The effect of classroom interaction on developing learners’ speaking skill

By:
Sahar Taghilou

Supervisor:
Reza Abdi (PhD)

Advisor:
Afsaneh Saeedakhtar (PhD)

October 2019
### Abstract
Providing relationships in the classroom is an important part of any teacher’s career. Having healthy teacher-to-learner and learner-to-learner relationships is an effective way to avoid pedagogical failure, social conflict, and unfriendly atmosphere. Successful teachers’ pedagogical work in the classroom necessitates detailed knowledge of learners’ relationships. Interaction creates a pleasant atmosphere in the classroom with friendly relationships among participants of the oral production. So, with representing good relations with students, they can interact easily with each other and their own teachers and communicate their own beliefs and ideas and speak fluently without any anxiety. The present study intended to identify the effect of classroom interaction on developing learners’ speaking skill as well as different factors that inhibit learners from interaction. It also investigated which aspects of speaking skill have been affected more by classroom interaction. Furthermore, interaction can present sufficient opportunities for learners to be exposed more to the language to increase their self-confidence and willingness to initiate communication. To this purpose, 115 intermediate and advanced level of Iranian learners who study English as foreign language and 50 teachers participated in the study. The results were obtained through questionnaire, Oral interview with teachers, and observation of some of the classes that were chosen randomly. The results indicated that all the learners and teachers agree with the effect of classroom interaction on learners’ speaking skill and their willingness to initiate communication and enhance their level of risk-taking ability.

**Keywords:** Classroom interaction, speaking skill, willingness to communicate, risk-taking ability, self-confidence
Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. Overview

At the present time, English language is used globally for communication throughout the world. The central and important point in mastering the foreign language is to speak it fluently and accurately. So, improving the oral proficiency of the learners has been considered the first concern for many teachers and learners. The crucial part of learning English as a foreign language (EFL) is mastery of speaking skill and because of this, classroom interaction is one of the effective techniques to improve oral proficiency. Language is a system for the expression of meaning. Its primary function is for interaction and communication (McDonough and Shaw, 2003). Language is used by human in order to know and understand each other. Hornby (1995, p. 318) stated that “speaking is as way of expressing oneself in speech and being able to use words and utterances to make production of sounds. In short, speaking skill is the ability to perform the linguistic knowledge in the actual communication”.

Interaction is one of the most important elements of any learning experience (e.g., Dewey, 1938; Vygotsky, 1978). Moore (1989) made the distinction between three types of interaction: learner-content, learner-teacher, and learner-learner. Different types of classroom interaction have many advantages: making a cheerful and motivating atmosphere for learning, motivating them to initiate to communicate, and expressing their own ideas and opinions easily are the most important among the other skills. As stated by Harmer(2001), "The communicative approach or communicative language teaching (CLT) has become the umbrella term to describe learning sequences which aim to promote students' capability to communicate”(p.86).
Mackey (2013) also asserts that “through processes of repetition, segmentation and rewording, interaction can serve to draw learners’ attention to form-meaning relationship and provide them with extra time to focus on encoding meaning” (pp. 12-13).

