

التفاعل الصفّي بين المعلم والطالب بمدارس التعليم الأساسي في غريان

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مستخلص:

تتناول هذه الدراسة استقصاءً حول التفاعل الصفّي في مجموعة من مدارس غريان للتعليم الأساسي. والغرض منه هو تحديد القضايا الرئيسية التي تؤثر على انماط التفاعل بين الطالب والمعلمين، حيث يشير الباحث إلى أهمية إدارة جودة التدريس والتعلم. لا سيما في السياق الذي تكون فيه موارد التعلم وتدريب المعلمين محدودة للغاية ويركز الباحث بشكل أساسي على التفاعل بين الطالب والمعلمين من خلال 10 جلسات ملاحظة لعدد 5 مدارس حكومية في نطاق مدينة غريان. أظهرت النتائج كثرة استعمال المعلمين لطريقة الشرح والتسميع والحفظ عن ظهر قلب في الفصل الدراسي والتفاعل بين المعلم والمتعلمين محدود جدا داخل الفصل الدراسي، مع القليل من الاهتمام لتأمين فهم الطالب. تبني العالقة على احترام الطالب للمعلم داخل بيئة التعليم في ليبيا.

Teacher –Student Interaction in Basic Education within Gharyan Schools

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Abstract

This study reports on an investigation of classroom interaction in Gharyan Basic Education schools. Its purpose is to identify key issues affecting patterns of teacher-student interaction as research suggests managing the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in the context where learning recourses and teacher training are very limited, is very important. It mainly focuses on interaction between the teacher and student through ten observation sessions in 5 public schools in Gharyan. The finding revealed prevalence of teacher explanation, recitation, and rote learning in the classroom, EFL teaching in Libyan schools is teacher-centered only, there is no interaction between teacher and students inside classrooms, with little attention being paid to securing pupil understanding. In the Libyan setting, the teacher-student

relationship is built on one-way respect from students to the teacher.

Key words: classroom interaction, teachers talking time, students talking time, English as a foreign language.

Introduction

The proliferation of English as a global lingua franca has garnered considerable attention within the domain of language pedagogy. Notably, the dynamics of classroom interaction have emerged as a central theme of interest among educators, albeit often accompanied by an appreciable lacuna in comprehensive understanding. Consequently, there arises an imperative need for a paradigm shift in the context of English language instruction in primary educational institutions, necessitating a rigorous investigative undertaking into the multifaceted nature of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. This exigency is underpinned by a conspicuous dearth of localized insights and

scholarship, a realization engendered through an extensive survey of pertinent literature. The present inquiry, therefore, elects to focus on this specific subject matter. As the study commences, the researcher finds herself increasingly driven by the aspiration to cultivate a holistic comprehension of language classrooms in the milieu of her own educational milieu.

Statement of the problem

The study endeavors to discern the pedagogical orientation within Libyan educational institutions regarding English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, specifically whether it leans towards a teacher-centered approach or deviates from this traditional paradigm. Furthermore, the research seeks to quantitatively and qualitatively evaluate the extent and nature of teacher-student interaction that transpires within the EFL classroom setting.

Aim of the study

This study is oriented towards a comprehensive examination of the prevailing conditions within the realm of basic education in Gharyan, Libya, with specific emphasis on the dynamics of teacher-student interaction in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. Simultaneously, it endeavors to underscore the pivotal significance of classroom teacher-student interaction in the realm of foreign language pedagogy, thereby underscoring its role in the facilitation of effective teaching and learning.

Hypotheses of the study

The study is predicated on the following hypothesis: Teacher-student interaction holds a paramount significance in the domain of foreign language pedagogy, and its effectiveness is positively correlated with the adept utilization of suitable techniques and strategies, thereby leading to improved academic achievement outcomes.

Research questions

Q1: What characterizes the nature of teacher-student classroom interaction within the basic education schools?

Q2: To what extent do pupils have opportunities to actively participate in the construction of their own learning?

Significance of the Study:

Teacher-student interaction is crucial for effective teaching and learning, especially in the Libyan educational context. This study highlights the pressing need for such interaction and can motivate school inspectors to promote English language teacher training. Additionally, it underscores the central role of teacher-student interaction in EFL education.

Scope of the Study:

This study primarily focuses on evaluating the extent of teacher-student interaction within the classroom. The research is delimited to the basic education stage in select Gharyan schools. The researcher's observations and first-hand classroom experiences constitute the primary data sources for this investigation.

