which is clearly impossible when we actually use language for communication. The aims and methods of linguistics are thus quite different from those of the language student, who needs to use the language, not to understand its internal workings' (p.85). Thus, these ideas of Cook clearly make a difference between the teaching objectives of the linguists and the learning objectives of English learners. Cook (1990) laments that a good deal of language teaching has followed a bottom-up approach, in that it has considered the formal language system, often in isolated sentences, without demonstrating or developing the way that system operates in context' (p.83). Thus, it may be helpful to teach the learners structures of language but it may also be helpful to teach learners how language or the rules of language work and are violated in real communication in various situations. Imparting this awareness of discourse should be the objective of teaching and learning language. Cook (1990) argues that 'splitting communication into levels may sometimes be helpful, but those separate levels will always need to be integrated if communication is to take place' (p.83). So this point appears to be the crux of Cook's thesis that we should teach our students how to integrate separate levels of communication in real life. We need to teach them how to apply the rules of language in various contexts to process and produce discourses.

Thus, we have discussed various aspects of atomistic approach and holistic approach in language teaching. When we try to apply these two approaches to English language teaching going on in Pakistan, we come to realize that English language teaching in Pakistan appears to be based on atomistic approach. It moves from lower levels to higher levels. It takes a bottom-up approach and looks at English language communication as a combination of various discrete parts. These parts are taught separately. The students in a poor school learn English words to name certain objects and animals. So,they learn the lower levels of English communication. Taking this approach in ELT may be good at early levels. But, even at higher levels the same 'bottom-up' approach is taken. As a result of this atomistic teaching, the students may fail to integrate these parts of communication into a whole. This results in poor English discourse skills and poor English language communication skills of Pakistani students. Teaching the rules is not enough. Language skills make a large component of discourse skills but there are other skills which are required.

How Discourse Skills are Relevant to Language Learning

Discourse skills help learners deal with 'language in use for communication'. Processing and producing this language in use or discourse may involve skills that learners did not develop in formal settings. In the light of observations of researchers and ELT experts, we can say that discourse skills are relevant to foreign language learning because they include:

- Language Skills
- Knowledge of cultural appropriateness
- Skills in Conversation Analysis
- Skills in recognizing discourse types

Developing spoken skills among students is not enough. For example,a student may have spokenskills but he or she may not be able to process and produce English discourse in the target country if he is not familiar with the target culture. Skelton (2008) refers to such a situation faced by Pakistani doctors working in an English country. Talking about the communication problems, he argues that:

these problems can be considerably magnified if there are significant cultural barriers. The speakers this time is perhaps a Pakistani doctor, educated in English, who has had little exposure to western culture. This speaker's problems with 'rules of use'are much greater than those of our Spanish colleague, although their

actual competence in English may be greater. Difficulties here may therefore extend to much larger areas, such as uncertainty about how formal or informal to be with colleagues or patients and so on' (p.123).

Thus, a Spanish doctor with poor communicative competence in English may be aware of the culture norms in the USA. But, a medical student studying English in Pakistan needs to be told about the cultural aspects of communication in the target English countries. Cultural awareness forms an important component of discourse skills and similarly development other discourse skills is important for the development of communicative competence of learners. For instance, look at Conversation Analysis. Conversation is important in any language. Most of the time, as speakers and learners of languages, we have to process and produce conversations. As Clark (cited in Wong &Waring 2010) explains that 'face-to-face conversation is the cradle of language use' (p.1). Conversation has several components of communication. Cook (1990) argues that conversation 'involves the gaining, holding and the yielding of the turns, the negotiation of meaning and direction, the shifting of topic, the signaling and identification of turn type, the use of voice quality, face and body' (p. 117) Conversation analysis deals with all these and other such aspects of conversation. Thus, helping the learners develop Conversation analysis skills can really make a difference in enhancing the communicative competence of the learners. Hutchby&Wooffitt (2008) explain that 'at the most basic level, Conversation analysis is the study of talk. To put it in slightly more complex terms, it is the systematic analysis of the talk produced in everyday situations of human interaction: talk-in-interaction' (p.11). So CA is the study of how conversation is produced, interpreted and how it contains deeper sociolinguistic cognitive aspects. Teaching CA to English language learners in Pakistan can have its own benefits. Through conversation analysis, we can teach students a number of skills and sub-skills. Spoken discourse is only one type of discourse. There are other types of discourses as well. Students should have knowledge of these discourse types as well.

