

Factors Causing Hurdles in Speaking English among College Students of Quetta

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Abstract

We need to have command over all four skills of English language. But in the modern times spoken language has occupied the most prominent position among the other skills and it is the most difficult skill to accomplish. Indeed, many EFL learners face problems to speak fluently in the target language. The students have diverse problems of their own while expressing themselves. The main aim of this study was to explore factors that cause hurdles in speaking among college students of Quetta. The participants of the study were 30 students (15 male and 15 female) and 5 teachers (3 male and 2 female) of English from two different colleges of Quetta. They were interviewed about the factors that cause hurdles for them to speak English. Some recommendations were also suggested, based on the findings of the research. The study was meant to support the students to improve their speaking ability in their EFL classes.

Key words: Speaking problems, communicative performance, Linguistic competence

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Introduction

In modern times, in all other professional fields, speaking has become the most decisive skill of all the four skills. Since the spoken language has gained much worth therefore teachers must concentrate over the activities enhancing students' English speaking performance. The priority of the teachers teaching English language as a foreign language should always be assisting the students of the foreign language to communicate in the target language fluently. However, due to the lack of practice, the learners are unable to speak fluently despite studying English language for many years. Moreover, they find themselves unable to transfer their thoughts fluently and smoothly in the target language despite spending years in studying English language because of the lack of essential knowledge (Nguyen Hoang Tuen, 2015).

Research Questions

This study has two issues under focus:

1. What are the hurdles that the college students of Quetta come across when they are in the process of learning English speaking?
2. How do English teachers view the factors that cause speaking problems in English language?

Literature Review

Communication Ability

According to Nunan (1999) for speaking in a foreign language, it is important to have some vocabulary and correct formation of sentences to communicate in that particular language. It is undoubtedly the linguistic competence. Moreover, for speaking with a command in a foreign language

linguistic competence is not enough for a person to speak in that particular language. The learners require competence in communication which comprises linguistic ability besides an environment surrounded by a variety of sociolinguistic skills and expertise in conversation. They assist the learner in knowing how, when, to whom and what to say. According to Johnson (1995) the learners participate in their EFL classroom and pick more linguistic structure if they have speaking competence.

Factors causing effects on speaking

Nation & Newton (2009) stated that numerous may factors cause hindrance in the speaking performance of the students, such as: the factors coming from performance conditions (Pressure of time, lack of planning, quality of performance and the required rate of support). The factors for example; anxiety, motivation, confidence, insufficient ability of listening and above all the feedback which the learners need to get from their teachers during the activities of speaking can affect fluency (Krashen, 1982).

Affective Elements

In language learning one of the most significant influences is the affective aspect of the learner (Oxford, 1990). According to Krashen (1982), different variables for example affective variables, have been considered responsible for the positive growth of the learners in the acquisition of the second language in different research studies. Similarly, most of the studies mainly considered the following factors responsible for assisting the speaking ability of the learners in EFL classroom. They are: motivation, anxiety and lack of self-confidence.

Relationship between Listening and Speaking

Thespeaking cannever be improved untilllistening skills are enhanced (Doff,1998). Students first must grasp the meanings of what is said to them, then; they can be involved in a successful and affective discussion. Shumin (1997) by sharing the views of Doff (1998) says that when a person speaks, the respondent responds by listening him attentively through the process of listening. In fact, each speaker is both a listener and a speaker. It is therefore, impossible for a respondent to say something unless he listens and understands what is said. Thus it shows that there is a close relation between speaking and listening.

Need of Feedback during Given Speaking Assignments:

Majority of the students expect that their teachers should give them feedback of their performance. Anyway, feedback cannot be given on every speaking production. Harmer (1991) states that the teachers' feedback should depend upon thekind of lesson, the tasks assigned, the kind of mistakes committed and particularly the student, who is committing that mistakes. As stated by Harmer (1991)that if the teachers interrupt during conversation, it will affect the speaking flow as well as thespoken activity. If the learners are corrected repeatedly, this will cause demotivation and fear of speaking in the coming times. The correction of the mistakes is useful when it does not cause fear and demotivation rather it gives encouragement to the students to speak more and effectively.

