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A Qualitative Study on School Teachers' Perspectives Regarding Speaking English in ESL Classrooms

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Abstract

The study aims to investigate teaching practices of ESL teachers in their classrooms to develop and assess the oral proficiency of students. Moreover, this paper further investigates the evaluation criteria of these teachers for assessing the oral proficiency of their students. In this qualitative study Semi-structured interviews with 20 ESL teachers working in different private and public sector universities were conducted in Pakistan. Data transcribed from interviews was coded and analysed in terms of Grounded theory. The results suggested that teachers use multiple techniques to engage students in oral activities based on group discussions and presentations. Oral activities were integrated with other writing and reading tasks. Activities were carefully planned as per students' need and evaluation criteria were pre assigned to students for assessing their oral proficiency. The assigned criteria seemed to be flexible focusing more on fluency and confidence.

Keywords: EFL teaching, oral proficiency, integrated learning, communicative competence, assessment of speaking skills

Introduction

One of the reasons of learning English as a Second language is to learn communicative competence and be able to interact with people. The university education in Pakistan is carried out in English where one of the learning goals is to enable students learn communication in English. The English speaking course enables students engage in possibilities of using English in different social contexts and to develop their ability to express themselves with a range of ideas and word choices. The development of oral skills is considered as an influential key for students' learning. Speaking is taken as the most impressive language skill in learning a language like English. To enhance speaking skills is one of the criteria of students and also for teachers who employ a range of English speaking skills in their classes (Martínez, 2018). English functions as a Lingua franca in the globalised world of today, it is essential for students to be competent in



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communication skills. It is important for teachers to train students for enhanced communication in English. (Olsson, 2018). The vital importance that English language enjoys in the Pakistan education system is due to the fact that it is linked with students' success. English is thus taught in most schools, colleges and universities from initial classes; English is a compulsory course until the first and second year of higher secondary and college level education. Pakistani students are additionally exposed to literature and books available in English, through media and internet. Students are therefore motivated to learn English because they aspire for a prosperous career, with better professional gains (Pathan, Shahriar, & Mari, 2010). Students aim to be counted in educated class of Pakistan who communicate successfully in English and perform various functions.

The following study is based on the teaching methodologies in English speaking classroom where teacher employ various tasks and tests to assess students' language proficiency through oral activities (Kimura, Mattson, & Amory, 2017). Speaking activities and placement tests are an important part of English competency program since they help in students' assessment. Placement tests grade students' English proficiency and place them into a certain level i.e. basic, intermediate or advance level of a language program. The following study investigate the significance and impact of instructional techniques adopted in speaking classes for improving L2 proficiency, comprehensibility and speech (Galante & Thomson, 2016). According to research, tasks assigned during the class provide L2 learners with many opportunities to learn their target language. For this reason, teachers of English provide a number of activities to their students to practice English speaking. The range of activities is not limited as most teachers choose a combination of speaking ideas for equipping students with the required fluency in English. Repeating tasks offer a wide range of advantages to second language learner since they improve their familiarity with language terms and aspects (Azkarai & García Mayo, 2016). It is studied that to what extent L2 learners interact in their L1 as they carry out communicative tasks; moreover it is also analysed that how repetition of tasks in L2 help learners use less L1 during language classes. For this reason, teachers of English ensure regular classes of speaking skills where students perform various communicative tasks in English. The activities are repeated for greater learning opportunities designed for students.

Objectives of the Study

The following study aims at exploring the notion that how oral proficiency is taught in the ESL classrooms in Pakistani universities by examining teachers' point of views on students' oral skills and performance; additionally the activities and method of teaching English speaking skills by teachers are also discussed. The study is based on 20 in-depth interviews with ESL university teachers to analyse their teaching style in classroom. The techniques used by the ESL teachers to establish students' speaking skills English are thus analyzed.

The followings are the objectives of the study

1. To learn about ESL teachers preferred method of teaching speaking skills to students



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2. To determine the activities used by the ESL teachers that help students improve their English speaking skills. The study is therefore an attempt to help students learn better speaking competence in English.

Research Questions

The study investigates the teaching style of ESL teachers and methods of assessing and evaluating students' in English speaking classes. To explore the phenomenon further, the study answers the following questions:

1. What are the activities and techniques that ESL teachers use for helping students' develop oral proficiency in English?
2. How ESL teachers evaluate students' performance in the target language?