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Daly (1991) “We live in an educational world where orality is seen as necessary and positive personal characteristics” (p.7). The development of English language worldwide necessitates the opportunities to acquire good communication skills in English. Poor listening skills lead learners not to get the material properly and in turn, their problems be intensified when they can’t respond and communicate appropriately because of poor performance in speaking skills. As teachers’ role is very important in communicating and interacting effectively in the classroom and they are responsible for providing students appropriate contexts to foster communicative situation that permit students to express themselves and interact in the target language; however, students’ dynamic role, participation, and motivation are necessary in the process too. Without their involvement, oral skills can’t be properly developed. Lindsay and Knight (2006) made the important point that it is a good idea to gather students and let them work in pairs and groups in order to practice the language effectively because those learners will talk only to their teachers, their chances for practice are reduced. Luoma (2004) stated that “speaking skills are an important part of the curriculum in language teaching, and this makes them an important object of assessment as well” (p. 1) which ensures classroom interaction. As previous studies, e.g., Johnson and Holubeck (1994), small group learning can contribute to improvements in areas such as resilience and positive interactions among students from different cultural backgrounds, the exchange and processing of information, academic achievement, chances to solve real-world problems, openness to new perspectives, encouragement to learn, confidence in one’s social
skills, psychological health (e.g., social development, self-esteem), and attendance. Fassinger (2000) indicated that the classroom should also be seen from the perspective of the group and that these group dynamics will ultimately influence levels of participation within the classroom which in turn have enhanced EFL students’ speaking skill. Foster and Ohta (2005) found, by analyzing interactional relations from both cognitive and sociocultural perspectives, clearly identifiable negotiation for meaning interactions were relatively rare but learners supported each other’s talk much more frequently in the absence of any communicative breakdown using a variety of communicative moves that could count as scaffolding. In the field of education, the term scaffolding refers to a process in which teachers model or demonstrate how to solve a problem, and then step back, offering support as needed. Scaffolding is the term originated from Vygotsky’s (1896-1934), concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Vygotsky defined ZPD as the distance between the actual development level of the learner, as determined by independent problem solving, and the level of potential development, as determined through problem solving under teacher support and/or interaction and collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky 1990, cited in Walqui, 2006). According to Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1974) the term scaffolding is tutoring or other support provided in a learning setting to help students with achieving levels of understanding impossible for them to achieve without guidance. In scaffolding, teachers guide the learners step by step till they can learn and understand the process, then teachers gradually give up the learners’ support in order to transfer the responsibility to learners for completing the task (Bodrova & Leong, 1998).

The impact of feedback on future practice and the development of students’ learning were highlighted by Eraut (2006), when students enter higher education, the type of feedback then they receive, intentionally or unintentionally, will play a crucial part in shaping their learning
futures. Hence we need to know much more about how their learning, indeed their very sense of professional identity, is shaped by the nature of the feedback they receive. Therefore, scaffolding is different negotiation of meaning and it has been developed as a concept and it has been utilized more widely to studies of peer and group collaborative interaction, and to classroom interaction. Interaction is viewed as significant by Chaudron (1988, cited in Nurmasitah, 2010), since analyzing target language structures and getting the meaning of classroom events is done via interaction. It is the interaction that learners gain opportunities to insert the derived structures of classroom events into their own speech. Knop (2009) revealed the increasing use of the target language in classroom interaction presented student-to-student pair strategies and classroom activities used successfully by teachers to increase target language use. Researchers (e.g., Canale & Swain 1980; Rivers, 1987; Savignon, 1983; Wells, 1981) concur that only through active interaction in the target language within meaningful contexts; students can obtain communicative competence and therefore are able to use the language voluntarily and adequately. Menegale (2008) studied the expanding teacher-student interaction through more effective classroom questions. The article referred to the teachers’ use of questions and tried to explore the ways in which questioning can be used not only as a means to promote learning in content and language integrated learning contexts but also as a means to enhance students’ participation and as a result, their oral production. Mackey and Alison (2007) suggested that interaction can help the learners to pay attention to the relationship of form and meaning, it also facilitates the learners to concentrate on end-meaning. Form-meaning relationship and end-meaning could be attained through repetition, segmentation, and rewording of utterances. Many theories of learning hold the view that learner-learner interaction is very helpful in actively constructing knowledge and improving skills. Johnson (1995) advocated that this type of interaction (learner-learner
interaction) is constructed and managed carefully then it helps the learners to progress cognitively to achieve educational goals and to emerge social competencies. Paula (2002) stated that learner-learner interaction is a powerful way to reinforce what already has been learned. Teacher must encourage learner-learner interaction because it facilitates language learning in general and speaking fluency in specific. There are many factors that affect learners’ interaction and in turn their academic achievement and speaking skill. Inhibition factors such as being worried about making mistakes and fearful of criticism, lack of topical knowledge, low participation, and use of mother-tongue are the most important factors that affect learners’ interaction and their speaking skill (Tuan & Mai, 2015). Rivers (1968) stated that the main inhibition factor that prevents learners from interaction referred to the selection of topic by teacher that is not interested for learners or because of lack of information that they couldn’t say anything about it. Harmer (1991) stated that if instructors directly correct their students’ problems, the flow of the dialogue and the aim of the speaking task will be ruined. Baker and Westrup (2003) supported the above statement and said that if learners are always corrected, they will lose their motivation and self-confidence when speaking.

