

**EFFECTS OF TEACHERS SOCIAL INTERACTIONS ON THE
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE
USERS**

By

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Abstract

The output of a particular teacher largely depends on how a lesson is delivered to the learners. The interactions between the teacher and the learner are the components of learning. This paper is on effects of teachers' social interactions on the academic achievement of the English language users. Imperatively, classroom interactions involve the verbal exchanges between learners and teachers; teachers should know that the learners need to do most of the task to activate their speaking skill, since it requires

practice and experience to develop. The paper scholarly highlights on the following variables; classroom interaction, the communicative approach of English, communicative competence, interaction as a type of communicative language teaching (CLT) framework, classroom social interaction, aspects of classroom interaction, the role of feedback in social interaction, teacher-learner interaction, principles of verbal interaction, importance of social interaction, interlanguage among others. The conclusion and recommendations were made on this article based on the topic discussed.

Introduction

For students or learners who are studying English in a non-English speaking setting, it is very important to experience real communicative situations in which they will learn how to express their own views and opinions, and develop their oral fluency and accuracy which are very essential for the success of Foreign Language communication. Classroom Interaction then, is necessary and useful as educational strategy to enhance learning in English language.

Classroom interaction plays a significant role in the process of second language learning. In fact, the considerable interest in the role of interaction in the context of learning became an important factor for the researchers of this field, because it creates opportunities for the classroom activities to develop knowledge and skills. As far as the speaking skill is concerned, we will try to shed some light on this skill which is considered the most desirable skill to be mastered by the vast majority of SL learners.

The understanding of the role of interaction in the classroom context in enhancing the speaking skill comes from the understanding of its main types: teacher-learner interaction and learner-learner interaction, where negotiation of meaning and the provision of feedback are highlighted. Classroom interaction involves the verbal exchanges between learners and teachers; however, teachers should know that the learners need to do most of the talk to activate their speaking, since this skill requires practice and experience to be developed.

If teachers are advised to reduce their time of talking in the classroom interaction, it does not mean that they have no role to play. Involving all of the learners in the interactive activities is their main job; they must apply some of

the teaching strategies to get all of the students to talk. Therefore, teachers during interaction should avoid continual interruption.

Classroom Interaction

In the field of second language acquisition, interaction has long been considered important in language learning. In the process of second language learning it requires the presence of two or more learners who collaborate in achieving communication. Interaction is a way of learning in general, and developing the language skills in particular. In this chapter we shall deal with the notion of interaction as a strategy that takes place in classrooms, starting with a brief review on communicative language teaching (CLT).

The Communicative Approach of English

With the importance of English on today's world, teachers look for a significant method to meet the demand of learners to use this language for communication. The communicative approach or (CLT) is considered as the best approach for such purpose. It is mainly related to the idea that "Language learning 'will take care of itself (Harmer, 2001). A deep understanding of CLT and its implication for classroom practice is very important for both learners and teachers, since it aims at helping learners to use the target language for communication. Lindsay and Knight (2006), say that CLT appeared by the end of 1960s and continued to evolve. Today, it is not considered as a method but as an approach for teaching based on the idea that language learning means learning how to use the language to achieve a better communication outside the classroom.

Communicative Competence

The communicative approach is mainly based on the theory of communicative competence which includes; grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence. According to Hedge (2000), who has been explaining these competences or abilities needed to create a coherent conversation, grammatical or linguistic competence refers to the different aspects of the language; syntax, phonology and lexicology, it is related to the knowledge of spelling, pronunciation and grammatical structure. Sociolinguistic competence or pragmatic competence refers to the social rules of language use which includes a better understanding of the social context where communication takes place like the shared knowledge of the

participants. It is also called the illocutionary competence. Discourse competence deals with the ability to understand individual messages and to recognize all the discourse features. Strategic competence consists of the strategies involved for a successful communication; such strategies take place when learners cannot express what they want to say because they lack the competence to do so. In the communicative approach, most researchers agree on the need for the communicative competence to support learning and make the classroom interaction successful. Johnson (1995:20) claims that “classroom Communicative competence is essential in order for the second language students to participate in, and learn from their classroom experience.”