Limitation and Delimitation of the Study:

The study that follows is not impeccable since it does not include students' opinion about the kind of teaching practices they are part of. The findings of the study are thus generalized due to restriction of time employed for the study and not involving insights from students. Besides, another limitation of the study is the fact that only oral competence of English language is investigated and not the other language skills like writing or reading and listening. There is a need to carry our further research for ESL teachers' role in helping students improve their English reading, writing and listening skills.

Literature Review

Communicative competence, oral proficiency and assessment of oral proficiency are three **hypothetical** perceptions which are appropriate for this study. For the English as a subject its curriculum is established on the concept of communicative competence, so that students would be provided the opportunity to cultivate overall communicative skills by using English language in practical and meaningful contexts (Skolverket, 2011c). While, teaching foreign language, the improvement of oral proficiency shows a vital role, as; it is closely associated to all zones of competence (Malmberg, 1993). Teaching of speaking skill is a vital part of the evaluation of oral proficiency because language instructors are always observing to evaluate and judge learners' capability to express their competence and interact in the English language (Myndigheten för skolutveckling, 2001; Lazaraton, 2014). The objective of each speaking classroom is communicative competence where teaching is focused toward the constituents on administrative, pragmatic, systematic and psychomotor (Brown, 1994). Brown (1994) explains that accurate language and actual-world responsibilities allow pupils to understand the importance of classroom activities to their future communicative objectives by presenting natural texts rather than artificial ones where students will participate in the activity and sufficient care is given to language use and not just usage, to fluency and not just accuracy, to realistic language and contexts and to how these students' apply the learning in real life situations so that communicative goals would be achieved. Besides, he believed that the learner exploits on his 'strategic investment' in learning the aimed language. He considers methods and ways to develop his proficiency of the language and is directly elaborate his specific learning development. So everyone must know that tactics used vary in each condition subject to the learner in resolving the difficulties or responsibilities given to him.



Communicative Competence

The progress of communicative competences is viewed as an essential objective in language teaching. A sociolinguist Dell Hymes has devised the term “communicative (TakkaçTulgar, 2015) have proposed different models of communicative competence. For instance, Canale and Swain’s (1980; as cited in TakkaçTulgar, 2015) model comprise of grammatical competence, which talk about the understanding of vocabulary and grammar; competence related to sociolinguistic, which is required to familiarize our communication to diverse conditions and social contexts; discourse competence, which shows shape speech; and strategic competence, which helps resolving possible issues in communication. Van Ek (1986; as cited in Malmberg, 2001) enhances two other competences to the list: sociocultural competence, which is the acquaintance of culture and society, and social competence, which contains motivation, empathy and a determination to interact. In Bachman’s (1990; as cited in TakkaçTulgar, 2015) model, first time added “Pragmatic Competences” and it references the capability to apply the language according to the society and cultural context.. According to the CEFR, sociolinguistic competences mention to social conventions, linguistic competences consist of knowledge of vocabulary and grammar and pragmatic competences have to do with the functions of language (Council of Europe, 2001). In curricula the idea of communicative competence has had a main role since the early 1980s (Malmberg, 1993; Myndighetenfor skolutveckling, 2001; Skolverket, 2011b). The curriculum guidelines for upper secondary school show that teachers would give support to students in their language and communicative progress (Skolverket, 2011b), and the curriculum for the English Language (Skolverket, 2011c) should include the communicative approach teaching foreign language. In 1970s communicative language teaching (CLT) is initiated and it is centered on Hymes’s (1968; as cited in Duff, 2014) knowledge of communicative competence. According to this idea interaction should be the main focus of learning process. Malmberg (1993) describes the features of CLT, which, contain modifying the materials to the group, using authentic texts in communication, creating a pleasant atmosphere in the classroom and providing space for communication, seeing students’ language mistakes as a natural portion of the method of language acquisition.