Discourses have types and subtypes. Each discourse may have its own parts. Students should know how they can recognize a discourse type. Cook (1990) gives out important features which can help students and learners identify a discourse type. These considerations are: 'sender / receiver, function, situation, physical form, title, overt introduction, pre-sequence, internal structure, cohesion, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation [and] graphology' (p.99). These features can help learners identify a discourse type. In addition, according to Cook, students should also be able to change one discourse type into another: changing spoken discourse into a written discourse. These discourse transfer skills increase the production and processing of discourses.

Rethinking Classroom Interaction to Develop Discoursal Skills

Traditional language teaching interaction in the class is teacher-centered. Cook (1990) observes that in traditional language teaching setting, the interaction is not dynamic. He argues:

traditionallythe student enters into only two kinds of relationship: passive subordination to the teacher, and egalitarian camaraderie with fellow students. If we wish our students to become competent in discourse, we will need to involve them in communication with a variety of interlocutors in different relationships to them, through a variety of discourse types, with a variety of functions, in both speech and writing and process and production, to deal with these elements in discourse, in different combinations—and with rapid changes too (p.134).

Cook gives the following figure to explain the multi-dimension interaction that is needed to promote discourse skills among the students.
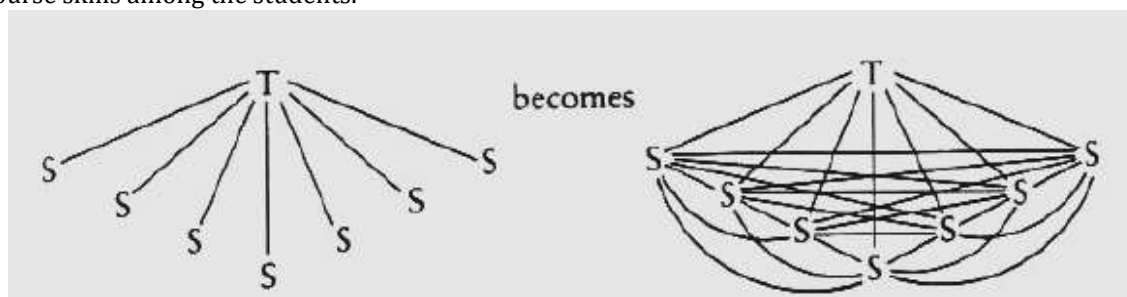

Figure 3

Classroom Interaction: from traditional to multi-dimensional model

Thus, these two types of classroom interaction show a difference of relationship between the teacher and the taught. Traditional teaching involves only teacher student interaction but interactive and multi-dimensional model engages interaction among students as well.Cook's thesis is that as a result of this multi-dimensional model interaction, students learn a number of skillssuch as discussion, presentation, problem solving, arguing a point of view, turn-taking and reaching a consensus.

Thus, creative activities based on discourse skills can make a great difference in the development of communicative competence of the learners. There is a need that we should promote these activities in our classrooms.

We have come a long way in our discussion of communicative competence and how discourse skills form an important component of communicative competence. We have looked at the observations of the ELT researchers about the communicative competence of Pakistani learners of English. In order to have first-hand knowledge about the problem of underdeveloped communicative competence of Pakistani learners of English, we conducted a survey among university students in the Southern Punjab.