LITRATURE REVIEW

Theories related to young learners' language learning and teaching:

1- The sociocultural theory

The field of teaching young learners has expanded enormously over the past several decades. But the framework established from beyond language classroom: in child development and learning theories. Knowledge is constructed in the social context of the classroom through language and other semiotic means. The guiding principles have been developed from two of major theories in developmental psychology; Piaget and Vygotsky. Piaget's main concern was how children's mental development is influenced by the world surrounds them.

The concept of how children construct their learning in his viewpoint is through taking action to solve problems learning occurs. Two adaptive stages are related to Piaget; namely accommodation and assimilation. These two processes of behavior are interpreted to important idea that has taken into second language learning under the label "restructuring", which is used to refer to the reorganization of mental representation of a language. Cameron (2001:3), argues that as environment offers opportunities for learning, one might think that classroom activities as creating and offering opportunities for learning too.

One would argue that unless pupils interact with their teachers meaningfully, language learning would not construct.

Vygotsky's view of development differs from Piaget for the importance of the former lies to the people in the child's world. The dual importance made between the individuals and cognitive development led to make his work as most noted for his central focus on the social, now socio-cultural theory. The notion of the teacher assisting student performance through the "zone of proximal development" also suggested that teachers can guide the discourse on the inter-/psychological plane to support student learning. This recognizes the importance of teacher-student interaction in the classroom, which may be considered as a form of scaffolding (Bruner,1986), although the later was originally conceived in the context of tutoring a single individual in problem solving. Vygotsky (1978) gave much greater priority to social interaction, emphasizing the role of language, communication and interaction in the development of knowledge and understanding. He considered talk as the central and primary medium of the process of learning because it helps the learner to make explicit to himself and to others what he knows, understands, and can do. Vygotsky also emphasized the role of children's interaction with people around them, such as parents and peers or teachers in the classroom, and therefore he stated that with the help of more knowledgeable people, or more knowledgeable other, an expression used recently to refer to the adult that assist the child, children can do and understand much more than they can on their own. One would take Vygotsky's theory as to promote learning context in which students play an active role in learning. Roles of the teacher and student are therefore shifted, as a teacher should collaborate with his or her students in order to help facilitate meaning construction in students. Learning therefore becomes a reciprocal experience for the student and the teacher. Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, a term associated with him which refers to what the child could do in interaction with another, but not alone, as the child's zone of proximal development. Pasty etal (1999:23) it is also defined as the distance between the student's ability to perform a task under adult's guidance and/or with peer collaboration and student's ability to solve the problem

independently. According to Vygotsky, learning occurred in this zone.

Another important argument is Bruner's argument, for him, language is the most important tool for cognitive growth. The concept of scaffolding, which refers to a type a language-using strategy the teachers employ that seems to be especially helpful in making space for children's growth.

2- The social psychology research

Another discipline which discusses the importance of interaction and the processes

Resulted is social psychology. In a very old book for Charon titled symbolic interactionism (1939:146), he pointed out that:

"from interaction comes a number of processes like role-taking and building the selfhood, which not only gives rise to this individual human quality, but also the basis for all group life in the society. It is through interaction that people are able to share with each other whatever is necessary for social organization"

A similar argument in the same field which induces the role and importance of interaction to develop language learning is made by Kuppuswamy(1960:33), he wrote:

"with the growth in experience and growth in acquisition of language is a growth in internalization . It is now well organized that the process of internalization both with respect the language and with respect to assimilation of attitudes goes on at this time in the life of the child. The development of the child is affected not only by what the other persons in the family do to control his behavior, he is also affected by his own thoughts and attitudes, some which are considered conscious and some inaccessible to consciousness. In the whole process, language play an important role."

3- Communicative language teaching (CLT)

This approach in language teaching was first proposed in the 1970s and it has served as a major source of influence on language teaching practice around the world. It is widely used in language teaching at the present time, it emphasizes the role of pupils' involvement. Richards (2006:4) in his booklet communicative language teaching today, discussed the language learning from a

different prospective. As he claimed, language learning is seen as the following:

- interaction between the learners and the users of language
- collaborative creation of meaning.
- creating purposeful and meaningful interaction through language.

Brown (2007) defines CLT as “an approach to language teaching methodology that emphasizes authenticity, interaction, student centered learning, task based activities, and communication for the real world, meaningful purposes”. Moreover, Widdowson (1978) cited in Ohno (2006) sees the language learning in CLT is more than how to understand, speak, read, and write sentences, but how sentences are used to communicate.