Oral proficiency

In the new curriculum, oral proficiency is much highlighted and it is considered very important for the progress of learners' language. Furthermore, in real life, the significance of oral proficiency is much greater than in the classroom, as the pupils' communication skills will depend on the proficiency of their spoken language. In addition, more new issues that, for instance, are debated on the media, such as the new steering documents, are found more appropriate and of more interest by society (Denscombe, 2004). Through sound knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, a variety of skills in different areas of oral competence can be organized to communicate successfully for L2 learners’ need. Hedge (2000) discusses that there are three core skills involved: firstly; unique kinds of speaking conditions, secondly; managing interaction and thirdly; making oneself understood. On the other hand, Lazaraton (2014) determines the competence of L2 speaking through the factors of fluency, accuracy, appropriacy and authenticity. Fluency includes distributing information quickly; appropriacy states to adjusting to the



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sociocultural context, accuracy means compatibility to the language system; and authenticity refers to using texts produced for non-language-learning purposes. Following the CEFR policy documents, distinguish interaction and production regarding both speaking and writing, as interaction and production need diverse competences (Borjesson, 2012). Instructors can practice an extensive diversity of both interactive and productive tasks to help their learners to cultivate their oral proficiency. For instance, productive tasks include narrations and descriptions whereas interactive tasks include discussions, interviews and, conversations (Sundell, 2001). According to Lazaraton (2014), in the L2 speaking class discussions are the most commonly used activity, further common activities are role plays, presentations, conversations, and accuracy-based speaking activities such as drills, where learners repeat a word or sentence in order to practice a sound or intonation. Tongco, as cited by Prejoles (1997) in her study, believed that problems in oral communication remained to come with a challenge to language instructors and instructors and language experts have been searching for different methods to make language teaching effective and relevant. Freeman, as cited by Prejoles (1997), considers that communicative competence would be increased if the pupils are prepared to sense that they are learning communicative skills, performing some functions targeting social context, not just collecting familiarity of vocabulary and formation of sentence structures. Oral communication is vital in all areas of individuals' life. Its purpose is to encourage, effect relationships, share and inform and reveal information. In a nutshell, oral proficiency focuses on the learners' oral skills.

Assessment of oral proficiency

Due to the intricate nature of the making of oral proficiency, language instructors must have a rich understanding of what speaking is to assure reliable evaluation protocols (Luoma, 2004). Furthermost, they must contemplate the superior nature of spoken vocabulary and spoken grammar. Speech is seen as less refined than transcribed language in terms of grammar and vocabulary, and it is ordered in notion units or phrasal chains instead of whole sentences (Milton, 2013). Moreover, language instructors must understand that speech is based on interaction, which suggests that speakers respond to each other and wait for their turns. The suggestions of these ideas in terms of evaluation contain that teacher are not supposed to need students to practice phrases and advanced terminology in speaking examinations, and that instructors should appreciate the use of communication strategies (Luoma, 2004). The action of speaking occurs in actual time and it includes several diverse features such as pausing, sound production system, rhythm and monitoring interaction, many other resources like grammar and vocabulary. Consequently, speaking is frequently viewed as the most problematic skill to evaluate reliably among the customary four skills (reading, listening, speaking and writing). The use of analytic assessment protocols which is centered on different categories or aspects, instead of holistic which is based on a worldly judgment is endorsed by the CEFR, as logical evaluation protocols encourage a nearer reflection and minimize the risk of basing assessment on one or two language aspects (Rydell, 2014). It is significant to define the assessment categories as lucidly as possible in order to make reliable evaluations (Brown, 2007). For instance, Brown (2007) delivers a list of six diverse principles that may be used in logical assessments; which includes the assessment of phonation,



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vocabulary, fluency, grammar, discourse sorts such as appropriateness and cohesion, and completing the aim of the task. In any event, EFL/ESL instructors must produce various and diverse occasions for output, particularly in the shape of interaction, to give a solid base for evaluation (Ellis, 2014). Lazaraton (2014) states that for the assessment of speaking there is always provided a very little guidance. In order to design their evaluation, EFL/ESL instructors in Sweden tend to rely on the syllabus, the national evaluation criteria and the course goals (Myndigheten forskolutveckling, 2008). Yet, the certified requirements concerning learning goals are regularly observed as vague or ambiguous (Olovsson, 2014). Instructors can also resort to the CEFR, which now guides language coaching policies, planning, and assessment in the European Union (Duff, 2014). Nevertheless, assessment rests a debatable subject, as categorizing disparities have been identified all over the country (Skolverket, 2017).