Interaction as a Type of CLT Frameworks

Many scholars; such as Philip (2017) and Brown (2018), investigated about classroom communication that involves interaction; they showed the importance of interactions in building knowledge and improving skills. In learning, for Allwright (2015), it is important to keep learners active in the classroom, which means reducing the amount of teachers talk in classroom and increasing the learner’s talk time. Naturally, they will talk to each other through pairs or groups where each learner gets his time to talk. Teachers usually seek to move on from getting learners talking to one another to the more complex problems of getting them communicating, and that is the result of what is called the communicative approach. CLT relies mainly on the value of interaction; person to person encounter. Teachers and learners then should distinguish between interaction and communication; they should not consider them as synonyms, In spite of the fact that many of them consider that communication refers only to people interacting with one another.

Classroom Social Interaction

The communicative process involves interaction between at least two people who share a list of signs and semiotic rules. The concept of interaction is defined as “reciprocal events that require at least two objects and two actions. Interaction occurs when these objects and events naturally influence one another” (Wagner, 2009). Therefore, interactions do not occur only from one side, there must be mutual influence through giving and receiving messages in order to achieve communication.

The concept of interaction has a significant importance in the classroom too; it is an essential part in learning and teaching processes. All

wright (2015) holds that interaction is something people can do together or collectively. Obviously, in the classroom it is considered as important for the teacher to manage who should talk, to whom, on what topic, in what language and so on. However, none of these can change the fact that classroom interaction focuses on the learners D cooperation. In order to understand the relationship between classroom interaction and SLA, there are two main assumptions; first, the classroom provides an environment that leads to SLA, the second is that what happens in classrooms involve communication, and this can be seen as some form of interaction, which there are reception and production based theories of classroom interaction and SLA. Reception-based theories agree that interaction contributes to SLA through learner's reception and understanding of the SL; therefore, production-based theories contend that interaction helps learners to produce the SL (Johnson, 2017).

Reception-based theory, according to Johnson (2017), it relates to the input hypothesis, which holds that the input should be comprehensible to learners for a better acquisition in learning since the latter happens when learners understand input that contains well-formed structures and which can meet their current levels. Productive-based theory relates to the output hypothesis which holds that learners should get opportunities to produce the language if they want to be fluent or speak like the native speakers.

Aspects of Classroom Interaction

Classroom interaction involves two main aspects; which are negotiation of meaning and feedback. If these two elements are not available in the classroom, then we cannot speak of a successful learning through interaction. Ellis & Foto (1999:09) say, "Interaction contributes to acquisition through the provision of negative evidence and through opportunities for modified output." Interaction then is rich in meaning negotiation where the learners can receive feedback from their interlocutors.

Negotiation of Meaning

Studies on interaction between learners focus on the interactive discourse between learners who engaged in second language learning tasks where negotiation of meaning is the focal point. Barkhuizen (2016) defines negotiation of meaning as the verbal exchanges that occur when the speakers seek to prevent the breakdown of the communication. The scholar adds that negotiation of meaning is the central discourse structure. The learners in the

classroom then should make the linguistic output more comprehensible for the other learners in the class, so that they can engage with them in the interaction. On the other hand, if there is a lack of comprehension, different processes can be focused on how to repair the interaction. Mackey (2007: 12-3), asserts that “Through processes of repetition, segmentation and rewording, interaction can serve to draw learners attention to form-meaning relationship and provide them with additional time to focus on encoding meaning.” Repetition involves repeating, the students exact speech as it is when the others do not understand.

The Role of Feedback in Social Interaction

It is important to note that oral feedback is one of the key beneficial aspects of interaction which can promote learning in general. According to Mackey (2007: 30) “through interaction that involves feedback, the attention of the learners are paid to the form of errors and are pushed to create modification.” In order for interaction to develop the speaking skills, learners must notice the errors and recognize them for correction. Thus, for some scholars, attention is very crucial for learning. Feedback may occur from learners, i.e. learners are able to correct and call one another’s attention to the errors. In doing so, it is very rarely replace their interlocutors correct form with incorrect form. Thereby feedback from teachers can be different from the learners one, because teachers employ many types of correction strategies.

