PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt / Egyptology

TRADITIONAL VERSUS MODERNITY: EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL INTERACTIONIST THEORY FOR SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

It is a natural phenomenon that children acquire their first language in a social setting where they interact with their caregivers. In early stages social interaction helps in phonological and lexical development in learning a language. However, it is not clear that whether social interaction facilitates the adults in the acquisition of syntactic rules in the second language learning. This research explored whether social interaction facilitates the learner in the acquisition of second language learning. Social interactionist theory (SIT) by Lev Vygotsky explains the process development of language with an enhanced emphasis on the role of social interaction. This interaction needs to take place between the child learning the target language and adults having linguistic knowledge pertaining to that particular language. The participants of the study were primary level students of private school, the researcher selected thirty students and divide them into two groups of fifteen. One group learned second language via traditional method (Grammar translation method) and the other group learned the language via traditional method and in social interaction. The research study was quantitative in nature.

INTRODUCTION

With the passage of time, changes in all spheres of life have been witnessed and education and pedagogy are no exceptions. The world is progressing at a rapid pace and teachers throughout the world are adopting as well as adapting to this transition in order to facilitate their learners more in the process of learning. A multitude of language teaching methodologies, strategies and tools coupled with

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CALL and other aids for learning are being employed by teachers around the globe so that learners are better equipped to deal with the fast-changing world out there (Aslam, Barzani, Aslam, et al., 2021).

However, in Pakistan, this shift seems to be comparatively slower. A significant number of teachers still use and rely on traditional methods of teaching in classrooms (Muhammad, 2013). This results in students still being unable to not only comprehend but also use the language efficiently inside and outside the classroom. Language teaching using traditional methods of pedagogy like Grammar Translation Method creates a huge gap in the second language learning and practically implementing that learned knowledge in real life situations by the students. Therefore, although students in Pakistan are taught English as a compulsory course since they start their education in schools, a majority of them are unable to communicate properly in English outside the classroom settings (Warsi, 2004).

The role of English as a lingua franca (Rehman, et al., 2021), language of research, academia and offices is remarkably evident in Pakistan. English language has acquired its status as direly necessary for social and economic development of the country (Mansoor, 2004; Baig et al., 2020). This dictates the importance of English language learning for the students of Pakistan as well. This research aims to point out the insufficient results brought about by traditional methods of language teaching and proposes to explore Social Interactionist Theory as an alternate method of pedagogy to increase the effectiveness of both second language teaching and learning.

Training based on social interactions is extensive and includes interaction within a social setting in its most natural form, which appeals to logic as well as seems appropriate with respect to the developmental aspect of a child. Through these interactions, a child is facilitated and encouraged to acquire an active role and hence, can easily initiate interactions on his own (Klinger & Dawson, 1992). Moreover, a child's interest is kept sparked by appropriately arranging his environment with suitable materials so that his interest can be enhanced to divulge in these interactive activities and he is motivated to dive into the process of interaction to carry out meaningful communication.

New research in the field of communication has revealed that the strategies based on social interaction are quite helpful for autistic children as well because they promote the social as well as communicative skills in them. Positive change has been reported in social behaviour and affect, requesting assistance, greeting and social amenities, eye gaze, joint attention, and motor imitation. Therefore, we sought to observe whether teaching students through SIT improves the learning process of second language acquisition as compared to the traditional method. And also, to observe whether teaching students through SIT makes them understand syntactic rules of second language.

Statement of Problem

Advancement in the field of education and pedagogy necessitates that language teaching methodologies need to be revised and modified as well with the

passage of time. However, teaching in Pakistan still lags in this regard as a significant number of teachers are using traditional methods of second language teaching in class even today (Panhwar & Baloch, 2017). Owing to the use of these outdated and orthodox approaches of language teaching which is mainly lecture driven and not learner centered at all, learners even at the tertiary level of education are not able to demonstrate effective use and sound command over English language (Bughio, 2013). This issue suggests that it is high time that traditional approaches of second language teaching are replaced by modern and more interactive methods of pedagogy by language teachers. For this purpose, Social Interactionist Theory has been proposed by Lev Vygotsky as an excellent alternative to traditional Grammar Translation Method.