Authenticity of Pedagogical Materials

Lazaraton (2014) suggests that it is essential for instructors to have a close critical look at their educational materials, as many of them are insufficient in terms of language content, procedure, and textual legitimacy. In terms of the teaching method, Rydell (2014) recommends various conversational activities in pedagogical resources lack emphasizes on interaction strategies such as the provision of response. Concerning authenticity, dialogues in textbooks have developed more real and natural, even though they are quiet established on the standards and norms of transcribed language and on stereotypical views on turn-taking (Wong & Waring, 2010). Cullen (2007), Lazaraton (2014) and Wong (2010) criticize the point that the massive mainstream of printed materials used in pedagogy for foreign language acquiring is in short of authenticity and argue that the aspects of spoken language should be educated and assimilated into training materials. In this way, the standards applied for spoken English in EFL/ESL instruction should be centered on conclusions in the regions of corpus linguistics and conversation analysis (Lazaraton, 2014). For instance, spoken corpus linguistics has revealed that, unlike artificially produced dialogues, spoken language is organized in phrasal chains as a replacement for sentences and encloses collocations and reluctance and discourse markers, as well as elements that would be considered ungrammatical in writing (Lazaraton, 2014). In a study about the grammar of spoken language grounded on corpus-research, Cullen (2007) suggests that majority of EFL/ESL textbooks required coverage of structures of spoken grammar. These scholars focused on three kinds of standard spoken grammar features: fixed lexicogrammatical units, creative grammatical creations and apparently not related to the grammatical structures. Productive grammatical constructions contain noun phrase prefaces and tags, the use of past continuous tense as a substitute of standard past tense to introduce reported speech, and situational ellipsis, which is the exclusion of elements which can be inferred from the situational perspective. Lexicogrammatical units typical of spoken grammar may contain of single lexemes such as really or actually, particles such as type of and kind of, imprecision tags such as or something, transforming expressions like a bit, and discourse markers such as you know and I mean.

Research Methodology:

In this section methods used in this study and the details regarding the choice of participants will be explained. Moreover, ethical consideration and limitations



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involved in the study will be discussed.

Participants

The participants for the current study are 20 interviews with ESL teachers of different universities in Pakistan including 11 male teachers and 09 females. All these teachers work in different private and public sector universities in Pakistan and hold considerable number of teaching experiences in ESL teaching.

All the interviewees will be referred to as respondent1, R2, R3 and up to R20 in the transcriptions to keep the data anonymous yet comprehensive. A brief account to the respondents will be offered below to contextualize the data for generalizability.

The teachers interviewed for the current research including PhD and MS scholars and the rest have 16 years of education in the relevant subject. Teachers are of different age groups and have varying professional experiences. The most experienced teacher has taught English for fifteen years and the rest have been teaching for five to ten years. Variation in the professional experience and qualification of the participants proved to be favorable for the study. Teachers with different professional experience had multiple perceptions regarding speaking skills in ESL classrooms.

Respondents' details				Codes
	Gender	Age	Experience	
Respondent 1	Female	32	8	R1
Respondent 2	Female	26	1	R2
Respondent 3	Female	34	6	R3
Respondent 4	Female	39	8	R4
Respondent 5	Female	30	8	R5
Respondent 6	Male	32	5	R6
Respondent 7	Male	29	2	R7
Respondent 8	Male	31	4	R8
Respondent 9	Female	32	4	R9
Respondent 10	Female	26	2	R10
Respondent11	Male	29	3	R11
Respondent 12	Male	31	4	R12
Respondent 13	Male	35	2	R13
Respondent 14	Male	30	3	R14
Respondent 15	Male	32	5	R15
Respondent 16	Female	30	5	R16
Respondent 17	Male	30	3	R17
Respondent 18	Male	37	2	R18
Respondent 19	Male	59	15	R19
Respondent 20	Female	29	10	R20

Table A: Respondents' details

Data Collection

Data has been collected in form of interviews to give the respondents free hand to share their feelings, perceptions and experiences regarding speaking practices in ESL classroom in Pakistan.



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Moreover, keeping in view that interviews can get detailed insight of the teaching practices and the complexity involved in the phenomenon of oral proficiency in ESL classroom in Pakistan semi-structured interviews were chosen. Questions were formulated for an open-ended response giving freedom to the respondent for personalized responses.

For the semi-structured interview 6 questions were constructed under the given four themes: Medium of instruction for oral proficiency, classroom environment, integrated learning and assessment for oral proficiency. The complete interview protocol is in Appendix 1.

Twenty semi-structured interviews were conducted with different English teachers, all teaching in different private and public sector universities in Karachi. Most of the teachers were interviewed during or after their working hours in their institutes. All the interviews were voice recorded and later transcribed.