Similarly, Mackey (2007), suggests two forms of feedback; an explicit and implicit feedback. Explicit feedback is defined as any feedback that states overtly that learners do not use the second language correctly in speech. It is also called met linguistic feedback because teachers provide the learners with the linguistic form of errors in communication. Whereas implicit feedback refers to the corrective feedback that includes requests for clarifications or recasts, in other words, teachers rephrase the learners’ utterances by changing one or more sentences components. Recently, many scholars views show that the explicit feedback is more effective than the implicit feedback, this means that in explicit feedback, the teacher draws the students attention directly to the errors, so that the students do not use them in further communication. However, in implicit feedback, the teacher asks students to reformulate their output to be understood and this is an indirect corrective feedback since the teacher does not point the errors directly in communication. In brief, the feedback role of interaction is of crucial importance. Students often want to

know how they are doing in relation to their peers. However, teachers should not deal with all oral production of the students and during all the time, they should make decisions when and how to react to the students errors so that the interactive activity will not break down each time.

Types of Classroom Interaction

Thurmond (2013) defines interaction as “the learners engagement with the course content, other learners, the instructor and the technological medium used in the course. True interactions with other learners, the instructor and technology result in a reciprocal exchange of information. The exchange of information intended to enhance knowledge development in the learning environment.” From this quote we understand that there are four types of interaction learner-course content interaction, learner-learner interaction, learner-teacher interaction and learner-technology interaction. Two main types of interaction will be discussed.

Teacher-Learner Interaction

This type of interaction as Coult hard (2015), mentions has received a great deal from- teachers in a wide range of disciplines. It happens between the teacher and one learner or many other learners, that is to say a teacher takes a part in such interaction. He negotiates with his students the content of the course, asks questions, uses students ideas, lectures, gives directions, criticizes or justifies student talk responses. On the other hand, the students will benefit by drawing on the experience of their teachers on how well to interact in the manner that is most effective. Scrivener (2005: 85) made the following diagram to show clearly how the interaction happens between the teacher and the students.

Interaction between Teacher and Students

Teacher interacts with student, Student interacts with teacher. During teacher-learner interaction, the students seek to demonstrate their speaking and listening skills in front of their teachers that is why latter should consider his way of interacting which is very crucial in learning and teaching. According to Harmer (2009), teachers should focus on three things when they talk with their students. Firstly, they must pay attention to the kind of the language the students are able to understand, i.e. teachers should provide an output that is comprehensible for the level of all the students. Secondly, the teachers must

think about what they will say to their students, hence the teacher speech is as a resource for learners. Finally, teachers also have to identify the ways in which they will speak such as the voice, tone and intonation.

Principles of Verbal Interaction

Classroom interaction prepares learners to use the language naturally outside the classroom. It provides for them the basis and the principles to interact in English in real situations; that are why classroom talk is worth investigating and understanding. The students should learn some essential principles involved in interactions.

Teachers' Roles in Social Interaction

Most students will not engage in an interaction by themselves unless the teachers start first. Obviously, the role of the teacher is very crucial in motivating and creating interest in the topics. The basis of the communicative approach is this capacity of the teacher to adapt himself, to change roles. Hedge (2000), identifies important roles the teachers can play.

“As controller in eliciting nationality words; as assessor of accuracy as students try to pronounce the words; as corrector of pronunciation; as organizer in giving instructions of the pair work, initiating it, monitoring it, and organizing feedback; as promoter while students are working together and as resource if students need help with words and structures during the pair work.”

Controller: within a classroom interaction and especially learner-teacher interaction, the teacher is the responsible for the teaching and learning processes. Harmer (2001), asserts that the teacher job here is to transmit knowledge from himself to his students.

Assessor: the most expected act from the teacher is to show the learners that their accuracy is being developed; Harmer (2001), says that this is done through giving correction or by praising them. The students have to know how they are being assessed; the teacher should tell them their strengths and weaknesses, the students, then can have a clear idea about their levels and what they need to concentrate on. The assessor teacher should pay attention also to the learners reactions and how to deal with them.

Corrector: the teacher has to decide when and where to correct students production. Another important point is that the teacher should be careful when correcting pronunciation mistakes or errors the learners commit during classroom interaction, i.e. he works seriously to give the correct pronunciation,

form or meaning because the learners very often acquire these issues from their teachers.

