



RESEARCH PAPER

Examining the Impact of Student-Teacher Interaction in the Classroom on the Speaking Skills of ESL Learners: A Study Conducted at BS Level

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ABSTRACT

The paper analyzes how the teacher-student classroom dynamics affect the speaking skills of undergraduate ESL learners. A quantitative survey method was used to sample 265 BS English students (156 girls, 109 boys) to fill out a Likert scale survey about issues like frequency of interactions, feedback, teacher encouragement, and opportunity to speak in the classroom. Findings indicate that although interaction, encouragement, and speaking activities are seen by many learners as helpful to their oral proficiency, a considerable number of them gave a neutral or negative answer, which implies that there is inconsistency in the contemporary interactive teaching methods. The results suggest that interaction between students and their teachers is not being utilized to the maximum to help learn speaking. In order to overcome this, there is a need to have more organized interactive methods, more individualized feedback and more practice opportunities, both within and outside of the classroom. The paper is ended with effective suggestions to ESL teachers, administrators, and recommendations to conduct additional research.

KEYWORDS Student-Teacher Interaction, Speaking Skills, ESL Learners, BS Level, Classroom Communication

Introduction

Oral proficiency is one of the foundations of communicative competence and one of the main indicators of a second language mastery by a learner. In the case of university students in the ESL setting such as Pakistan, confident spoken English is the key to academic success, career growth, and interpersonal assimilation. However, after years of formal training, most of them still have fluency and confidence problems. This detachment highlights the crucial role of the classroom dynamics, most importantly, the nature and the quality of student-teacher interaction, in providing the opportunities to practice the language authentically.

Such interaction involves the following techniques, questioning, feedback, scaffolding, and affective support, which combined form the participation of a learner and his or her willingness to speak. The risk-taking involved in oral development can be encouraged through a classroom environment with positive feedback and patience to make mistakes and be encouraged. Conversely, limited or mainly one-way communication usually limits speaking time and develops laziness, especially in big, exam-oriented classes.

Undergraduate students in Pakistan which is predominantly English speaking are supposed to graduate with improved speaking skills. Nonetheless, the anecdotal reports and first impressions show that there is still a tendency of hesitation, no participation, and limited use of English outside of the classroom. As a result, there is a strong necessity of the systematic investigation of how learners perceive their interactive experience during speaking activities and the impact of the interactive experience on their oral understanding and self-confidence.

This paper examines how the interaction between students and teachers influences the speaking abilities of undergraduates in four Pakistan-based higher education institutions who study ESL. It pays special attention to the investigation of student perceptions regarding speaking interaction during classes, the degree of teacher encouragement and patience, feedback strategies, and the possibility of individual attention and practice.

Literature Review

Interaction and speaking of students with teachers.

Students and teacher interaction has always been associated with better classroom activity, school performance, and language growth. In the context of language learning, in particular, research has shown that interactive learning, whereby students question, meaning negotiate, and respond to, are more effective in acquiring speaking fluency and accuracy, as compared to the traditional teacher-centered, lecture-based language learning. Discourse patterns of a teacher, wait time, and questioning strategies are important factors in expanding or diminishing the opportunities of the learners to perform extended oral production.

Moreover, teacher-student relationships are positive and related to a decreased language anxiety and willingness to communicate. Students feel more comfortable with their teacher when they feel that the teacher is supportive, patient, and encouraging and will most probably engage in speaking activities even when there is uncertainty. Conversely, when the responses are either critical or impatient of mistakes, then this can put off participation and encourage avoidance behaviors among learners.

Pakistani context ESL speaking skills.

English has a high practical and symbolic value of a language of education, and government and social progress in Pakistan. Nevertheless, teaching methods in secondary and tertiary educational institutions tend to focus a lot on the reading and writing abilities to guarantee the achievement of examination results, often at the sacrifice of speaking and hearing abilities. The research on the pedagogical techniques indicates that teaching methods that are focused on translation, teaching grammar, or teacher lectures are highly likely to limit students in terms of the opportunities to use spontaneous spoken English. Recent studies on the nature of bilingual and interactive techniques show that the interaction of the type such as the means of clarification and support with the strategic code-switching can be effectively used to develop speaking competence when combined with sufficient language input and output possibilities. Nevertheless, the current literature lacks empirical data that specifically addresses the issue of the perception of student-teacher interaction by undergraduate ESL students and its direct effect on their speaking skills. Despite the vast research on the pedagogical approach and bilingual practices in language education, there is a smaller amount of studies, which explore the micro-dynamics of student-teacher communication and their perceived effect on the development of speaking skills in Pakistani undergraduate programs. This research aims to fill this gap by focusing on self-reported experiences of the learners in terms of interaction during oral activity, teacher support and feedback and the subsequent confidence and practice behavior among the learners.