Park and Lee (2005) examined the relationship between second language learners’ anxiety, self-confidence, and speaking performance. The participants of their study were 132 Korean college students who enrolled in English conversation classes. The results of their study indicated that learners’ anxiety level was negatively related to their oral performance. Tanveer (2007) investigated the factors that cause language anxiety for 20 language learners in learning speaking skills and the influence of anxiety on communication in the target language and his result was similar to what Park and Lee (2005) figured out. MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels (1998) studied the effects of self-confidence on oral performance. The results of their
study showed that the learners’ WTC was determined partly by their self-confidence. As MacIntyre and Doucette (2010) put it, “the ultimate goal of second language learners is being willing to communicate.” (p.161). Park and Lee (2005) also examined the relationships between L2 learners’ anxiety, self-confidence, and oral performance. They reached a conclusion that self-confidence affected tremendously L2 learners’ ability to interact and in turn, their oral performance. They said that if the learners felt more confident, they would have better oral performance. There were a lot of studies that showed the effect of interaction on learners’ speaking skill and reducing their anxiety, learners’ WTC, and their motivation. So, this study investigated the classroom interaction in improving speaking skill, the aspect of speaking that is most influenced by interaction and its effect on reducing learners’ inhibition factor. Furthermore, this study aimed to investigate a new perspective of classroom interaction which contributes to developing learners’ self-confidence and risk-taking ability.

1.3. Significance of the Study

Classroom interaction and enhancement of oral proficiency have been a significant matter for many researchers, and especially for instructors who teach English language as a second or foreign language. A lot of studies have been done in the field of language learning investigating interaction and cooperative activities as an essential mean for effective teaching and learning in the classroom. Moreover, the use of English language as a common language is very widespread throughout the world and is utilized as a means of communication in different fields such as trade, job market, medical assistance, higher education or access to information. Regarding these local and global needs, speaking skill has been influenced in the light of the interaction. With regard to this, the significance of this study is basically to determine how influential classroom interaction is in promoting opportunities for teachers to create an interactive learning context to
enable learners exposed to the language and target language practice opportunities to interact and in turn, improve their speaking skill. Furthermore, interaction can present sufficient opportunities for learners to be exposed more to the language and comprehensible input to increase their self-confidence and willingness to initiate communication.

Effective classroom interaction has two implications on oral skill development. The first one concerns creating a pleasant atmosphere in the classroom with friendly relationships among participants of the oral production. The second one encourages students to become effective communicators and enhance their self-confidence and WTC. The purpose of communication is the creation and maintenance of social relationships, the negotiation of status and social roles, as well as deciding on and carrying out joint actions. L2 interaction facilitates and has huge impact on developing oral skills because through interaction, learners receive feedback by modifying their output and negotiating meaning. It is helpful for teachers to identify learners’ need and interest and try to meet them. It can be useful for syllabus designer to integrate classroom interaction activities in textbooks and include more pair work and brain storming activities in books to stimulate students to speak. The friendly interaction between teacher and students and student- student provide vast amount of opportunities to produce speech by learners. So, the classroom interaction plays an important role in developing learners’ oral skill.

1.4. Purpose of the Study

A mixed methods design (both qualitative and quantitative ways of analysis) was used in this study to investigate the role of classroom interaction in learners’ speaking skill in real classroom situation. In the quantitative phase of the study, students’ questionnaire was completed to know students’ opinion on important feedback regarding classroom interaction and speaking skills, and
important factors that inhibit them from interaction, and the significant and facilitator role of their teachers in making opportunities for interaction and production.

The qualitative data was collected by observing the classroom and interviewing with teachers to know their opinion, and attitude towards classroom interaction and the learners’ improvement of oral skill. To obtain a better understanding about the status of the classroom interaction on learners’ speaking skill, the research was conducted among English institute and Zanjan Farhangian University. The specific objectives of this study were as follows:

1. Identifying the factors that influence interaction ability of the learner.
2. Identifying a new perspective of classroom interaction which leads to the enhancement of learners’ self-esteem and risk taking and students’ WTC.
3. Finding out how often teachers and learners practice the communicative language teaching and classroom interaction in their classes.
4. Investigating teachers’ opinion about applying classroom interaction in developing the students’ speaking abilities.