Language learning is not always concern with composing and comprehending correct sentences as isolated linguistic units of random occurrence, but also using sentences appropriately in order to achieve communicative purposes (Widdowson, 1978). In line with this idea, Madya (2013) suggests that the English teachers who apply CLT as their teaching method should invest the linguistic knowledge and the use of that knowledge in communication practice when guiding or helping the students in learning the language. As mentioned earlier, the goal of CLT is that the students could deal with the communicative competencies. Canale & Swain (1980) argue that there are four competencies which are needed to be mastered by the students, namely:

- (1) grammatical competence;
- (2) sociolinguistic competence;
- (3) discourse competence;
- and (4) strategic competence.

-Grammatical competence refers to the ability to create grammatically correct utterances.

-Sociolinguistic competence indicates the ability to produce sociolinguistically appropriate utterances.

-Discourse competence concerns with the ability to produce coherent and cohesive utterances. The last one, which is strategic competence deals with the ability to solve communication problems as they arise. If the students learn and apply those competencies nicely in the classroom, it can be said that they have successfully learned the target language and be able to communicate properly with the target

language.

In terms of its characteristics, Brown (2007) proposes four interconnected characteristics of CLT, as follows.

1) Classroom goals focus on all of the components of communicative competence and not restricted to grammatical or linguistic competence.

2) Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Organizational language forms are not the central focus, but rather aspects of language that enable the learner to accomplish those purposes.

3) Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times, fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use.

4) In the communicative classroom, students ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts.

Overview of some findings of classroom interaction research

Classroom interaction research began in the 1960s with the aim of evaluating the effective of different methods in foreign language teaching in the hope that the findings would show the "best" method and its characteristics. The focus of classroom interaction used to be the language produced by the teacher, in particular teacher questions and learner's responses, teacher's feedback, and turn-allocation behavior. These features were examined in light of how they affected interaction and opportunities for learners to engage in language production .

Recent studies have paid more attention to learners talk; Penney UR (2006:227) put emphasis on what was stated by Tusi in that the observation has shown that the most common type of classroom interaction is that known as Initiation-Response-Feedback.

In this method the teacher initiates an exchange, or the supposed give and take, which usually takes the form of questions, and considering different objectives that will be discussed later, one of the students answers and the teacher gives the feedback (Assessment, correlation, comment) initiates the next question- and so on.

All of such kind of interaction, named teacher-student interaction, is not the only type of interaction that could take place in the classroom; many interactions can be clearly observed leading to different kinds of discussion according to the objective of the reaearch. Other types that are considered of great interest in the classroom research recently were highlighted like student-student interaction, where students are very active, teacher only receptive, which is the case or the alternative pattern where the initiative does not always have to be in the hand of the teacher. Another pattern is the interaction between students and the material. Different interaction patterns were neatly stated by UA (2006:228) as follows in:

- Group work: students work in small groups on tasks that entail interaction.
- Closed-ended teacher questioning: only one right response gets approved
- Individual work: the teacher gives a task and students work on them independently, the teacher walks around monitoring and assisting where it is necessary.
- choral response: the teacher gives a model which is repeated by all the class in chorus.
- Collaboration: students do the same sort of tasks as in "individual work", then work together to try to achieve the correct or the best result.
- Student initiates, teacher answers: for example, in guessing game: the students think of a question and the teacher responds, but the teacher decided who asks.
- Full-class interaction: the students debate a topic or do a language task as a class
- Teacher talk: this might involve some kinds of silent students' response, such as writing dictation.
- Self-access: students chose their own learning tasks, and working autonomously.
- Open- ended teacher questioning: there are a number of possible right answers, so that more students can answer.

Research methodology

The study employs a mixed-methods approach, encompassing both qualitative and quantitative components. The qualitative facet is centered on classroom observations of EFL teachers with

a minimum of five years of teaching experience. The quantitative aspect involves the measurement of the student-talk-time to teacher-talk-time ratio, serving as a means to gauge the extent of interaction in the classroom. The study encompasses five basic education schools, two classes for each school, where English is taught to students aged 9 to 14 (years 5 to 9). The average class size consists of 25 students. The majority of EFL teachers hold teaching licenses. Classroom observations constitute the primary data collection method, supplemented by unstructured interviews with teachers to acquire additional insights.

Interviewing teachers

In this study, several teachers were interviewed to explore the techniques they employ for student interaction in language classes, assess the opportunities students have to engage with the target language, and gauge the perceived importance of such opportunities. These interviews commenced with standard inquiries concerning the teachers' qualifications, teaching experience, and pedagogical methods. To facilitate a more detailed and comprehensive exchange, the interviews were conducted in the teachers' native language, mitigating potential language barriers. A pre-prepared information guide was utilized, with additional questions generated during the interview process based on the teachers' responses.