Problems which Teachers come across in Getting Students to Speak:

Various problems namely: fear of committing mistakes, insufficient information of related topic , less or even no participation in speaking and the

use of mother tongue, have been identified as the main causes during classroom performance when the teachers have tried to get the students to talk in the target language (Ur, 1996). Firstly, the problem, which the student encounters, is inhibition, the fear of making mistakes when speaking a foreign language. They feel worried of being criticized and getting ashamed. They feel shy of the attention of their peers.

In same vein, the students also complain sometimes having nothing to think of and say, and they do not have any motivation as well to say something. Rivers (1968) believes that if the students lack speaking performance, it may be because of the topic, the teacher has assigned, which may not suite the students or which they may possess no knowledge of. Responding for the students at the time when the teachers ask them to say something in a foreign language which they may have very little or no idea about what to speak or which suitable word to use or how to make the correct use of grammatical structures; makes it really difficult for them. (Baker & Westrup, 2003).

Thirdly, it is the low or even no speaking participation of students in a classroom. In large group speaking classes, the students already have very little time to speak where one student has to speak and others can only listen. In this way, the active students dominate while the others have very little or even no chance at all to speak.

Finally, when the majority or even all students are of the same language (mother-tongue), they find it easy to have tendency to use the same language. Harmer (1999) highlights the following reasons why students make excessive use of mother tongue:

1. When the students are assigned a topic that they are incapable to speak about they go toward using their own native language.

2. The use of mother tongue is natural, therefore; the speakers have the tendency to make use of it.
3. The speakers enjoy to explain something to one another in Urdu if there is no control and encouragement on the part of teachers. Finally the students feel at ease in using the language which the teachers frequently use which is the use of mother tongue.

Participants of the study

The participants comprised 30 students(15 male and 15 females) and 5 teachers of English both from two different colleges of Quetta, i.e.15 male students and 3 teachers from Government College of Commerce Brewery Road Quetta and 15 female students and 2 teachers from Government Brewery Girls degree college Quetta.The students' average age was 20 years whereas;they were 17 to 21 years of age. Only17 of themhad attended English language Centers and were diploma holders in the target language.

Table 3.1

Participants' Demographic Information

Population	Student Participants	Teacher Participants
Government College of Commerce Brewery Road Quetta	15	03
GovernmentBrewery Girls College Quetta	15	02
Total	30	05

Procedure

With the due permission of the college heads, data was collected. Then thestudents were given necessary information regarding the very makeup of the study. The participants were given surety that the information regarding them would be kept confidential.The participants were interviewed

for collection of data. Convenience sampling was used for the selection of the sample for the study. Similarly the teacher participants were also selected through convenience sampling and were interviewed likewise.

Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed and interpreted using data analysis technique and grounded theory. It is an explicit method in which theory is built from the data (Davidson, 2002). Later, the interviews after recording were transcribed with a great care. The participant comments were noted down in the related section.

In grounded theory the coding and the reduction of the data process occur repeatedly. Similarly the coding is the process of data reduction which is carried out by division into its units of analysis and coding. In this process each unit occurs concurrently. The data about English speaking problems emerged from both the participants was summarized into the units of analysis based on the common themes and participants' language patterns. Furthermore, the units were given following codes: a) the students' inadequate competence (strategic and communicative); b) their motivation; c) deficiency in confidence; d) poor emphasis on communication; e) vocabulary teaching without structures; f) lack of listening stuff for the students; g) not permitting them to participate in discussions; h) no cooperation by teachers'; i) GTM pattern teaching; j) inadequate practice of English; k) almost no chances for communication tasks; l) people's behavior, etc. These groups were further reduced to four sets as, 1) the related factors to the student participants; 2) teachers teaching methods; 3) curriculum; 4) the environment for learning and the role played by the society

etc. These categories describe the study under research. It is the theory which is flourished by using data.

The findings related to the students' observations revealed that the demotivation was the main hurdle in English speaking of the learners. Even the majority showed their concern by asserting that they do not need to learn English. According to Little Wood (1984) motivation is the essential force that defines whether a learner embarks in an assignment at all, how much strength he can devote to the learning of the target language, and how long he can stay devoted. In same vein, they also reported that they found themselves unable to overcome these problems when a breakdown occurred in communication (properly known as inadequate strategic competence). Similarly, they also asserted that they also faced difficulty in uttering linguistic structures in communicating with other students in English class (termed as linguistic competence). Thus, they attributed their inability to communicate in English to the above factors altogether.