1.5. Research Questions

The research questions is divided into two parts: a general research question and specific research questions

1.5.1. General question. To what extent classroom interaction can help students to improve their speaking skill?

1.5.2. Specific questions. There are six specific research questions that were studied in this research. They are as follows:
1. What kind of interaction patterns (teacher-students, students-teacher, and students-students) mostly occur in the classroom and why? And what effects do these interaction activities have on learners’ oral proficiency?

2. What factors do hinder the learners from participation in the classroom interaction?

3. What aspects of English language speaking (accuracy, fluency or both) are influenced mostly by classroom interaction? Why?

4. To what extent does classroom interaction improve learners’ self-confidence and risk taking level?

5. Does classroom interaction improve learners’ WTC?

6. Do the teachers know the value of corrective feedback during classroom interaction and does it have any effect on the reduction of learners’ mistakes?

1.6. Research Hypothesis

There is no impact of classroom interaction on ESL learners’ speaking skill.

1.7. Definition of the Key Terms

**Classroom interaction**: Cambridge International Dictionary of English defines the verb ‘to interact’ as to communicate with, or react to each other. Interaction refers to the relationships between teachers and learners and learners to the learners or peer to peer relationships.

According to Hatch (2007, p. 2) “language learning evolves out of learning how to carry on conversation, out of learning how to communicate”. Moreover, Nonan (1991) stated that language is acquired only when learners actively engage and interact with each other in order to communicate in the target language.

**Speaking**: Many researchers believe that the speaking skill is an essential part in leaning EFL. Lazaraton (2001, p. 103) stated that “the ability to speak a language is synonymous with
knowing a language since speech is the most basic means of human communication”. Furthermore, according to Lindsay and Knights (2006), “We speak for many reasons: to be sociable, to want something, to want other people to do something, to do something for someone else, to respond to someone else, to express our feelings or opinion about something, to exchange information, to refer to an action or event in the past, present, or future, the possibility of something happening, and so on”. (p. 57)

**WTC:** The concept of WTC was developed from Burgoon’s (1976) concept of unwillingness to communicate which was first hypothesized as a personality characteristic and a trait-like predisposition to account for individual differences in L1 communication. Based on the findings of Burgoon (1976), Mortensen et al. (1977), and McCroskey and Richmond (1982, 1987, 1990) proposed WTC as the individuals’ tendency to initiate communication when they are free to do so.

**Risk-taking abilities:** Risk-taking is defined as the behaviors of doing something which involves risks with the aim of achieving something in the Longman advanced dictionary (3rd edition, 2004). In addition, risk taking as: “A situation where an individual has to make a decision involving choice between alternatives of different desirability; the outcome of the choice is uncertain; there is a possibility of failure” (in Gass & Selinker, 2008, p. 433). Furthermore, Morris (1979) assumed that risk taking has some relation with adventuresomeness, spontaneity, and flexibility in social behavior. Richard (2000) defines risk-taking as a personality factor that concerns the degree to which a person is willing to undertake actions that involve a significant degree of risk.

**Self-confidence:** Brown (2001, p. 62) states that “learners’ belief that they indeed are fully capable of accomplishing a task is at least partially a factor in their eventual success in attaining
the task”. Juhana (2012) argues that students who lack self-confidence about themselves and their capacities in English essentially suffer from communication apprehension. That is to say, the lack of confidence leads to difficulties in communication.

1.8. Limitations and Delimitations

Although mixed methods research was used in this study which consists of four instruments (questionnaire, interviews, focus-group discussion, and observation), the results were restricted to the some areas in Zanjan (Zanjan Iran Zamin English language institute and Zanjan Farhangian university) and the findings were not totally generalizable, so one of the limitations of this study referred to the size of the sample. Another limitation related to the classroom observation which was done once for each class. Thus, generalization of the findings should be done very cautiously. One of the delimitations referred to the selected sample from Iran, Zanjan province. The other delimitation is the fact that the study was limited to just intermediate and advanced levels of proficiency.
Chapter Two