Analysis of Interviews

Grounded theory has been chosen as an approach to analyze the data in this research in order to investigate the best practices adopted by teachers for speaking skills in ESL classrooms. Grounded theory is commonly associated with semi-structured interviews to collect rich qualitative data in the form of interview transcriptions. New theories are developed based on the ideas and patterns found in the data in this inductive approach of data analysis. Grounded theory demands the researchers to be as open-minded as possible for investigating the available data to reach a hypothesis based on the results of the study.

Open-ended interview questions were designed to get a detailed insight of the teaching practices and opinions regarding the research questions by the participants. After transcribing the interviews initial coding was done to the collected data. For initial coding data was scrutinized to develop different categories and found patterns in the data. The next step towards final analysis was focus coding based on the similarity of ideas and categories formed after constant comparison of initial coding. Codes were further analyzed to identify the key concepts that are more relevant to the research to generate themes.

Ethical considerations

Research Ethics were taken into consideration in this research while data collection. All the data including transcriptions and audio files is kept confidential and privacy is maintained. Participants' information is kept anonymous and their identity and the name of their institutes are not revealed. Participants were informed about the aims and objective of the research beforehand and consent was taken from all the participants. Moreover, they were informed of their right to withdraw from the research at any stage, during or after the interview are taken.

Thematic Analysis

Theme 1 (Goal of teaching speaking skills)

Teachers have different perceptions regarding speaking skills and they set goals for teaching speaking skills accordingly. Following are the prominent themes revealed in the analysis of interview protocols.

Communicative Competences

The goal of teaching speaking skills is based on the communicative proficiency.



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Speaking plays an important role in field of second language learning and teaching and the main goal of speaking is to improve the communicative skills of the students. This is one of the most important themes which have been noticed through the session of the interviews with the different respondents who were focusing on multiple varieties in order to improve the speaking fluency of the students by adopting and involving in interactive discussion and giving them topics to speak up in front of other students.

“...I always focus on the target language and my believe is that students should be given an environment where they are able to speak English regardless of their mistakes they make in the class, regardless of the grammar problems they should be able to use target language only, correct or incorrect that comes later” (R7)

Speaking is something that always comes with persistent practice and a sense of adaptability. Students feel reluctant to speak in the target language unless they are given such an encouraging environment where they are not accounted for their mistakes rather they are motivated to practice language. It is believed and observed that communicative language teaching of the students is focused on the real life situations that involve communication.

“..I adopt various techniques: one of which is the pair and share technique. I divide the students into pairs where they are already given a guideline or prompts, according to which they carry out their discussion” (R6)

Teachers believe that students learn better and practice language more confidently if the tasks assigned to them or the activities executed in the class are of their interest “..if you want them to enjoy speaking we should keep very light connected task with speaking instead of thick compact and tiring” (R9). Another respondent believes that students feel bored doing same kind of activities everyday so the teacher brings variation in the tasks everyday “I change the activity every day what I mostly do is to ask my students speak extempore so that they can speak English naturally on random topics.” (R14)

Hence, it can be deduced that students develop better communicative competence if they are engaged in such activities where they get a chance to interact in informal settings and be creative in particular. Tasks assigned to them should prompt for real life communication encourages them to practice language.

Confidence building

Motivating students towards language learning and building their confidence create opportunities for the students to be psychologically and mentally prepared to participate in conversational activities with other students. Oral proficiency of the students has always been a key figure by creating environment for the students to build up their confidence and to utilize the students' innate abilities towards better and effective communicative strategies in learning a second language. Almost all the teachers interviewed believe that rehabilitating students' confidence in speaking is the most important element in learning a second language.

“...The illusionary perception of being exposed prevents them from speaking fluently. I try and eradicate this fear out of their systems so that they speak in a more natural way.” (R6)

It has been found that the teachers are in favor of restoring the students' confidence and to make them able to utilize their own innate abilities in a learning environment for the students in speaking classes.



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Theme 2 (Activities used for teaching speaking skills)

Teachers use a number of activities for the enhancement of students speaking skills with multi directional strategies. Different activities have different strategies in building up students speaking skills and promote the concept of learning.

Role play

It has most importantly been observed that teachers adopt role play for improving students speaking skills. Students pretend to be indulged in different social contexts and have a variety of social roles. Role play activities makes students versatile in context with the pretext of being and feeling by imitating the most prominent characters of the world and in this manner students become very active in participating class activities.