An Exploratory Survey about Communicative Competence of Pakistani Learners of English

A questionnaire was made for the said survey. In the questionnaire, the researchers asked the students close-ended and open-ended questions. A Pilot Study was conducted among 25 LLB students studying at BahaudinZakariya University Multan. The responses of the LLB students were analyzed and in order to make the questionnaire more appropriate to the investigation, revisions were made in the questionnaire. After the revisions, the researchers took permission of the concerned authorities and on the basis of random sampling, 160 questionnaires were administered among the students of BBA studying at the Islamia University of Bahawalpur, BahaudinZakariya University Multan and COMSATS (Vehari). When the students returned the questionnaires, the questionnaires were coded and on the basis of missing responses, 10 questionnaires were rejected. 150 questionnaires were selected for the analysis. Responses of the 150 questionnaires were entered in the SPSS software for statistical analysis. When the data entry work was over, the researchers went for frequencies of the responses. For better visual quality, SPSS graphs were changed into MS Excel graphs. The following graphs show the frequencies of the responses.

II. ANALYSIS:

The first question asked the students about how they assessed their own communicative skills, as the following graph shows:
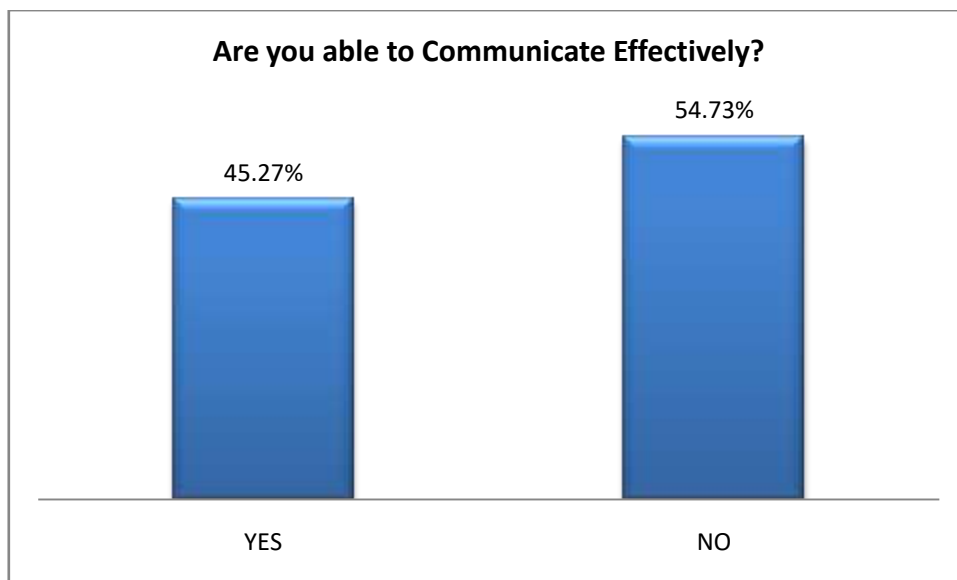

Figure :4 Learners' Assessment about their own Communicative Skills

Responses of the students show that 54.73% of the students are of the view that they are unable to communicate effectively. 45.27% of the students think that they can communicate effectively in English language. The next question asked the students about the effectiveness of spoken courses.

When the students were asked about the quality of these courses and any difference they made in their proficiency, majority of the students were of the view that they were unable to speak English fluently after attending spoken English courses, as the following graph shows:

Were you able to speak English fluently after attending the spoken English course ?
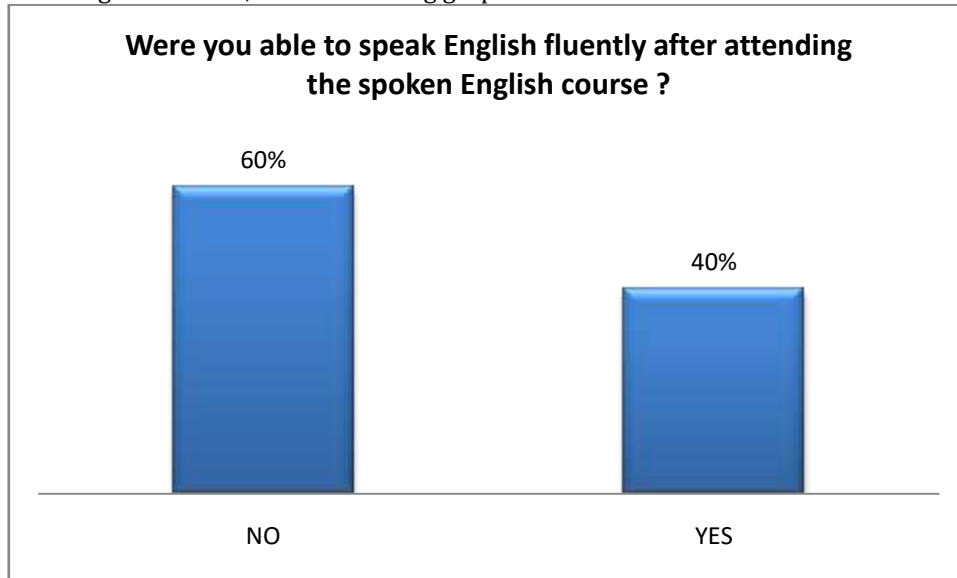
Figure : 5. Learners' views about Spoken English Courses