Research Methodology

Research design

The data-gathering methods comprised a quantitative survey which included a questionnaire with Likert scale questions that were given to the undergraduate ESL

learners. This strategy helped to provide overall research on the perception of students with regard to the interaction relating to classroom and the speaking competence. The instrument was constructed on the guiding research questions of the study and the literature related to the study.

Population and sample

The population to be used in the study was undergraduate students who majored or took compulsory courses on English in the public and private universities. The sample was recruited using convenience sampling (265 participants, 156 female and 109 males). The study population was made up of all participants who had been taught English language at secondary or college level.

Instrument

The self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data on a five-point Likert scale which included the following options: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (DA), and Strongly Disagree (SDA). The questionnaire was made to involve the following questions:

Frequency and quality of interaction with teachers during speaking activities

Teacher encouragement and motivation to participate in speaking tasks

Teacher patience and attitude toward speaking errors

Perceived impact of regular interaction and speaking activities on speaking comprehension

Feedback practices after speaking tasks

Learners’ confidence and practice of speaking inside and outside the classroom

Individual attention during speaking activities

The tables provided in the Word document present the distribution of responses by gender for each item.

Data collection and analysis

The questionnaires were given on papers during specific classes after receiving consent of the authorities concerned and the informed consent of the participants. To summarize the perceptions of the learners descriptive statistics, which mainly involved frequencies and percentages, were applied to code and analyze the responses. The analysis was performed on the general trends and gender-related patterns basing on an interpretive approach, as it is presented in the model article.

Data Analysis and Findings

This section presents key findings from the ten questionnaire items, using the existing tables and interpretive descriptions from the Word file.

Table 1
Interact with Teacher in Class

SDA		DA		N		SA		A		Total	Gender	Sr. No.
%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F			
6	16	10.2	27	13.2	35	15.5	41	14	37	156	Female	1
5.3	14	8.7	23	9.1	24	10.6	28	7.5	20	109	Male	2
11.3	30	18.9	50	22.3	59	26	69	21.5	57	265	Total	3

Table 4.1 shows that 21.5% of respondents (7.5% male and 14% female) agreed that they interact with their teacher during speaking activities in class, while 26% (10.6% male and 15.5% female) strongly agreed. A significant percentage, 22.3, was neutral, 18.9 was disagreeing and 11.3 strongly disagreeing which means that a significant fraction of students never interact or perceive the teacher regularly when performing speaking activities. These findings indicate that in spite of a large number of learners who report interaction, not all learners have the same experience as classroom speakers who believe their interactions to be interactive.

Table 2
Teacher Encourages Participation in Speaking

SDA		DA		N		SA		A		Total	Gender	Sr. No.
%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F			
4.5	12	12.5	33	17.4	46	14	37	10.6	28	156	Female	1
5.3	14	10.2	27	9.1	24	8.7	23	7.9	21	109	Male	2
9.8	26	22.6	60	26.4	70	22.6	60	18.5	49	265	Total	3

In the question about the item, My teacher encourages participation in speaking activities, 18.5 percent of the respondents were in agreement and 22.6 percent strongly agreed, with 26.4 percent of the respondents being neutral. Also, 22.6% of the students disagreed and 9.8% strongly disagreed, which indicates that nearly a quarter of students are not motivated enough to engage in speaking. The level of the neutrality and disagreement reveals that there is encouragement of the teacher but not experienced equally.

Table 3
Teacher Shows Patience while Making Mistakes

SDA		DA		N		SA		A		Total	Gender	Sr. No.
%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F			
7.5	20	13.6	36	14	37	16.2	43	7.5	20	156	Female	1
6	16	11.3	30	12.5	33	7.9	21	3.4	9	109	Male	2
13.6	36	24.9	66	26.4	70	24.2	64	10.9	29	265	Total	3

On the statement, My teacher is patient when you are making mistakes when talking, 10.9% said yes, 24.2% said yes, strongly, and 26.4% said yes, neutrally. Simultaneously, 24.9% of respondents disagreed and 13.6% strongly disagreed, which gives reason to believe that many students feel that the teachers lack patience when they commit any mistakes in speaking. Such a pattern can put off risktaking and discourage oral practice among more anxious learners.