“.... I divided them in pairs and give them time to discuss their dialogues. Then I invite pair after pair the students on the stage and to speak their dialogues. It proves to be very useful to improve their speaking skill and listening skill.” (R8)

Teacher identified that students are unable to communicate in social settings. They need to learn to interact in different formal and informal situations for which teachers believe that role ply is the best possible solution.

“They really don’t know how to behave in the informal situations. We have to put them in different situations that we have to design such activities to cater different needs of the class.” (R9)

Playing different roles in the given formal or informal settings **improve the communicative competence of students. Students not only learn to interact in real life situations** but they also gain confidence of speaking when the converse with each other. **It is found on the experimentation of the teacher that role play can bring outstanding changes in the behavior of the students in learning a particular language because such activities bring students closer to each other and make them more active in participating speaking session and in this manner a teacher is supposed to provide the basic information of the subject being discussed in role play activity.**

English as Medium of Instruction (EMI)

On the other hand, there has been a huge inclination towards the implementation of English in class room can enhance the interest of the students to speak up in the class. English medium instruction (EMI) plays a crucial role in rehabilitating the students’ instincts and to give them environment of speaking.

“. I always speak English in the class whether it’s part of the lecture, classroom discussion or casual chitchat, even outside the class I speak in the target language with students. I believe that if we switch language if we come toward code-switching so it will not create that environment, the environment that should be in the classroom.” (R7)

English as medium of instruction motivates the learner to speak in the target language. Teacher is a role model to student. They follow the patterns. If the teacher speaks in English all the time they get enough input of the language to internalize the correct structures which they later on use in their own speech as one of the respondent said. “If a teacher speaks English in the class, students are



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motivated to speak the language themselves.” (R19)

English medium instruction can engage the students to develop their confidence and make oneself away from errors and it will become the habit of the students to speak in the class as well as to spread it more outside the institutions because in today’s arena a large number of international and national universities carrying out their curriculum in English.

Theme 3 (integration of speaking with other skills)

Integration of speaking with listing, reading and writing are linked with each other and as a teacher it is very necessary to develop multiple skills among students because it is obvious that if you focus on student’s oral proficiency and ignore the other parts of learning then it will look very odd to manage the class and students automatically become very dunce in other skills. It is very natural in the modern day to engage students in reading, writing, speaking and listening.

Speaking and listening standards are the need of the students to develop a range of mainly productive oral communication and interpersonal skills, students are supposed to learn and to work together, express and listen attentively to concepts and to integrate information. One of the respondents shared his method of integrating speaking with listening and writing. (R7)

“I had given a task to my students. I told them to listen to a Ted Talk, after listening to the ted talk of approx 15-20 minutes, they had to write down, they had to summarize that ted talk in their own words and later on they had to come in front of the class and they had to present that speech.” (R7)

Moreover speaking along with reading enables the students to voice their opinions regarding whatever they have read. One of the respondents shared how they integrate receptive with productive skills.

“....sometimes when they read a text and finish it off, they are encouraged to speak about it. This way, they feel themselves better able to voice their opinions about a certain excerpt.” (R6)

Teachers were very satisfied and confident that integrating on another is the part of learning and as an English teacher you should motivate your students in order to gain a wider knowledge of the language. Integrating learning is part of the development of language learning and students themselves get interested in class activities which resort towards positivity.

Theme 4 (Assessment of speaking skills)

A teacher is supposed to be very cautious while assessing students speaking skills because sometimes it creates discrimination among students. Teachers believe that students should be assigned with different activities in the class and they should be given freedom to express themselves. It suggests that whenever you give your students freedom of expression it further more creates the mode of environment because students feel themselves confident and become too frank with other students in the class. In this zone of learning teacher should have friendly discussion with the students in order to



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assess them openly?

Formative Assessment

Respondents of this study believed that formative assessment is an integral part of language learning. Where formal assessments are part of the exam policy, there should always be an ongoing formal assessment to provide feedback and feed forward to the students. Teachers think that assessment should not be meant for evaluating the skills and language proficiency of students, rather it should be a part of the learning process.

“I do it for their betterment to show them where they stand to show them where they need to work and improve themselves. The thing is that I do not assess them with the intention of drawing a conclusion.” (R10)

Respondents view the importance of assessments in terms of feedback. They assert that students should be evaluated on weekly basis so to get timely feed forward. This informal assessment can be in the form of exercises and group discussion in the class. Assessing students speaking skills sometimes creates disturbance because you as a teacher would be become very flexible when they are provided the gap of learning and if you interrupt during this discussion or speaking session students may get nervous and resort towards shyness.