Research Gap

Teaching in Pakistan still lags in this regard as a significant number of teachers are using traditional methods of second language teaching in class even today (Panhwar & Baloch, 2017). Owing to the use of these outdated and orthodox approaches of language teaching which is mainly lecture driven and not learner centered at all, learners even at the tertiary level of education are not able to demonstrate effective use and sound command over English language (Bughio, 2013).

Research Objectives:

1. To determine whether teaching students through SIT improves the learning process of second language acquisition as compared to the traditional method.
2. To measure whether teaching students through SIT makes them understand syntactic rules of second language.
3. To observe whether teaching students through SIT develops the necessary skill set for second language acquisition.

Research Questions

1. Is the second language learning process of students through SIT improved as compared to traditional method?
2. Does teaching students through SIT make them understand syntactic rules of second language?
3. What skill-set of students is developed through SIT that is necessary for second language acquisition?

Purpose of the Study

The study explored whether teaching students through SIT improves the learning process of second language acquisition as compared to the traditional method. It was also helpful in examining whether teaching students through SIT makes them understand syntactic rules of second language. The study also observed whether teaching students through SIT develops the necessary skill set for second language acquisition.

Significance of the Study

It highlighted the SIT approach for teachers on effective language acquisition strategies to employ in primary settings. This study has also suggested the new ways of second language acquisition and teaching experiences for English language teachers.

LITERATURE REVIEW
In today's world, English language has become an absolute necessity for better communication and has been linked to better job prospects and improved living standards. According to many recent researches and studies, English language has acquired the status of the most commonly and widely used lingua franca (Chew, 2013; Iqbal et al., 2021). This trend is apparent worldwide and Pakistan is no exception (. English language has been used as the official language ever since the country came into being and continues to enjoy its prestigious status (Ahmad, Khan & Munir, 2013; Sibtain & Aslam, 2020; Afzal et al., 2021; Iqbal et al., 2021).

Despite the utmost importance of English language everywhere around the globe, in terms of education and teaching, Pakistan is still way behind as compared to other countries. Although English is taught as second language and foreign language as well in some cases since the beginning of the educational career of the majority of population, a large number of these learners are still unable to demonstrate effective communication (Zafran et al., 2021; Bhatti et al., 2021; Afzal et al., 2021; Hayat et al., 2021; Tayyab et al., 2021; Sattar et al., 2021)and exhibit the necessary skill set that they should have acquired after all the years of second language acquisition (Warsi, 2004; Ahmad et al, 2011; Barzani et al., 2021; Azeem et al., 2021; Syeda et al., 2021; Masroor et al., 2021).

A major reason behind this lack of performance exhibited by second language learners is attributed to poor and orthodox teaching methodologies adopted by their teachers on every level of education, whether primary, secondary or tertiary (Raja, 2012; Javaid et al., 2021). This outdated style of teaching is the root cause of ineffective use of second language by the students. Due to adoption of these traditional teaching methods which include lecture-based instruction instead of interactive learning for the students, the end result is that students are unable to perform well while using second language (Shamim, 2011).

A solution to this problem is offered by an alternate language teaching approach known as Social Interactionist Theory which was proposed by Lev Vygotsky (1934). Social-interactionists see language as a rule-governed cultural activity learned in interaction with others (Muho & Kurani, 2011). According to Vygotsky, social interaction is the key element vital for the process of cognition to take place and in turn, support the process of second language acquisition. So, interaction with the community plays a pivotal role in developing one's communication skills as the process of 'meaning-making' is highly reliant on the society or the community one is interacting in (McLeod, 2014). Another research in Seoul, Korea explored various patterns of interaction occurring between teachers and middle school students. The results indicated that the

teachers keep talking for more dominant part of the class time as compared to students' responses and reaction and the sole reason behind this was the lack of student-centred activities in the class (Shim, 2007).

In addition to this, new methods for analysis and categorization of interaction taking place in class between teachers and students like Flanders Interaction Analysis System (FIAS) and Social Network Analysis (SNA) were introduced (Li, Zhao & Chen, 2011). Moreover, another research in Iran was carried out with a focus on promotion of conversation strategies among university students by using turn-taking as the main tool. It was found out through this experimental research that students who were briefed about the strategy of turn taking by their teachers performed better as compared to the control group taught through traditional strategies (Gorjian & Habibi, 2015). This proves that turn taking strategies are without a doubt an amazing way of promoting and developing the interactive abilitites of students.