60% of the students are of the view that they were not able to speak English fluently after attending spoken English courses. 40% of the students are of the view that they were able to speak English fluently after attending the spoken English courses.

The next questions were about the reasons behind underdeveloped communicative skills . As we know from the discussion in this study, multi-dimensional model of classroom interaction between the teacher and the students can be effective in developing discourse skills among students. So, we asked a question to the students about the model of interaction in foreign language in their classes. Majority of the students agreed that they used English to interact only with their teacher, as the following figure shows:

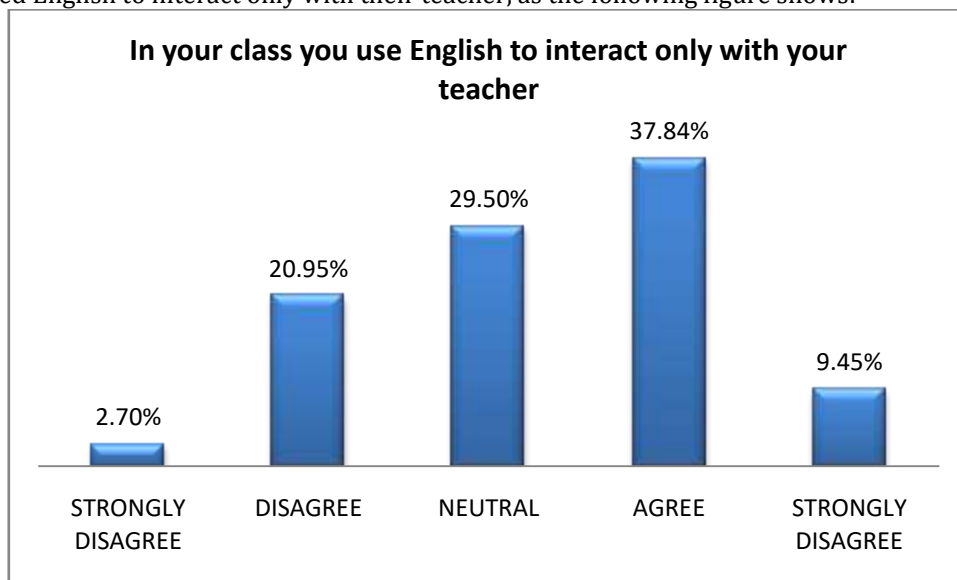**In your class you use English to interact only with your teacher**

Figure :6. Classroom Interaction in English

37.84% of the students agree with the statement of the question that they use English to interact only with their teacher. 9.45% of the students strongly agree with the statement . So, it means 47% of the students agree that they use English to interact with their teacher. 20.95% of the students disagree with this statement and 2.703 students strongly disagree with the statement. 20.95 remained neutral on this issue.

