Teacher and Student Interaction in Second Language Classroom

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to bring out the issues related to classroom interaction between teacher and learner and also among the learners who are with different kinds of thoughts, feelings, or ideas. Students can develop their ideas only when they are given enough attention in the classroom. Normally the classroom interaction helps only a few fluent students; but every learner can acquire language through interaction. The present work shows that how a classroom interaction can be an effective tool for the students, who come from different places to learn, speak, and understand English better. This study analyses both quantitative as well as qualitative data, like classroom observation towards both teacher as well as the learner. Several results show that the teacher supports the students to develop their various skills and the students try their level best to practice English in the classroom through interaction. Therefore, classroom interaction is an important subject which has a pivotal role in teaching and learning English as a second language.

***Keywords: Interaction**, L2 Classroom, Teacher support, Practice, Opportunity, Teacher's role, Role of students.*

Introduction

We are all living in a world where competition is inevitable in every sphere of life. Every day we are waking up into a new world. And in this busy world, the value of education is something very important. Teachers in today's world are taking up countless measures to teach the students. They take up many decisions and try to facilitate interactions among themselves and the students. These interactions and decisions are taken in different ways by different educators. The importance of teacher-student interaction in a second language classroom is something inevitable today. It is said that the conversation and instructional exchanges between a student and a teacher provides the best opportunity for the learners to attain their dream/target (second language) language, to test out their fluency and to get a better feedback. Teachers, who are very positive in their interaction with the students, create a positive environment for the students to speak as well as interact in the same language.

Language learning and teaching will always be possible if it is practiced almost all the time with proper guidance. Whenever we mention about the second language teaching as well as learning, there is a greater opportunity to practice that language even inside the classroom and also outside. The interaction between a student and a teacher in a second language classroom not only increases the fluency of the learner; but also the teacher gets a vast idea about the language. It will be more helpful to learn and meet students' developmental and educational needs. The different nature of interaction and its effect on language learning has four major areas:

1. The language used by the teacher to the L2 learners, where the classroom contains both native and non-native speakers.
2. The different languages used by the teacher to address a learner.
3. The type of questions asked by a teacher to the learner.
4. Types of feedback provided to a learner following the errors in second language speech.

Interaction in the classroom is significant for various reasons. It develops or leads a learner's skill to elevate him to University, to do well at University, and to relate to peers. Students from different countries have their classroom pattern which is entirely different from that of others. How these students interact in a common second language classroom is mostly strange or inappropriate in different cultural settings. Students who come from different countries bring with them different cultures and traditions. Learners will not be able to identify the difference as they travel to countries like the UK or U.S.A. In classrooms we can come across a teaching style where the teachers are the main authority and the students will be the mere listeners. They are not given the chance of interaction and in this way the class becomes very boring and difficult to make it interactive. In multicultural classes, the value that is given to both verbal, as well as non-verbal communication, can affect the distant learners. A good teacher will

assist her students to communicate in a new language. And in that process the teacher will both teach as well as learn new language and culture. Cross-cultural issues in a classroom are of a teacher's concern, when it is a multicultural one. A student will get encouraged when the teacher shows more interest in studying their culture. And in that way, one can make the students learn the second language.

Characteristics of an Interactive Teacher

Harmer (2007) observes that the role teachers take will depend on what they wish learners to achieve, but will also depend on the learners' attitudes to teacher/learner roles and relationships. Dealing with different types of students in a classroom will become difficult for at least some language teachers. The teacher gets more experienced when the children are from multicultural backgrounds and also when they do not know how to respond to what the teacher is asking them. Every teacher is expected to be interactive in the classroom. To make it happen, ".....the teacher must create a climate in which spontaneity can thrive, in which unrehearsed language can be performed, and in which the freedom of expression given over to students makes it impossible to predict everything that they will say and do" (Brown, 1994). He/she should always have control over his/her speech to carry out the interactive technique successfully. Teacher-directing or a teacher dominating classroom will always lack interactive methods. A teacher needs to take the role of a controller or facilitator. A teacher as a facilitator will always give importance to the students to discover the language through speaking/interacting with others rather than teaching/stating them about language. When a student asks for any clarification, a teacher should be there to advise and to redirect the student. These types of teaching methods are practiced by different experienced teachers in different classrooms. Example: A teacher who is an Indian with experience goes to a classroom with students from different countries; rather than going and standing in front of the classroom, she needs to sit with the students in the same row. She needs to be very friendly to make students at ease. They all start to respond and interact with her and the classroom becomes very interactive.