Classroom observation

Regarding teacher-student interaction, observations were conducted in ten diverse classrooms within 5 different schools. To commence, we shall delineate the fundamental characteristics of traditional classroom interaction. The observation sessions unveiled considerable variability in the patterns of classroom interaction across the ten observed classes. Each class traverses distinct stages during the instructional process. Notably, the sole stage consistently observed across all classrooms was the initial greeting stage.

In general, the observed teachers exhibited a predominantly serious demeanor, with little use of smiles or humor, despite the acknowledged importance of humor in EFL teaching. The typical class initiation involved the teacher greeting students, taking attendance, and inquiring about the date. A few teachers would

seek a student volunteer to state the date in the target language (L2) and write the lesson's title on the board. In some classes, teachers began by reviewing the previous lesson's content, while others instructed students to open their textbooks to the current lesson. The subsequent phases of the classes varied among different teachers and were not consistently ordered. Notably, no employment of brainstorming techniques was observed, which is a pedagogically valuable strategy. Brainstorming can help elicit students' prior knowledge and encourage their active participation in the learning process, aligning with Senior's perspective (2006:214): "... by eliciting from students what they know, language teachers are encouraging students who might consider themselves superior in terms of their prior knowledge to view themselves as both valued contributors to whole-class learning." Certainly, an additional advantage of incorporating brainstorming techniques in the language classroom is the social aspect. By encouraging students to share their knowledge and ideas, these activities foster a sense of community and collaboration among the students. This not only enhances the learning experience but also promotes a supportive and inclusive classroom environment.

The predominant teaching approach among the teachers observed is adherence to the prescribed textbooks and compliance with the directives of school inspectors. Their primary focus appears to be on covering the textbook lessons without necessarily considering the actual language learning outcomes for the students. During lessons, students tend to be engrossed in their textbooks while the teacher writes and vocalizes new vocabulary items on the board. Some students resort to their native language (L1) when seeking the meaning of unfamiliar words or clarification. In response, teachers typically provide the Arabic translation of the new word and occasionally offer explanations in the students' L1. Students are instructed to engage in chorus repetition of new vocabulary, followed by individual repetition by select students. Notably, this repetition practice, whether conducted as a group or individual exercise, represents the primary form of student discourse. However, the responses are typically constrained and dictated by the teacher's pre-determined questions. Moreover, in the context of turn allocation, it was observed that certain students were

repeatedly called upon to participate, resulting in an uneven distribution of participation among pupils. Consequently, students in the back rows were often overlooked, even when they raised their hands in response to teacher questions or volunteer requests. In some classrooms, teachers employ a strategy of involving inattentive students to reengage them. However, it was noticeable that teaching aids, such as pictures, cards, or other supplementary materials, were conspicuously absent. The prevailing classroom environment was largely teacher-centered, with students seated in rows, passively listening to the teacher's instruction and often transcribing content from the board.

When addressing student errors, the approach varied among different teachers. Some promptly corrected errors and seamlessly proceeded with the lesson. In contrast, in certain instances, the teacher's feedback took the form of criticism, with pupils being blamed for their perceived carelessness or inattentiveness during prior clarification. As Kerry (2004:31) posits, this approach might signify a misalignment between the teacher's instructional strategies and the current needs of the class. Additionally, explicit and rapid error correction was observed in some classes.

The learners' role in this context appears to be that of passive recipients of knowledge imparted by the teacher. The study's findings unveiled a predominant teacher-centric teaching process, characterized by teacher-led repetition, teacher-initiated question-and-answer interactions, the provision of negative feedback, error correction, and the use of the students' native language (L1). These variations in teaching practices might be attributed to the individual attitudes and assumptions held by the teachers regarding language instruction.

The statistical analysis

The statistical analysis procedure began by quantifying the duration of teacher and student talk during the total observation time, which ranged from 400 to 450 minutes, given that each class spanned 40 minutes. The teacher talk time (TTT) constituted 236 minutes, while student talk time (STT) accounted for 128 minutes. Additionally, there was a portion of time marked by silence or

confusion, but it was not separately measured as it involved various activities within the class.

The subsequent step in the statistical analysis involved determining the ratio of teacher talk time to student talk time in traditional classrooms based on the means (M) of each. It was found that teacher talk time had a mean of $M=23.6$, constituting a significant portion of the class time, while student talk time had a mean of $M=12.8$. This outcome indicates a marked dominance of teacher talk in the instructional process. Furthermore, when considering the percentage of TTT to STT in the overall class time, it became evident that teachers played a prominent role in the language class.