Another reason that can prove a hurdle for the students in achieving communicative proficiency is the phenomenon of mental translation. Mental translation checks the production of utterances in foreign language. We asked the students about this phenomenon. Most of the students are of the view that they first think in their mother tongue and then translate their thoughts into English, as the following figure shows:

You feel that you translate your mother tongue thoughts into English when you express yourself in English

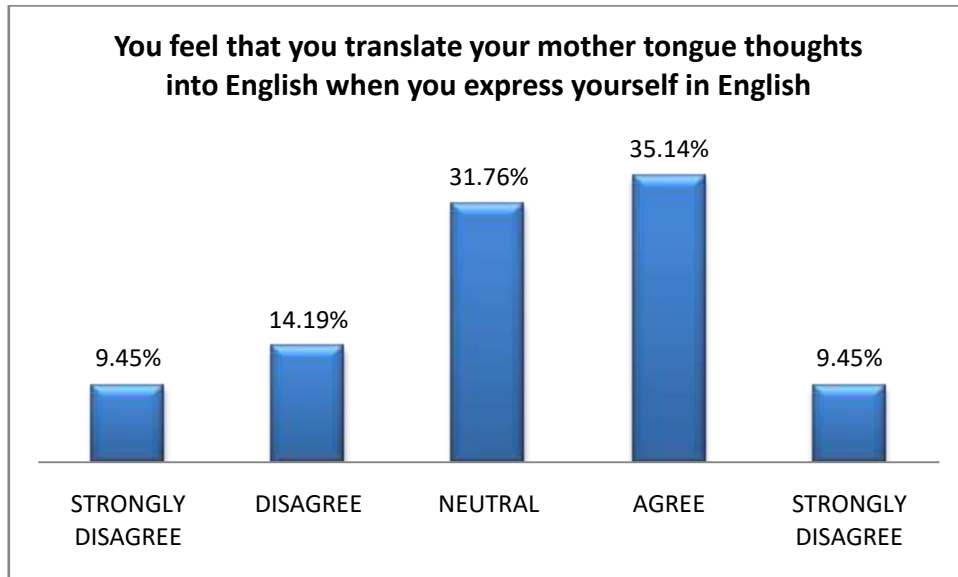| STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
9.45%	14.19%	31.76%	35.14%	9.45%

Figure: 7. The Strategy of Mental Translation

35.14% of the students agree that they translate their mother tongue thoughts into English when they want to speak and write in English. 9.45% of the students strongly agree with the statement of the question that they have their inner speech in their mother tongue and then they translate this inner speech into English when they are speaking and writing in English, as the following words of a particpant show:

Around 23% of the students disagree with the statement of the question and 31.76% of the students are neutral about the statement of the question. One factor that seems to foster this tendency of mental translation in the production of foreign language utterances is the use of bilingual dictioanries. The next question asked the students about the dictionaries they use.

Which dictionary do you mostly use ?

45.95%   47.97%   6.08%

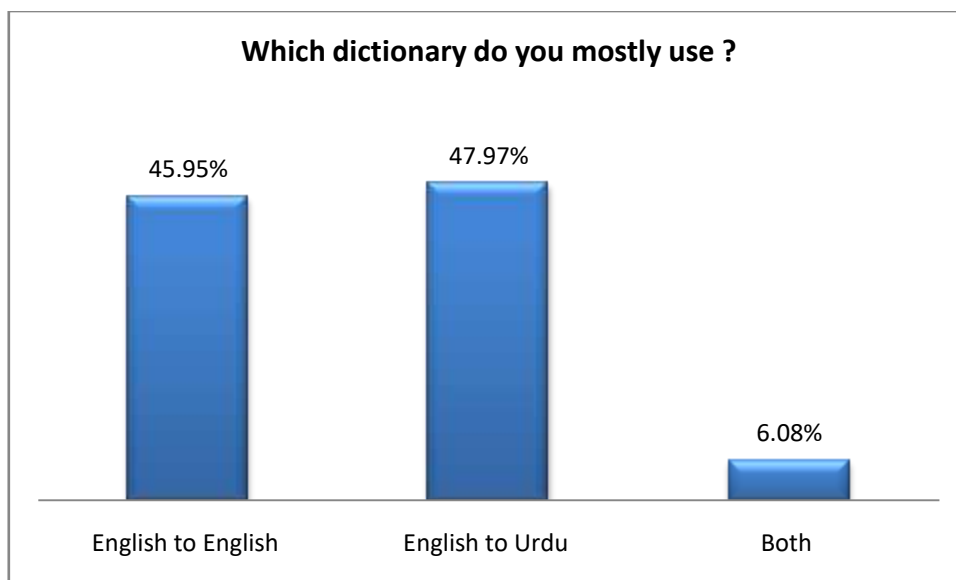English to English   English to Urdu   Both