Review of literature
Chapter Two

Review of literature

2.1. Definition of the Speaking

Researchers such as Louma (2004) stated that speaking in a foreign language is very difficult and competence in speaking takes a long time to improve. Learners are not free to say whatever they want, they may face difficulties and they are guided by the rules of that language. Andryani (2012, p. 2) describes speaking skill as the ability to speak the target language to communicate with others and it consists of many sub-skills such as: accuracy, fluency, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and comprehensibility. Luoma (2004:1) argues that “speaking in a foreign language is very hard and competence in speaking takes a long time to develop.” Speaking as a productive skill is not an easy task; it takes a long period of time to develop it. Richards (2008) divides speaking to three functions which are talk as interaction (use of conversational conventions and social identity), talk as transaction, and talk as performance (it deals with transmitting information before an audience).

Cole et al., (2007) stated, “Speaking is essential a collaborative and interactive process. It is an exchange. We may finish each other's comments, interrupt, disagree with or extend what is said” (p. 12). According to Lindsay and Knights (2006, p. 57), “speaking is a productive skill. It consists of putting a message together, communicating the message, and interacting with other people”.

Speaking is not only knowing its’ rule but also it is significant matter how to use these rules to communicate efficiently. Brown (2007, 219) defined communicative competence as “the aspect of our competence that enables us to transmit and interpret messages and negotiate meanings interpersonally within specific context”. speaker needs to have the ability of using
language regarding to its social environment that was further developed by Canale and Swain, 1980, Thornbury, 2005, Bachman, 1990, Brown, 2007, and Canale, 1983. The communicative competence composed of four parts: Extralinguistic knowledge, sociocultural knowledge, linguistic knowledge, and strategic knowledge.

Extralinguistic competence deals with the speakers’ ability to discuss a topic as Thornbury said that speaking includes such things as topic and cultural knowledge of the context and familiarity with the other speakers. Social cultural knowledge is the knowledge about social values and the norms of behavior in a given society, in other terms speaking the second language necessitates the learners to be aware of its norms and how to deal with this new society.

Linguistic knowledge which is used to formulate and articulate the ideas they want to express. This competence according to Brown consists of three parts: grammatical competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. Grammatical competence “encompasses knowledge of lexical items and rules of morphology, syntax, semantics, and phonology”. (Brown 2007, p.219)

Brown also stated that discourse competence “is the ability to connect sentences and to form meaningful whole out of a series utterances” (2007, p. 220). According to Canal and Swain strategic competence is how to cope in an authentic communication situation and how to keep the communicative channel open. Lindsay & Knight (2006, p.57) agreed that speaking: “is putting the messages together, transferring them and interacting with other people”. From this statement we conclude that, communication and cope with the other people is the main objective of speaking.

Speaking is as an interactive process of building meaning that consists of producing, receiving, and processing information (Brown, 1994; Burns & Joyce, 1997; Luoma, 2004). Speaking is “an interactive process of getting and evaluation of information in order to produce
meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols in a variety of contexts” (Chaney, 1998, p.13). In particular, speaking is one of the four skills which require special competencies to be developed, as it is an exchangeable affection between the teacher and the learner. For that reason, a greater opportunity of the psychological principles is being truly demanded in learning to speak. Human affective factors are essential for human language acquisition and effective communication. Therefore it is necessary to understand the general nature of human learning such as learning and training. The training of students requires a special deep psychological knowledge on the part of the teacher as well as on the part of the learner, too.

In the traditional methods of teaching language, the speaking skills had been neglected massively whereas much attention had been paid on writing and reading skills. Good example of that claim is the Grammar-Translation method. In spite of the fact that speaking skill is tremendously important for language learners to converse and communicate, much emphasize has been put to other elements of language (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). In addition, of all the four skills of language, speaking is perceived as the most significant skill because people who claim to know a language can claim that they are able to speak the language (Ur, 2000).

Nunan (2000, p.67) defines speaking as "a productive aural/oral skill and it consists of producing systematic verbal utterances to convey meaning". In addition, Hedge (2000, p.261) adds that speaking is "a skill by which they [people] are judged while their impressions are being formed ".