Organizer: it is the most important role -according to Harmer (2) that the teacher acts in a classroom where many things must be set up such as organizing pair/group work, giving learners instructions about how well they interact, and finally stopping everything when the time is over.

The teacher in such a role spends much time in engaging all the class in the interaction and ensures its participation. Once the students are involved in the interaction, the teacher can stop interacting and let the learners speak and listen to each other, exchange views and why not correct each other's too.

Prompter: Sometimes the learners do not find the words when they talk to each other's or with the teacher, the role then of the latter is to encourage the learners to think creatively so that to be independent from the teacher. In such role, the teacher must prevent himself to help the students even if he wants so that they will be creative in their learning.

Resource: the job of the teacher here is to answer students questions. For example, when they want to know how to say something or when they look for the meaning of a given word or phrase, they go back to their teacher as a resource of information. In turn, the teacher should be able to offer such needed information.

Another role the teacher needs to adopt in a classroom interaction is the observer. Harmer (2001) points out that, the teacher here should distract the students attention so that they can interact naturally and spontaneously. Moreover, he has to take notes about his learners in their use of actual language. Teachers do not use observation only to give feedback, but also to evaluate the success of the classroom interaction in developing the speaking skill of the learners. If there is failure in achieving fluency, then the teacher tries to bring changes for the classroom in the future.

Importance of Social Interaction

On the basis of extensive research, there was considerable agreement that the learning environment must include opportunities for learners to engage in meaningful social interaction with users of the second language if they are to discover the linguistic and sociolinguistic rules necessary for second-language comprehension and production (Pica, 1987). And this agreement is still applicable for today's second language learning. A very good example is that students who study abroad are usually more fluent and accurate in the second language they are using, as compare to their classmates in their own country.

In fact, there are many examples of the learners who are able to communicate and use the language efficiently without any formal instructions. For example the Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia do not have formal instruction in Bahasa Malaysia but are able to function well in their workplace and the community. Their second language is acquired through the unsystematic social interaction with the broader society. The learner has access to the target language in the course, of everyday communication or interaction with the environment. The sounds of the language are embedded in a relevant situational context and the learner's job is to extract from this material the rules for the use of the language. This interaction allows him to start learning and learning in turn allows him to make progress in communication (Albakri, 2006).

The question might be asked, why interaction is important to the second language acquisition. In order to answer that question we need to look at what is required to second language learning. First of all, we need to have input, with the input we will be able to produce a response which also known as the output, feedback will be given according to the output. These three major components made up an interaction. The interaction approach attempts to account for learning through the learner's exposure to language, production of language and feedback on that production. A central claim resulting from a past research is that, though interaction may not be strictly necessary, it nevertheless constitutes the primary means by which language learners obtain data for language learning, not only because interaction is how most learners receive input, but also because the input obtained through interaction is more pragmatic and conducive to acquisition than input received in other ways (Gass & Mackey, 2007).

Inter-language

An important term used in the interaction approach of second language acquisition is inter-language. Inter-language is a emerging linguistic system that has been developed by a learner of a second language who has not become fully proficient yet but is approximating the target language. It often preserving some features of their first language, or over-generalizing target language rules in speaking or writing the target language and creating innovations. An inter-language is basically a set of language created by the learner to engage the first language and the second language and it is usually based on the learners' experiences with the second language.

Effects of Teachers Social Interactions on the Academic Achievement of the English Language Users

At a more theoretical level, there are also well-argued claims that the social interaction most relevant to inter-language development is that in which learners and their correspondents share a need and desire to understand each other (Pica, 1987). There is also recent empirical evidence that such mutual understanding can be reached when the learner and interlocutor modify and restructure their interaction as a result of their requests for clarification or confirmation of each other's input and checks on the comprehensibility of their own productions, this will be discussed more in the feedback section. When learners need to understand unfamiliar linguistic inputs, or when it is required to produce a comprehensible message. are opportunities to modify and restructure their interactions with their respondents until mutual comprehension is reached. That process enables learners to move beyond their current inter-language receptive and expressive capacities and yet improve their second language.