Findings of the Study Related to the Student Participants

According to the findings related to English speaking problems, the students found difficulties in using their vocabulary to communicate with their peers in EFL classroom. Resultantly they couldn't keep the tempo of speaking going on. Moreover, they were just restricted to copy the lectures delivered. Similarly, the English class also lacked activities regarding listening comprehension. Their only focus was on teaching the linguistic structures.

Inappropriate curriculum was reported to be another major issue that emerged as a hurdle in speaking English. The learners were directed to follow their teachers in translating the lessons by their teachers. In the same vein,

they were advised to cram the linguistic conventions of the target language (GTM).

Likewise, for practicing their speaking skill they got very few chances. It means that they had insufficient exposure to English language.

Harsh manner of the people was another factor which hindered students to practice English outside classroom. Therefore, this created avoidance of speaking among the students to speak in front of people outside their classroom. In turn, they quit practicing English language in front of people.

Findings of the Study Related to the English Teachers

The teachers reported that the large class was an obstacle to introduce student-centered activities because it was more challenging for them to teach in groups and let the learners participate spoken activities. This way they would lose control over large class.

The English teacher also asserted that they were deficient of conducting listening activities and using authentic material for their EFL learners in English classroom. Moreover, the text books also do not support student-based activities. They suggested that there should be a positive change to fulfill the educational needs of the EFL learners in order to help them meet the standard set by international learning.

Discussion

From the first research question, the results showed variety of factors affecting the students' speaking performance. The other worth mentioning elements were listening ability and lack of motivation to speak. Furthermore, the absence of feedback on the part teachers and finally the lack of self-confidence were also the factors hampering students' speaking. the findings

indicated that the students speaking performance was not good because of little time assigned for performing speaking activity.

In the present study, the findings revealed that the students faced many problems at the time of learning to speak. Furthermore, they practiced mainly Urdu in class and there was no motivation on the part of their teachers to make them speak. Moreover, the students also reported to have very little or nothing in their EFL class. A great number of students mentioned fear of criticism as a cause of lack of speaking.

Generally, the results of the study showed that the participants underwent countless difficulties in their EFL class. Furthermore, many elements were responsible for their success and failure in doing speaking assignments. On the whole, the present teaching and learning of speaking skills at government girls' degree college Brewery road Quetta had a dire need to be reframed and improved.

Conclusion

As it went on throughout this research that is was aimed to study the problem the students faced at Government College of Commerce and Government Girls degree collage Brewery read Quetta in communication lessons and the factors that hampered their performance in speaking.

The results of the study revealed different speaking problems faced by the students, as:(1)they lacked participation in speaking or did not speak at all. (2) They had no points to speak. (3) When they were not assigned group discussions.(4) They had no motivation to say something. (5) They feared of being criticized, therefore; they did not speak. (6) They were in the habit of translating the given material in Urdu before they spoke. (7)They consulted from their textbooks when they were asked to say something.

On the basis of the research, some suggestions were made both for the teachers and the students of Government College of Commerce and Government Girls Degree college Brewery road, Quetta. The recommendations made for teachers were that they should firstly assign considerable time to the students to prepare before they perform a speaking task and they should use their minds to generate ideas and they should be given sufficient time to perform those ideas. Secondly the teachers should help their students not to fear about making mistakes and should maintain cooperative behaviors to make students not shy and should give enough guidance and clear instructions to the students to feel comfortable while speaking in class. Thirdly the teacher should simplify the topics so that to make them attractive and interesting. Furthermore, there should be speaking tests as the part of exams so that the students should be motivated to learn speaking skills, another recommendation is that the students should be given more opportunities to speak English in class. Furthermore, the teachers should carefully correct the students' mistakes deciding a suitable time so that the students' fear of making mistakes and flow of speaking may not be disturbed. The teachers should also encourage the students to participate in speaking activities more and more. Finally the teachers should encourage the students by creating a good speaking environment in EFL class in order to make English speaking a habit. Furthermore, the teachers avoid speaking in Urdu or the other local languages and restrict themselves to using only English language in class. This way the students can get maximum exposure of the target language. Similarly, the students should give time to speaking English outside classroom with their classmates and friends and should join English language centers and English speaking clubs so as to communicate

and improve their English speaking skill. Lastly in class, they should make English speaking a habit instead of Urdu.

It is hoped that the study can greatly contribute to improve the English teaching and learning at Government College of Commerce and Government Girls Degree College Brewery road Quetta.

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