More research needs to be conducted in this area as it has been proven time and again that research in understanding and improving the interaction between students and teachers in the class is still insufficient (Farashaiyan & Muthusamy, 2017). This is in line with the results of other studies that prove the utmost importance of using interactive learning techniques in the classroom (Arias & Garcia, 2013).

Theoretical Framework

Following the Social Interactionist theory, Flander's Interaction Analysis System (FIAS) by Flander (1970) was used as a theoretical framework. FAIS has been classified into ten categories which has been shown in the table mentioned below. The mentioned categories are classifying verbal events into three groups named, teacher's talk, student response and the silent moments. The category which is teacher's talk is further clustered into two groups namely, indirect influence and direct influence. These responses significantly indicate the teaching methodologies of a teacher that how a teacher's way of teaching influencing the learning of a student.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research was experimental in nature as it consisted of Pre/Post-test method. The sample consisting of 30 students in total was divided into two groups based on their sections A and B. Group A belonged to section A and contained 15 students who served as the control group while Group B consisted of 15 students belonging to section B and served as the experiment group Both the control and experiment group were instructed to take a test at the beginning of the research in which their second language skills were tested via written and oral tasks. This test gave the researcher a clear idea about the existing level of knowledge and performance of all the students participating in the study

After the completion of pre-test stage, the control group was taught the second language with the help of traditional method of teaching. This included teaching them through Grammar Translation Method. Students were taught the basic rules of the second language while translating them into their first language, Urdu. The aim was to make them understand and establish a relation between the two languages. On the other hand, the experiment group was taught by a mixed methods approach. The students belonging to this group were exposed to teaching methodologies based on both grammar translation method and social interactionist theory. This meant that the students were initially made aware of the rules of the second language with the help of grammar translation method. Afterwards, they were made to practically use those newly learnt rules in real life-based scenarios as dictated by the social interactionist theory. At the end of the term, a post-test was conducted again for both the control and the experiment group to assess the level of knowledge and performance of students in second language again. The results of both the pre-test and post-test were compared and studied in detail to extract meaningful information.

Table T1. Categories for FIAS

Teacher Talk	Indirect Influence	1. Accept Feeling
		2. Praises or Encourages
		3. Accepts or Use Ideas of Students
		4. Asks questions
	Direct Influence	5. Lecturing
		6. Giving Directions
		7. Criticizing or Justifying Authority
Student Talk		8. Student talk—Response
		9. Student talk –Initiation
		10.Silence or Confusion

Teacher's talk: indirect influence

Accept Feeling

When teachers accept the feelings of their and the communication among students and teacher is smooth and non-threatening. These feelings include all negative and positive feelings concerned with the students.

Praises or Encourages

The role of a teacher is of facilitator in such situations as teacher praises and also encourages the students. The teacher also cracks jokes and in order to release the tension of the class and to keep the environment of the class light and positive.

Accepts or Use Ideas of Students

The discussion in class is built on the discussion made by the students although teacher's ideas are also included in that discussion but the discussion is normally based on the ideas provided by the students.

Teacher's talk: direct influence

Asks questions

Teacher infers the information from students in order to get the required information from the students

Lecturing

Rhetorical questions are asked and teacher expresses the ideas and elaborates the points by adding the opinions of the provided content.

Giving Directions

Teacher gives all directions, guidelines and, commands and students are bound to comply with those commands.

Criticizing or Justifying Authority

It becomes the duty of a teacher to come up with such statements that students move from the state of non-acceptable to acceptable pattern, it also shows the authority of a teacher.

Student response:

Student Talk – The students respond to the teacher's discussion and the discussion is built on what teacher's responses.
Student Talk –Student initiate the discussion which include the responses of the teacher as well. Such discussion shows the student's willingness to participate in class.

Conceptual Framework

The teachers were instructed to base their teaching methodologies on SIT following Flander's framework. Consequently, their teaching began to demonstrate these various techniques like giving positive as well as constructive feedback to the students. Similarly, if any student asks a question, the teacher would encourage the others as well to inquire more in the class and give satisfactory answers in return. Moreover, if a student attempted to answer something in English, the teacher would appreciate them, thus in turn, motivating them to be more confident as well as responsive in future. This proved that understanding communicative tools and strategies helps teachers to develop individual learning methods such as, discovery learning, and social interactive activities (Kalina & Powell, 2009)

Population

The target population of the study were the students of primary school students studying in private sector schools. The students had no knowledge of learning by connecting socially with their peers.