Figure: 8. Use of Monolingual and Bilingual Dictionaries

47.97% of the students use bilingual dictionaries. 45.95% of the students use English to English dictionaries. 6.08% use both types of dictionaries. This tendency to use English to Urdu dictionary seems to show that students find it hard to process English language discourse. They need to understand foreign language on the patterns of their mother tongue. This tendency of understanding a foreign language by generalizing from mother tongue structures causes mistakes and errors in the linguistic output of the students in foreign language. These mistakes and errors create fear and hesitation. The next question asked the students if they have any fear and hesitation when they speak English.

When you speak English, the fear of making mistakes and errors upsets you

6.08%   14.86%   19.59%   41.89%   17.57%

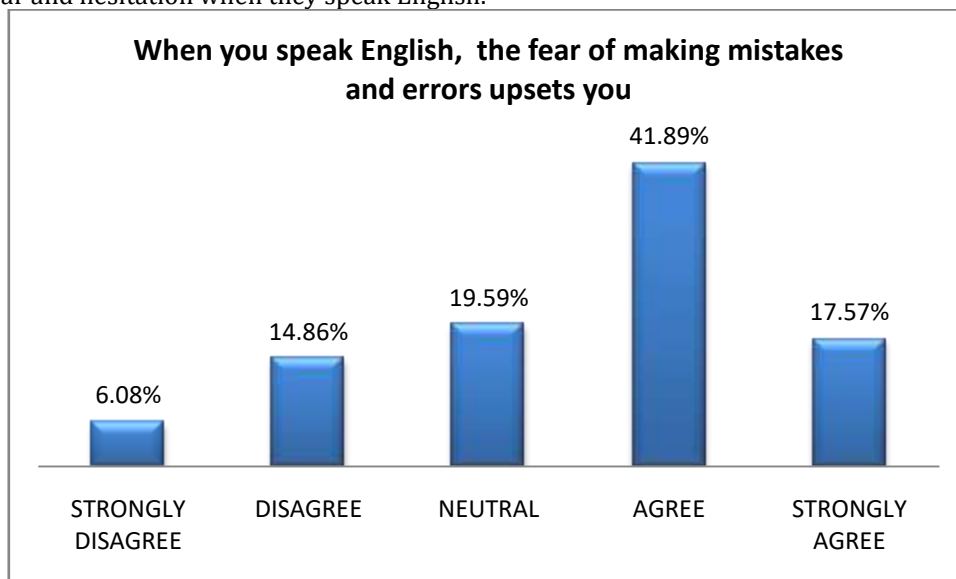STRONGLY DISAGREE   DISAGREE   NEUTRAL   AGREE   STRONGLY AGREE

Figure: 9. Learners' Fears about Making Mistakes

More than 20% of the students disagree with the statement of the question. They are of the view that they are not bothered by any fear of making mistakes when they speak English. 19.59% of the students ticked 'neutral'.41.89% students agree with the statement in the question that the fear of making mistakes upsets them. 17.57% of the students strongly agree with the same statement. Thus, more than 59% of the students

Developing English Discourse Skills: An Exploratory Survey of Communicative Competence of Pakistani Learners of English

are of the view that fear of making mistakes hangs heavy on their nerves when they speak. The next question dealt with similar aspects of their communicative competence and discourse skills.