“I am of the view that summative assessment somehow develops a sense of negativity in the minds of students. They start measuring themselves in terms of marks, and that ultimately hinder their progress. Whereas formative assessment is an ongoing process wherein the teacher can provide regular feedback and feed forward to the students and that creates a win win situation.” (R6)

Another respondent shares similar views to this by quoting “I usually assess the students continually whenever we come across each other”. (R9). So the best of the respondents’ knowledge and experience about the assessments of the students speaking skills that students should be more often assessed on formative basis, in this case of assessments teachers become very sensitive to notice the pronunciation and the tone of speaking of the students in order to bring synchronization in their pronunciations. Over the regular and continuous assessments of the students may extent the concept of credibility of feedback during the session they experienced.

Themes 5 (challenges in teaching speaking skills)

There are various discussions concerning the problems that emanate from the body of the students themselves, comprises of the way they produce the language. One of the most prominent difficulties that teachers face during teaching the students is the lack of confidence among students that makes them to denigrate in their pronunciation. Native language has a huge influence on the attitudes of the learners and makes teachers to resort towards challenges in teaching speaking skills. There are students who have different back grounds and due to the influence of native language of the speakers may stop them to become orally proficient.

“.... we have students coming from many backgrounds and their age is



different, but due to the market trends, they want to speak English like whites so it becomes challenging for me to tell them that you are weak and that type of English takes time.” (R5)

It has also been observed that with the involvement in multi-cultural backgrounds of learners the problems are divided into two sections comprising of internal and external problem which become a challenging task for the teachers. Internal problems consist of native language, age, exposure, instinctive phonetic ability, and identity and language ego, and inspiration and concern for good speaking. An external problem is institutional perspective that locates English as second or foreign language in a nation.

“...we always have heterogeneous class the level is not same. Being second language teacher we have to take care of this thing that how we frame our class how we start our class and if we need some code switching in the beginning so we do it. There should be flexibility...” (R8)

Students’ diversity in terms of proficiency level and cultural background make the language classroom bilingual and a bit challenging for the teacher to facilitate all the students according to their needs.

Recommendation based on the Findings

The findings of the study reveal that teaching of English speaking skills to university students is goal oriented. The concerned teachers of speaking skills apply a number of strategies to enable students speak English to convey their desired message(s). The English teachers at different universities implement more than one method for building communicative competence among Pakistani second language speakers of English. The objective that all teachers have during the English speaking skills classes is to improve students’ communicative competence. Students are fluent and confident as they practice speaking of English with improved grammatical structures and relevant vocabulary.

Another result drawn from the study is that the role play activities are beneficial for the students who then understand the social context and respective use of words and phrases. Students take part in the role play activities hence allowing themselves a greater exposure to specific language needed for every situation. The teachers of English monitor and guide students for the correct usage of words and help them communicate independently.

Additionally, the encouragements the teachers provide to students help them in building their confidence and correct the mistakes they make while speaking English. Students are able speakers of English after regular practice during the classes. Pakistani university students learn and improve the art of communication and presentation in English as a compulsory part of their academics in different disciplines.

Besides, the study recommends the suitable method to teach English speaking skills to university students. It is beneficial for the English language teachers to improvise the classes as per findings in the study as it entails the current activities that are implemented for teaching speaking skills.

The results of the study recommend that speaking skills play an important role in building overall competence in English. Integration of speaking skills with listening, reading and writing enhance the language proficiency and fluency of learners.



Conclusion

This research has investigated the importance of speaking skills for building English proficiency among university students with suitable methodology. Interviews of 20 English teachers, who teach at different universities in Karachi, were conducted. This study aims to explore the teaching style that is most suitable for enhancing speaking skills among students. Moreover, the study also examines the activities and techniques that teachers use to improve students' communicative competence. The following results can be drawn from the study:

- a. Teachers specifically focus on English speaking skills and apply a number of methods to provide exposure to students
- b. Due to regular assessment and supervision, students learn better English communication and presentation skills
- c. The limitation is however the fact that speaking skills are not integrated with other forms of leaning such as reading, writing and listening
- d. Students' diversity in terms of proficiency level and cultural background make the language classroom bilingual where Urdu translations are provided to clarify the meanings/sense.

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