Sample

A sample consisting of a total of 30 students studying at primary level of education was selected using purposive sampling technique. These students belonged to two separate sections (A and B) of grade 5 in a private school in Lahore, Pakistan.

Instrument

Data was collected using the students' written and oral tests.

Pre-post test

In order to find the effectiveness of SIT, test was designed based on the format and from the curriculum the students were studying. The test was multiple choices based on vocabulary items.

Pre-Post test and Treatment

The pre-test was taken from the students to determine prior knowledge. The treatment was given by introducing engaging students in different activities based on social interaction.
Post-test was conducted after a 5-week treatment.

Data Analysis Procedure

The objective was to investigate whether teaching students through SIT improves the learning process of second language acquisition as compared to the traditional method. To achieve the objective, after collecting data from pre-test and post-test, the average scores of both tests were compared by the application of paired T-test. Paired T-test was used in order to compare the variability between pre-test and post-test. For quantitative data analysis (McDonald, 2008). SPSS (Statistical package for Social Sciences) was employed. This research was quantitative in nature and it used Pre-Test and Post-Test method for data collection.

Data Analysis

The study explored whether teaching students through SIT improves the learning process of second language acquisition as compared to the traditional method. This study also observed whether teaching students through SIT makes them understand syntactic rules of second language. This chapter provides results and analysis of the data collected through pre-post test. The data obtained

through students' pre-test and post-test was analyzed quantitatively to determine the effectiveness SIT in language acquisition.

Results of Pre-Post Test

The pre-test was conducted in order to determine whether teaching students through SIT improves the learning process of second language acquisition as compared to the traditional method. Post-test was conducted after giving treatment based on the Social Interactive activities to the participants. Paired t-test was applied to analyze the difference in the students' pre-test and post-test scores before and after the treatment in order to answer the research questions. Ho: There is no significant difference in the language acquisition of pre-test and post-test.

H_1: There is a significant difference in the language acquisition of pre-test and post-test.

RESULTS

It was found that at the pre-test stage, all the students were significantly struggling with their use of second language. The written and oral test that was carried out before any teaching was administered to the students revealed that students were not able to construct sentences of English using proper sentence structures and struggled a lot while searching for appropriate vocabulary items as well. This showed that they had limited grasp of the second language and needed more training to improve their overall performance in English.

After the pre-test, the control group was continued to be taught through the traditional pedagogical methods, while the experiment group was given training for second language acquisition via both traditional and social interactionist approaches. The students were taught not only the basic rules of English grammar translated into Urdu for ease of understanding, but also exposed to various strategies used in social interactionist approach. At the end of the term, after the conduction of post-test for both the experiment and control groups, the examination of post-test revealed a significant increase in the level of knowledge and performance of students belonging to the experiment group.

A comparison of pre-test and post-test suggested that the control group also showed some level of improvement in terms of their usage of second language but it was not as remarkable as the experiment group. The control group was able to tackle written tests crafted along the use of correct tenses better in the post test but when subjected to the oral test, they were not able to exhibit any command on language whatsoever.

On the contrary, the experiment group that was subjected to training through traditional as well as social interactionist approaches, was found to have developed better understanding of the grammatical and syntactic rules of English language. In addition, the students belonging to this group displayed an improved level of second language use both in written and oral tasks conducted in the post-test stage. This suggests that the social interactionist approach

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proved to be fruitful in harboring the necessary skills in effective communication of second language.

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

This research aimed to find out whether a combination of traditional and SIT based teaching methodologies are effective for second language teaching. The results proved the effectiveness of using these techniques as students demonstrated an improved grasp over the syntactic rules of language and started responding more in class as compared to earlier results, when they were taught only through traditional methods like Grammar Translation Method. Students demonstrated remarkable performance which clearly indicated the effectiveness of SIT. It was also observed that students were more confident in their oral communication as practice, during the treatment removed their hesitation.

Limitations of the study

‒ The research was conducted at the primary level; hence the results cannot be generalized. The results might vary when the same study is conducted at the secondary or intermediate level.

‒ The other limitation of the study is that it focused only on second language acquisition of the students.

Suggestions for Future Research

Further studies on SIT can be conducted to check the proficiency development of the grammar, fluency and s skills. Further studies should be done in order to review and observe the provision of management and Practical tools.

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