In light of these findings, teachers are encouraged to reflect on the balance they strike between their own talk time and that of the students, as it bears significant implications for the dynamics of the language learning environment.

Interviews with teachers

Teachers interviewed have been teaching for more than 5 years, but they have never received any kind of training. They seek guidance from inspectors, but teachers claimed that the inspector's visit were never helpful or encouraging. The role they were limited to was to tell the teachers to finish the syllabus within the time framework of academic year regardless to whether the students achieved the objectives of the curriculum or not.

Ten teachers were interviewed using a list of questions. In relation to the first question, "what teaching method do you use with your students and why?" some teachers answered that they use semi-grammar translation method. They start the lesson with writing a list of words on the board, translate them, and then practice the new word in a group choral repetition. Others start with lecturing, explaining the new lesson using L1. Regarding the second part of the same question, "and why?" the answer was "that's method I got used to, besides I don't know any other method".

When the second question was addressed "what is the opportunity the learners might have to practice English?", teachers did answer directly. They paused for a while, and then they sounded as if they have just realized that students do not have enough opportunities for learning. The answer was very similar among the teachers, "I think not that much".

The previous question's answer was confirmed by the answers to the third question about whether they conduct any pair or group works. As there was none of the teachers who practiced any cooperative learning techniques in their teaching, teachers justified that because of lack of knowledge and training as the key issues: as they haven't received any type of training; pre- or in-service training. The last question was about aides, all of the teachers' response was "no" with all of the cases. The justification was "as the school administrations do not provide us with any, we cannot offer to bring or make them."

Discussion

It can be now argued that teacher training and teacher education are two essential requirements of EFL teachers. A distinction needs to be made between these two notions; as stated by Widdoson (1990:62): Training is the process of preparation towards the achievement of a range of outcomes which are specified in advance. Teacher education, then, provides for the appraisal of ideas in order to make them more practically effective, because an understanding of abstract concepts and their relationship allows for adaptability in their realization."

Another important point to be argued based on the findings from teacher's interview is the availability of teaching aids at schools, some teachers are willing to use them if they were available. The minimum requirement, as one of the teachers complained, was offering a CD player as the curriculum includes some CDs to expose pupils to hear some songs and proper pronunciation.

The study also showed that students are deprived of being involved in the classroom. They do not obtain sufficient opportunities to engage in any collaborative learning activities or to interact with their peers or with the teacher. This was observed particularly in higher grades classrooms (grade 7 and 8). That could be due to the learners' and teachers' social and cultural background. In an informal talk with some teachers, they were asked what was the reason behind not using such modern methods of teaching. Teachers, stated as a justification, because they do lack knowledge about how to do this interactive teaching, therefore, they reconfirm their need of in-service training programs. This was declared by most of the teachers who participated in the study.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, a composite picture evolved of how teacher-student relationship looks like in the Libyan basic education settings, and what knowledge EFL teachers have regarding the career of language teaching in the modern time. It contributes to the existing body of knowledge. It also showed that EFL classrooms are relatively teacher-centered. At the same time, it displayed that teachers have thirst to develop themselves through various programs based on a comprehension needs analysis approach, they are in-service teacher training programs that refresh their language and language teaching and increase their awareness of the pedagogical value of meaningful classroom interaction. As Cameron (2001:20) points out that there are important links between what and how children are taught, and what they learn.

The links Cameron discussed can be interpreted as the methods teachers use and the outcomes of such teaching. Goals of such professional development programs in such setting need to be reachable and well identified. For example, in most of the schools participated in this study, teachers are not capable to use the language to express their thoughts to the researcher communicatively. That would lead teacher-development course designers to consider such issues for a period, then moving forward to train teachers for using different language teaching skills.

Recommendations

1-Teacher-student interaction plays vital role in teaching-learning process and the need for it is likely to be very demanding in the Libyan setting.

2-Teacher-inspector needs to be reshaped. School inspectors can play more effective role for the purpose of development of EFL teachers by adopting cooperating approach rather than a dictating one.

3-The findings of the study provide information about the teachers which can be manipulated in designing in-service teacher training programs for their pedagogical value of understanding the requirements of teachers from their perspective.

4-Many issues in this study require further investigation. The social and cultural boundaries and concerns of the teachers.

5-Teachers' adherence to traditional methods of teaching need to be investigated.

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