Speaking is the interaction between one or more interlocutors. That interaction needs the ability to comprehend the others and also to be good listeners, in order to take turns or to allow others to do so. Therefore, Speaking plays an important role in second or foreign language learning because we should communicate the message through speech. Goh (2007, p.1) states
that" as an essential tool for language teaching and learning, speaking can promote language attainment and development". In addition, Zarosdy et al (2006, p.57) argued that “of all the four complex skills (listening, reading, speaking, writing), speaking seems to be the most important as people who know a language are referred to as speakers of that language, as if speaking included all other kinds of knowing a language”.

2.1.1. Different kinds of speaking activities. Brown (2004) stated five types of speaking with regard to the speakers intentions: imitative speaking, intensive speaking, responsive speaking, interactive speaking and extensive speaking. Imitative speaking refers to listeners’ ability to repeat the others’ sounds or speech as a word phrase or sentences, this type of speaking includes grammar and lexis, the speaker must be a good listener to the pronunciation in order to help him/her to be more comprehensible for the others (Brown2004). Intensive speaking refers to speaker competence for interpreting the semantic properties so that he/she can respond immediately. This type also has some assessment tasks; it’s obliged the speaker to read aloud sentences and dialogues (Brown, 2004, p. 141). Responsive speaking “contains short conversations in a brief interaction; it is also carry a small talk and simple requests in order to maintain authenticity with only few questions or answer” (Brown 2004, p.142). Interactive speaking differs from the previous ones in terms of length and interaction. It involves two styles of languages: transactional and interpersonal. The first one refers to switch of information precisely while the second one relate to preserving social relationships. The final type of speaking is the extensive one which includes monologues, oral presentation and storytelling with more formal language.

2.1.2. The relations between speaking and listening. According to Anderson and Lynch (1988, p.15) there is a clear relationship between speaking and listening skill in the context of
عنوان و نام پژوهش: تاثیر تعاملات کلاسی بر روی ارتقاء و بهبود مهارت گفتاری زبان اموزان

استاد اصلی: دکتر رضا عبده
استاد مشاور: دکتر افشا سعید اختر
تاریخ دفاع: 1398/9/14
تعداد صفحات: 126 ص.
نام گروه/شماره پایان‌نامه:

چکیده:
برقراری روابط در کلاس یکی از وظایف بسیار مهم معلم است. داشتن روابط سالم بین معلم و زبان اموز با زبان اموز یکی از عواملی است که برای جلوگیری از عدم موفقیت اموزشی، تصمیمات اجتماعی، و محیط غیر دوستانه در کلاس اثر نشان می‌دهد. تعاملات جوی بسیار مطبوع و دانشجویان را در کلاس در روابط دوستانه می‌بینند و این روش سه‌الیکان با معلم و زبان اموزان تصمیم خوبی به دانش اموزان می‌تواند به راحتی با یکدیگر و معلم خودشان تعامل برقرار نموده و ایده‌ها و نظرات خودشان را مبادله نمایند و بصورت سلیس و بدون هیچ گونه نقد تا حدی صحبت نمایند. تعداد افرادی که برای ارتقاء و بهبود مهارت گفتاری زبان اموزان انتخاب شده‌اند، دریافتند که با وابستگی به تعاملات کلاسی، توانایی خطر پذیری را افزایش دهند. این افراد از برخی بررسی‌ها و ارزیابی‌های قبلی بگونه‌ای که ساختار زبان اموزان و معلم بر تأثیر تعاملات کلاسی بر روی مهارت گفتاری زبان اموزان و تمایل آنها برای برقراری ارتباط و افزایش سطح خطر پذیری هنگام انتخاب آنها می‌باشد. اندازه‌گیری کلیدی: تعاملات کلاسی، مهارت گفتاری، تمایل برای برقراری ارتباط و افزایش سطح خطر پذیری.
پایان نامه برای دریافت درجه پایان نامه کارشناسی ارشد در رشته آموزش زبان انگلیسی

تأثیر تعاملات کلاسی بر روي ارتقاء و بهبود مهارت گفتاری زبان آموزان

پژوهشگر:
سحر تقی لو

استاد راهنمای:
رضا عبدهی

استاد مشاور:
افسانه سعید اختیار

مهر 1398