What problems do you face when you have to speak English in real life or in academic activities

- LEFT THE SPACE BLANK — 0.86%
- NO PROBLEM — 17.24%
- OTHERS WILL LAUGH — 10.34%
- HESITATION AND FEAR — 24.14%
- POOR FLUENCY — 12.07%
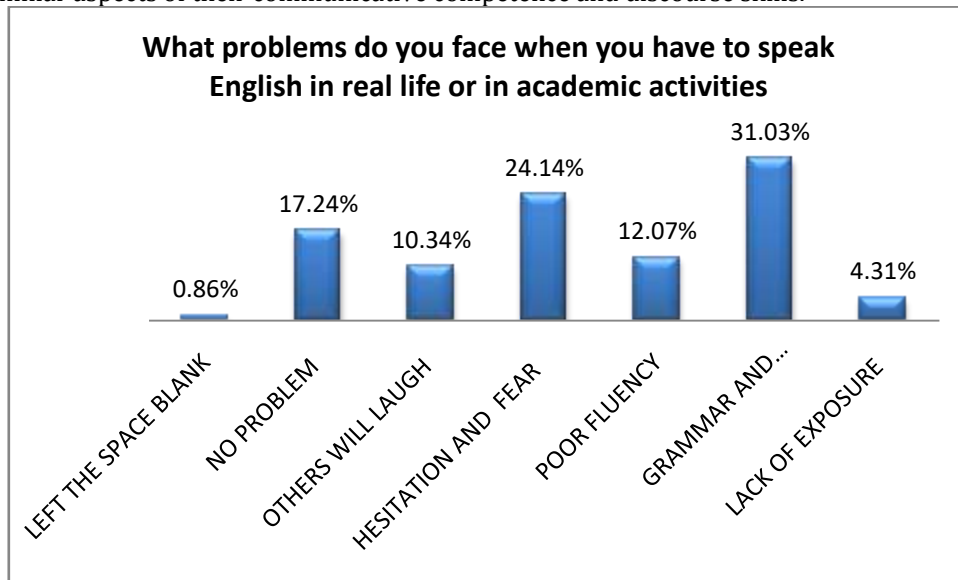- GRAMMAR AND… — 31.03%
- LACK OF EXPOSURE — 4.31%

Figure:10

This was an open-ended question that was asked to the students at the end of the questionnaire. 0.86% of the students left it unanswered. 17.24% of the students think that they don't face any problem when they have to speak English in real life or in academic activities. 10.34% of the students say that they have a fear that others will laugh at them if they speak English. 31.03% of the students think that lack of grammatical knowledge and adequate vocabulary is their greatest problem with regard to English in real life. 24.14% of the students think that they hesitate to speak English andare afraid of making mistakes. 12.07% of the students think that their problem is poor fluency.4.31% of the students say that their problem is lack of exposure. Thus, majority of them regards lack of grammatical knowledge and adequate vocabulary as their greatest problem when it comes to speaking English in real life. Other students have fears about making mistakes. They have fears that others will laugh at their mistakes, as the following words of participants show:
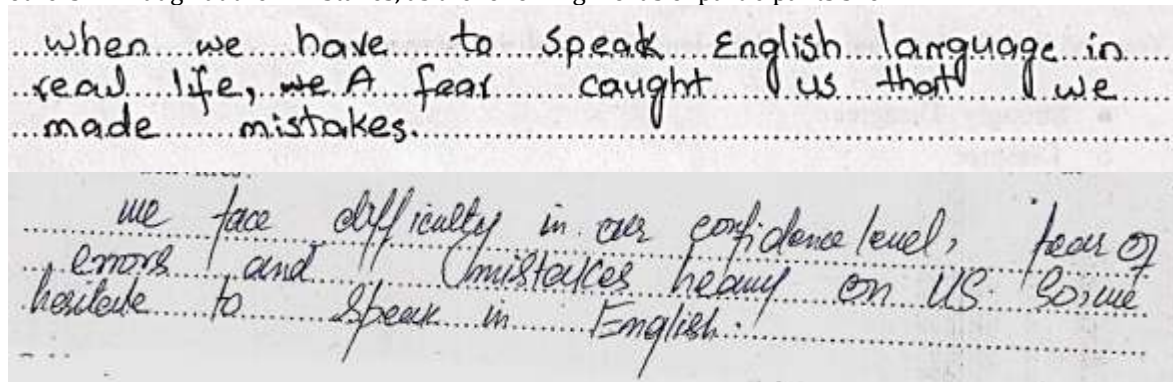
These responses about fears of making mistakes lead us to a discussion about the status of mistakes and errors in discourse.   Cook (1990) argues that rules of grammar alone don't make our utterances coherent and that the purpose of language learning is communication and not just knowledge of rules. He argues that 'there is more to producing and understanding meaningful language–to communicating—than knowing how to make or recognize correct sentences. A person who could do only that, and did so without any other considerations, would be , as the sociolinguist Dell Hymes (1971 [1972;277])has said , 'likely to be institutionalized' for saying all kinds of inappropriate , irrelevant, and uninteresting things. Being a communicator, having what Hymes calls communicative competence, involves much more' (p.6). We have already mentioned in this study that discourse analysis looks at mistakes differently. As Cook argues