Here, we can understand that sitting with the students and by sharing one's thoughts and ideas with everyone makes the student's anxiety level to drop. When they saw the teacher as one of their class-mate they got even more relaxed, and natural interaction took place. Thus, the students will get motivated. The different behavior showed by a teacher will make things worse. Teachers addressing the students limitedly, criticizing them for what they have done, and reacting very negatively to their contributions are some of the behaviors a teacher should avoid. This affects more in a classroom where there are minority language children who are mainstreamed in a majority language classroom. Any type of ill-treatment or lack of attention from the teacher will affect the students' progress. It is evident that in a second language classroom, the learner will be less interactive than others.

Questioning Methods for Interactive Learning

According to David Hackett Fisher, questions are the engines of the intellect, the cerebral machines which convert energy to motion and curiosity to controlled inquiry. Talking is known to be a mean that a teacher conveys her message or ideas to the students. It is observed that most of the time teachers do talking in the classroom. And it is the primary way of controlling learner behavior. Teacher talk is important when it comes to the process of acquisition. It is an essential factor for an organization because it either succeeds or fails the teacher in implementing the strategies.

In a second language classroom, where the students do not have enough materials/tools to maintain a language, the teacher's interaction becomes a stepping-stone for the communication. The correct questioning in an interactive classroom can have many functions. The questions asked by the teacher will provide the students an opportunity to produce the language without risking the language themselves. Learners usually become afraid when they are given a topic or when they are asked a question. It becomes very difficult for them to answer in a second language. Asking a lot of questions does not make a class more interactive. Certain questions may even make the learners less interactive. Example: spending a lot of time on a question to which the teacher knows the answer already. In this situation the students become weary of the artificial content because it does not require any further information.

One of the important ways to create an interactive classroom is that the teacher should initiate first. However, it is the teacher who sustains the continuation of the interaction. These stimuli which are used by the teacher to continue the interaction is important throughout the lesson. With these kinds

of interaction and guidance the classroom interaction will be communicative. But one of the drawbacks is that the students will get easily distracted and have the tendency to move away from the objective of the lesson. The two factors of an interactive classroom is that, firstly, the 'wait time'. Many researches have shown that a wait time of five minutes should be given to a second language learner to answer the question which is asked by the teacher. There are many reasons to use all question types in ELT classrooms that different types of questions will be more or less appropriate to the teacher's immediate goal (Walsh, 2006).

Secondly, the different questioning strategies are helpful for the learners in the field of communication. When a teacher asks a question to a beginning level ESL classroom, the student might not be prepared for that. But the teacher should know how much 'wait time' she should provide to the student. If more time is given, sometimes, it will be so hard to come back to the topic that is being taught in the class. And while doing this the student might get humiliated in front of the class. Hence, the 'wait time' needs to be moderate.

a. *Type of questions*

In an early study conducted the L1 classroom distinguished the question into 'open' and 'closed' questions. L2 researchers distinguished between 'specific' and 'general information' questions. Both of these divisions separate the questions which expect only a particular answer i.e.; questions like "what is your name?", "how old are you?" only has a specific answer and which expect a brief answer i.e. "how was your trip to London?" When the concern towards the communication in a language classroom attained a growth, a further differentiation also took place between 'display' and 'referential'. Display questions are those in which the student will know the answer to the question asked and referential is the type of question in which the student will not know the answer. It is said that the referential questions will promote more learner productivity and the latter will promote more meaningful communication between the student and the teacher.

The final picture which we get from the classroom interaction when a teacher asks a question is that the question alone does not promote any interaction unless the teacher should be aware of the pitfalls of closed or fast or vague questions that are asked and the teacher also should know that she is asking the same question again and again.

Importance of Group Work

The other strategies apart from questioning, which provides good communication in a second language classroom is group work or pair work. This gives rise to effective interaction in classrooms. Encouraging the students to provide their strategies will increase the amount of learner's interaction. Even speech or lecturing on a topic or any kind of presentation and the involvement of students while reading a text contribute very much for the effective interaction.

> The discussion is based on the idea that it is not the currency of the instructional method used that matters most, but rather a fuller understanding of classroom interaction (Allwright and Bailey, 1991).

A student will learn a foreign language when she gets to interact in a group. There will be more people in a group to speak for or against the topic and therefore there is more possibility for discussion. Group discussion is not limited to those students who are not very open. The learner, who finds it difficult to pre-set her ideas in front of the class or the teacher, will come up with brilliant ideas if she is in a small group. When students work in a group, there is a possibility of at least one to solve the problem. At times, it is very difficult to make a class interactive. There will be some students who are inaudible and who are withdrawn. But this method of grouping students becomes so effective because even the more reluctant ones will start to speak. When the students are divided into pairs it is possible that even the teacher can become the pair of anyone learner. He might be a student who should need more attention than others. It is always acceptable to give individual attention only if a teacher has a limited number of students in a classroom.