Another research investigates the type of interaction and the effects on the development of the inter-language. It shows that certain kinds of interaction that the child engages in encourage faster and more complete development of features of his inter-language than other kinds of interaction. A similar finding is reported by Shea (2003), who compares interactions between Japanese students studying at an American university and four different teachers. Shea reports that the Japanese students appear more proficient in English in conversations where they have equal access to the floor and take perspectives that are congruent with those taken by their teachers (Watanabe 2008).

Input

Input refers to the language that a learner is exposed to. In all approaches to second language acquisition, input is a vital component for learning in that it provides the evidence from which learners can form linguistic hypotheses. On the other hand, the information provided by the input illustrates what is possible within a language. Interaction makes learner to see the differences between them and native speakers.

Interaction itself also directs learner's attention to something new, such as a new lexical item or grammatical construction, thus promoting the development of the L2. Input obtained via interaction has been conceptualized and researched in terms of 'comprehensible input', 'negotiation of meaning' and 'comprehensible output' by Krashen, Long & Swain (Gass, 2003,

Krashen, 1981). The interrelatedness of these three notions is concisely articulated in Long's revised version of the Interaction Hypothesis: The negotiation for meaning, and especially negotiation work that triggers interactional adjustments by the NS or more competent interlocutor, facilitates acquisition because it connects input, internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention, and output in productive ways (Tarone, 2009).

The process of turning input into intake has been described by Krashen as follows: First, learners understand a message using the not yet acquired L2 structure and somehow connect the form with its meaning. Second, learners must notice a difference between their current inter-language competence and the second language form (Xu, 2010).

As input of an interaction is just like the listening, it is important for learners to be familiar with the phonetics and phonology of the second language. Language like French, which does not pronounce the way it looks like. Native speakers usually speak much faster than a learner can understand. It means that it is understandable if the sentence was written or spoken word by word. As many French learners have experienced, it is important for the learner to have more social interactions with the native speakers to get their ears used to the speed and dialect (for some language) of the second language.

Output

Swain observed the children in Canada which showed less native-like language. Swain hypothesized that what was lacking was sufficient opportunities for language use. She claimed that language production forces learners to move from comprehension to syntactic use of language.

As many learners may be experienced, there is a stage where the learner is too shy to produce an output. It may be due to the afraid of making a wrong statement or convey a wrong message. The less the learner talk in the target language, the more shyness the will feel. That is why many Chinese students who take English as second language is excellent in the grammar and lexicon but can hardly talk to a native speaker fluently. Practicing the speaking skill in classroom

Practicing the speaking skill outside the classroom is the role of listening. In a foreign country, the students will hear the spoken language regularly and then without any conscious efforts they will imitate and perform their own utterances on the basis of what they have heard. Progressively, they will come at a stage where they can speak like people around them.

Conclusion

Social Interaction is at the heart of the current theories of communicative competence; it involves learners in face-to-face or teacher-learners encounters in the classroom. Pairs or groups interaction provides a basis for language learning in general; it gives the learners practice in community and negotiation of meanings through taking turns, in addition to learning other features that are crucial in any interactive discourse such as how to initiate, respond and close conversations. At the same time, it allows student to know how they can understand and make themselves understood.

Teachers' talking time must be reduced in classroom interactions as opposed to learners who should increase their talking time because their teachers need to take other roles. Therefore, social interaction becomes imperative in order to increase student performance in English language owing to the nature of their environment as it will be an open door for them to be bold and speak in public.

Recommendations

It is scholarly important to enjoy the teaching and learning of social interaction and students academic achievement in English language in the Nigerian education system with the following recommendations, students should be aware of the importance of English language and public speaking as it prepares them to be good and bold in public speaking.

1. Teachers should be to understand the importance of classroom interactions and its effects on students' academic achievement in various disciplines
2. Both teachers and students should see interactions in the classroom as a means to improve teaching and learning exercise.
3. In teaching and learning process, learners should not be intimidated, rather should be encouraged to learn where necessary.
4. The user of English language should be encouraged among the learners to enable them master the required skills in English language communication setting.
5. Proficiency and competence should be advocated among the learners of the English language for international intelligibility and performance.

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