Table 4
Student-Teacher Interaction Improve Speaking Comprehension

SDA		DA		N		SA		A		Total	Gender	Sr. No.
%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F			
8.7	23	10.6	28	14.7	46	10.6	28	11.7	31	156	Female	1
4.9	13	10.9	29	7.5	20	12.1	32	5.7	15	109	Male	2
13.6	36	21.5	57	24.9	66	22.6	60	17.6	46	265	Total	3

A response to the question That interaction with teachers on a regular basis has served to enhance my speaking comprehension results in a response to 17.6% that it is true and strongly true at 22.6%. Nonetheless, 24.9% of them were neutral, 21.5% were in disagreement, and 13.6% strongly disagreed, this means that almost a quarter of the learners do not obviously perceive that there is a positive effect of interaction in their speaking comprehension. The results of this study indicate that current interactive practices are not as often, sufficiently targeted, and explicit to yield observable benefits to every student.

Table 5
Helpful Feedback from Teacher After Tasks

SDA		DA		N		SA		A		Total	Gender	Sr. No.
%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F			
7.2	19	12.8	34	14	37	17	45	7.9	21	156	Female	1
6	16	8.3	22	12.1	32	8.7	23	6	16	109	Male	2
13.2	35	21.1	56	26	69	25.7	68	14	37	265	Total	3

For the statement "I receive helpful feedback from my teacher after speaking tasks," 14% agreed and 25.7% strongly agreed, while 26% chose neutral. Additionally, 21.1% disagreed and 13.2% strongly disagreed, showing that although a majority recognize some feedback, many students either do not receive or do not perceive this feedback as sufficiently helpful. This suggests that feedback practices may need to be more systematic, individualized, and oriented toward improving specific aspects of speaking.

Table 6
Confident in My English Speaking Comprehension

SDA		DA		N		SA		A		Total	Gender	Sr. No.
%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F			
5.7	15	17	45	16.6	44	11.7	31	7.9	21	156	Female	1
5.7	15	9.8	26	11.7	31	8.7	23	5.3	14	109	Male	2
11.3	30	26.8	71	28.3	75	20.4	54	13.2	35	265	Total	3

When asked whether they feel confident in their English speaking comprehension, 13.2% agreed and 20.4% strongly agreed, contrasted with 28.3% neutral responses. Furthermore, 26.8% disagreed and 11.3% strongly disagreed, which indicates that almost two-fifths of learners lack confidence in their speaking comprehension. Limited confidence may be connected to insufficient supportive interaction, feedback, and practice opportunities in and beyond the classroom.

Table 7
Practice Speaking English Outside of Class

SDA		DA		N		SA		A		Total	Gender	Sr. No.
%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F			
5.7	15	17	45	16.6	44	11.7	31	7.9	21	156	Female	1
5.7	15	9.8	26	11.7	31	8.7	23	5.3	14	109	Male	2
11.3	30	26.8	71	28.3	75	20.4	54	13.2	35	265	Total	3

Regarding regular practice of speaking English outside class, 14.7% of respondents agreed and 19.6% strongly agreed, while 28.3% were neutral. On the other hand, 25.3% disagreed and 12.1% strongly disagreed, suggesting that a large proportion of students do not extend speaking practice beyond formal class time. This lack of extramural practice further increases the importance of maximizing interactive speaking opportunities within the classroom.

Table 8
Speaking in Class Improve My Speaking Comprehension.

SDA		DA		N		SA		A		Total	Gender	Sr. No.
%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F			
8.3	22	12.1	32	14.71	39	13.2	35	10.6	28	156	Female	1
6	16	10.2	27	12.1	32	6.8	18	6	16	109	Male	2
14.3	38	22.3	59	26.8	71	20	53	16.6	44	265	Total	3

In relation to "Speaking activities in class help improve my speaking comprehension," 16.6% agreed and 20% strongly agreed. Nevertheless, 26.8% remained neutral, 22.3% disagreed, and 14.3% strongly disagreed, indicating that a significant segment of learners either do not perceive speaking activities as effective or may not be participating actively in them. The results call for more purposeful design and implementation of speaking tasks that are clearly linked to learning outcomes.

Table 9
Teacher Gives Individual Attention during Activities

SDA		DA		N		SA		A		Total	Gender	Sr. No.
%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F			
5.3	14	18.1	48	12.8	34	14	37	8.7	23	156	Female	1
3.8	10	6.4	17	13.6	36	12.1	32	5.3	14	109	Male	2
9.1	24	24.5	65	26.4	70	26	69	14	37	265	Total	3

For the statement "The teacher gives me individual attention during speaking activities," 14% agreed and 26% strongly agreed, while 26.4% reported a neutral stance. Additionally, 24.5% disagreed and 9.1% strongly disagreed, reflecting that many students feel they do not receive sufficient individualized attention in speaking tasks, possibly due to large class sizes or time constraints.