Some of the major advantages of group work are that:

1. It changes the role of a teacher as an instructor or a facilitator and allows him or her to give more attention to the students. The teachers will provide the help that is needed for the students and will correct all the conversational errors that take place while they are interacting with each other.

2. When the task gets simpler, the participation of students will be more. And through this group work the students will also get a chance to know their peers. When one group mates share any idea/point, she or he has to explain why she has taken that point. And In this way there is a chance for face to face interaction and will have many conversational exchanges.

This increases the interaction between not only among the students but also in-between a teacher and a learner. And he/she will get more familiar with the second language.

Error Correction/ Feedback

The relationship between a learners' perception add the learning can only be identified through a feedback session. Error and its treatment is far from straight forward, to the extent that, when describing teachers' possible responses to errors and mistakes, the term 'correction' is perhaps too narrow and we can use the more general term 'repair'(Hall, 2011). It is only through effective feedback that one could identify and discuss the positive outcomes that a learner produces. Good and spontaneous feedback will always give the best learning outcomes. An effective teacher can always go around the class and monitor the groups. The teacher can listen to students, offer her suggestions over their ideas of students, and can also criticize the ideas. It is said that, even doing error correction of a speech is likely to have a negative attitude for the students. The students should be always willing to express themselves. There are even more researches which mentions that, when a teacher does any error correction, it does not show any positive effect over the students.

Errors usually take place when a learner learns a new language. It is through these errors that a learner learns. Error correction should not be an obsession for a teacher. A teacher correcting the error in a language might be helpful for some children. But it will not be useful for some people or in some classrooms. Correction done within the groups or doing self-correction with the guidance of the teacher will always be worthwhile of time and effort for some teachers as well as the learners. Moreover, a good/well-managed group will always give spontaneous feedback for the error made by any group member.

Usually in Second Language classes, the teacher moves around the class, while the students are doing group works. In such a classroom, error correction will be delayed. If a student makes an error, then that error can be cleared by a teacher at the end of the class.   Only when the student finishes the task the error can be pointed out and this method is quite valuable, because in this method the teacher will not point out who made the error. But still the interaction between the learner and a teacher will continue.

Error correction has the immediate effect of putting the student on the defensive. It encourages a strategy in which the student will try to avoid mistakes, avoid difficult constructions, focus less on meaning, and more on form. It may disrupt the entire communicative focus on an exchange (Krashen, 2003).

One of how a teacher can give feedback or can correct error is that she can make the students not only verbally but also write on the board, so that every student will get the chance to correct their answer. If any student makes any mistake rather than rebuking them, the teacher herself will ask the students to re-read the answer and will ask to see whether the answer is correct or wrong. The liveliness of the classroom becomes so increased when this type of method is being used. The students will use a more positive attitude to use English and to speak English.

The interaction in a second language classroom is known to be the most critical issue which concerns the formal second language learning. Although the above article suggests how the current teaching methods are helpful in this present world, the complete picture is yet to be completed. The researches have proven that the teachers are less interested to address the second language students when there are native speakers in the classroom. Teachers should pay greater attention to the question asked, the time duration of the question, and also should give greater attention to the content. Finally, a teacher's feedback is considered to be a complex phenomenon with several functions. Through the error correction done by the teacher the classroom interaction automatically leads to learning.

Feedback is known to be one of the important and beneficial aspects of interaction which can promote learning very well. According to Mackey (2013) through interaction that involves feedback, the attention of the learners is paid to the form of errors and are pushed to create modification. For a good learner there will be feedback as well as error where they will call back at each other and will correct themselves. However, the feedback given by the teacher will entirely be different from the

feedback given by the learner, because the teacher will use many kinds of correction strategies according to the situation.

Mackey (2013) brings out two types of feedback, explicit and implicit feedback. Explicit feedback is defined as any feedback that states the learners do not use the second language correctly while they are speaking to someone. This type of feedback is also known as metalinguistic feedback because the teachers provide the linguistic form of their errors. In implicit feedback there will be a request for clarification. The teacher will rephrase the utterances by changing one or two sentences. There are many studies which show that the explicit feedback is more effective than the implicit one. And this means that in explicit feedback the teacher draws the attention, straight to the errors made by the students, so that the students will not use that type of error again.

The Influence of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing Skills in a Second Language Classroom

English has four main language skills namely, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. And in these four major skills the important one is speaking. But to this statement there arises an opposition. Nunan (1999) introduced listening as the main skill in second language learning as well as speaking. He claimed that, if we have to work or function in one language then we can speak that language itself. A teacher who teaches the learner should use all these four skills. Each of these four skills has its value. A teacher can only identify a student whether if she or he is good in thinking capacity she has to give the task related to listening. The same happens when it comes to the other three skills i.e., speaking, reading, and writing. The teacher has to give the related task like reading comprehension, or asking the learner to speak on a topic for a few minutes or to write about something. Many critics pointed out that speaking skills is an important part of the curriculum and in language teaching.