discourse 'can have grammatical mistakes in it, and often does' (p.7). He further argues that 'discourse treats the rules of grammar as a resource, conforming to them when it needs to, but departing from them when it does not' (p.7). He concludes that in discourse 'what matters is not its conformity to rules, but the fact that it communicates and is recognized by its receivers as coherent'. (p.7). What we infer from these words of Hymes and Cook is that in teaching English we should give primary importance to communicative skills and coherence and secondary importance to rules of language. If we want our students to be good communicator, we have to concentrate on production of coherence utterance than on production of correct sentences. This way we can remove the hurdle our students have in communication—hesitation and fears that other people will laugh at their mistakes and errors. So, we have to change our pedagogical culture that penalizes those who make mistakes and errors.

To summarize the results, we can say that 55% of the students are unable to communicate effectively. 44% of the students agree that they use the strategy of mental translation to communicate in English.60 % of the students were not able to communicate effectively after completing a spoken English course. 48% of the students use bilingual dictionaries. 59% of the students agree that fear of making errors hangs heavy on their nerves when the communicate in English

Let us now compare the findings of this study with the findings of other studies. We have looked at the phenomenon of mental translation which seems to slow down the students' ability to produce and process discourses in English language. In its findings about the use of the strategy of mental translation among the learners, the study comes close to the study conducted by Hussain (2012) and Upton & Lee-Thompson (2001) . We referred to the report of UK Border Agency about poor discourse skills of Pakistani students going to the UK for higher studies.   The findings of the present study come close to the findings of the report of the UK Border Agency because in our survey, the responses of the majority of the students, who attended Spoken English courses, show that these courses did not make them fluent speakers of English. In addition, we also talked about the importance of rethinking classroom interaction in order to develop discourse skills of students in English language. The findings of the current study show that classroom interaction in the classes of the students is not based on a multi-dimensional model of interaction. As we have seen in the analysis of this study that most of the students agree that their classroom interaction in English language is based on traditional teacher student interaction.

III.   CONCLUSION:

Some of the ELT researchers are of the view that ELT has not achieved its objectives in Pakistan. The results of the survey we conducted about the communicative competence of English learners in Pakistan show that students seem to have underdeveloped communicative skills. 55% of the students are unable to communicate effectively. 44% of the students agree that they use the strategy of mental translation to communicate in English. 60 % of the students were not able to communicate effectively after completing a spoken English course. 48% of the students use bilingual dictionaries. 59% of the students agree that fear of making errors hangs heavy on their nerves when the communicate in English. ELT researchers stress the importance of a method in which 'language is learned through social interaction'. In order to be good at social interaction, we need to help our learners develop discourse skills in English language. Discourse skills are part of communicative competence. By developing discourse skills, they learn how to integrate separate levels of communication. We need to change our approach towards English teaching. We need to give up the traditional atomistic approach that causes the students to resort to the strategy of mental translation and using key books to pass the exams. Teaching English to the students with a holistic approach may help in the development of discourse skills among the students. Helping students develop discourse skills in English language may enhance their communicative competence in English language. We can enhance the discourse skills of our English learners by introducing in our classroom teaching discourse transfer exercises, Conversation Analysis exercises, and discourse type recognition exercises. These and other exercises are likely to enhance the presentation skills, assessing skills, discussion skills and turn-taking skills of the learners. The study recommends that we should change our pedagogical culture with regard to mistakes and errors made by the students. There is a need for experimental studies that should focus on the effectiveness of conducting English discourse activities in the class.

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