Table 10
Teacher Motivates You to Participate

SDA		DA		N		SA		A		Total	Gender	Sr. No.
%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F			
8.7	23	15.1	40	13.2	35	14.3	38	7.5	20	156	Female	1
3.8	10	10.6	28	10.6	28	11.7	31	4.5	12	109	Male	2
12.5	33	25.7	68	23.8	63	26	69	12.1	32	265	Total	3

Finally, regarding "Teachers' attitude motivates you to participate more in speaking activities," 12.1% of respondents agreed and 26% strongly agreed. However, 23.8% remained neutral, 25.7% disagreed, and 12.5% strongly disagreed, which means that a considerable number of students do not find their teachers' attitudes highly motivating for speaking participation. This pattern underscores the importance of affective and relational aspects of interaction in fostering speaking skills.

Discussion

The results give a subtle picture of student teacher interaction in undergraduate ESL classes. Although large groups of students identify a positive experience in terms of encouraging attitudes towards them, positive feedback, and facilitating interaction when speaking, there are also very large percentages of students who see a neutral or negative experience in the majority of survey questions. Such imbalance implies that interactive practices are not consistently used and can be ineffective to reach the maximum number of learners.

The neutral answers in various items can be caused by the fact that the students had no clear expectations of what makes an effective interaction or the fact that speaking in an ordinary instruction was not given a conscious focus. Even where there is interaction it is sometimes seen to be limited to a more vocal minority and a small number of more reserved students are left with less chances to interact and, therefore, less development in verbal understanding and confidence.

The findings also reveal that not all learners practice English orally, and they express little confidence in their speaking skills. The classroom plays a significant role in the limited outside exposure to English and forms the most important stage of interaction. It imposes more responsibility on instructors to consciously make speaking activities interactive and student-oriented and to provide students with more specific and constructive feedback.

These findings echo the body of literature which criticizes teacher-centred, exam-oriented pedagogies in Pakistani ESL to limit oral interactions. Even though there are those instructors who do take efforts to create a participatory environment and do give feedback, the statistics indicate that there is no systematic consistency in applying to the use of

inclusive practices, e.g. in structured pair work, group activities and genuinely communicative activities, which may involve all the learners.

Conclusion

This research concludes that student-teacher interaction is of significant but mostly untapped potential in improving speaking proficiency of undergraduate ESL students. Even though a considerable percentage of students acknowledge the advantages of promoting feedback and positive communication, a considerable amount of them do not know whether the existing classroom tasks are effective to enhance their oral understanding and self-assurance. It means that classroom interactions have to be organized in a more systematic way, with a planned emphasis on speaking and aimed at integrating all learners into the classroom.

The findings indicate that teachers should use more interactive methods of teaching, provide frequent and individual feedback, and support students in creating a favorable classroom atmosphere in which they have no fears of making linguistic errors. Well integrated these practices can make learners more willing to communicate and eventually achieve better speaking results in the undergraduate level of ESL.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings, the recommendations to teachers, institution, and future researchers are:

- A speaking activity (e.g. roleplay, discussion, problem solving task) should be designed by the teacher to have all the students engaged in it and not a few volunteers.
- To make the participation fair, clear interactional roles (e.g., time limits, rules of turntaking, pair/group structures) should be provided.
- Educators should be more supportive in their teaching and reward students with appreciation of their efforts and minor progress to avoid speaking anxiety.
- Teachers can be trained in classroom talk and motivational techniques using training sessions or workshops, which will enable them to learn more supportive interactional styles.
- Teachers are supposed to take errors as part and parcel of the learning process and should react to them with patience with an emphasis being made on constructive reversal and restatement instead of condemnation.
- Understanding explicit classroom norms can be achieved by instilling the habit of making errors in the process of speaking.
- The post speaking activities should be specific, timely, and concentrating on the main aspects of pronunciation, fluency, and accuracy.
- In cases where they can be, short one on one conversations, tape recordings, or written remarks can be used by the teacher to access those students who are not given full attention during the lesson.
- One way to motivate more oral homework outside of the classroom is by teachers giving low stakes oral homework, including short recorded responses, peerconversation logs, or minipresentations.
- To offer more informal speech practice institutions can form English clubs, conversation corners or peer mentoring programs.
- Minimize the number of students in classes or engage in sub grouping strategies where feasible.

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