Teachers should set big standards for effective English as a second language classroom. It is the teachers who should work to create the needful condition for the students to interact and to learn and to get the desired outcome. He listening and speaking skills works simultaneously. They are interrelated in real-life situations also. These skills produce meaningful communication. Whereas the reading and writing skills form a relationship where the written communication will be improved. Some of the activities that the teacher can promote with the help of all these four major skills to improve the interaction are:

- Listening- listen to a song and try to identify the meaning (Group activity).
- Speaking- reciting poems, giving greetings, dialogue creation (individual activity).
- Reading- reading out the instructions of any games in a group (group activity).
- Writing- to write a sentence that describes the feelings and emotions, a journal entry, a dialogue script (individual activity).

Reading and listening comes under receptive skills and speaking and writing are classified into productive skills. Speaking and writing are known as productive skills because they produce language. While we utter any word it gives us a chance to communicate or interact with everyone. If a class has to be interactive then both the students as well as the teacher should know speaking skills. One of the disadvantages of learning English as a second language is that the students do not use the language every time. There are situations where the teacher teaches English in other languages. And when these types of cases occur students stick on to their mother tongue. They give the least importance to the second language. Dakowska (2012) mentions that speaking has become the most important skill in the field of foreign language learning and the most difficult skill to develop in the classroom environment. Students use the targeted language while they are in the classroom. But when the class gets over they go back to their first language or mother tongue. Only by practicing and through regular interaction one can attain the second language. Penny Ur in her book titled '*A course in language teaching*', indicates:

> … of all the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), speaking seems intuitively the most important: people who know a language are referred to as „speakers" of that language, as if speaking included all other kinds of knowing; and many if not most foreign languages learners are primarily interested in learning to speak (Ur, 1996: 120).

Interactive Teaching and its Effect

There is a widespread agreement that only when there is an effective teaching takes place; an effective interaction occurs. In the classroom, communication is mostly initiated and maintained by the teachers. They, as a key holder of classroom communication, play prominent roles to manage the classroom participation and stimulate student language production (Hanna Sundari , 2017). In the traditional way of teaching the only resource which was available for a learner was a teacher. There are other resources such as blackboard, textbooks, pen/paper, etc. But inside a classroom the interaction took place only between the student and a teacher or between the students itself. Interactive teaching is mostly used in a classroom where the whole class of learners behaves in the same way. At least a few will disagree with the notion that the motivated students are much easier to teach and also they learn more. Before interacting with the students the teacher should get some idea about the learners.

> For a real interaction to take place in a classroom, the teacher has to step out of the limelight. She should be able to accept all kinds of opinions and also should tolerate the errors students make while they are trying to communicate (Rivers, 2000).

Their culture, tradition, learning style, and even the speaking style will be different from that of other students. A teacher cannot impose her knowledge on the learners. First she should understand the learner and then she should proceed. It is said that a student should utilize the full knowledge of a teacher. When the teacher becomes friendly, then only the learners will tend to interact. A teacher should create a welcoming learning environment. The students should feel comfortable and important. Then only they will start to speak. There are researches which proved that the teacher's expectation has a powerful effect on the student's performance.

The classroom should be always positive and open for the learners. The learners should understand that the classroom is a place where there will be disagreement and discussions. Through an interactive classroom the students develop a sense of commitment and community to their peers. The interaction of the teacher and the students' reactions to her are determined by some factors. They are- level of proficiency, characters, intelligence, confidence, and motivation. The students who are highly-motivated make the process of communication easier and also the teachers find it easier to teach them.

Conclusion

The prime motive of an L2 teacher is to make the students interact in the classroom. This article gives a brief idea about the different methods a teacher can use in a second language classroom to make the classroom quiet interactive. The first point is about how a teacher can be more interactive with the students. It describes how a teacher should be in the classroom. She should not be dominating and she should give more time for the student's ideas. She should make the students speak out. The second point is that, the different types of questioning methods for making a classroom more interactive. The interaction takes place based on the type of question a teacher asks i.e. whether it is 'open' or 'closed' type of questions. The third point deals with the importance of group work and group activity. There are many advantages in increasing the interaction between a student and a teacher while in group work. It changes the role of a teacher who is a trainer to a facilitator and also the students' participation will be more when it comes to group work. The fourth point is doing the error correction or giving the feedback correctly. A learner or a student can always improve his/her interactive skills when a teacher gives her feedback. Next, the article gives a brief description of the four skills of language i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It describes how these four skills are important and helpful in improving the interaction of a student and a learner.

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