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ELTWeekly

India's first weekly ELT eNewsletter

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TARUN PATEL



BHASKAR PANDYA



KAUSHAL KOTADIA



RAJESH BHARVAD

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Tip of the week: Use Phonic Games to Help Children Internalize the Phonic System

Greta Jackson, a British expert in the teaching of reading has recently launched a set of 20 phonic games. These games help the children internalize the phonic system and learn to read faster. This is mainly for children at the nursery and primary level.

To watch videos of the game in action and to see the fun the children are having while learning to read, go to <http://quickquiz.info>. You'll also find more information about the games including the different levels of games available.

The games have been tested with live classes for the past two years and children who've used it have been able to read better compared to other children at their level. If you have questions, comments, or feedback, please get in touch with me on Google Wave or send me an email or ping Rangoo on Google Talk using rangoo@gmail.com

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Video: Picture Stories for ESL (TESOL)

Watch this video to learn how Antonio Graceffo uses ALG, Automatic Language Growth theory, to teach English in Taiwan. ALG is a listening based second language acquisition theory developed by Dr. J. Marvin Brown, an American Linguist. The method is currently being employed in Bangkok, where David Long heads a Thai language program, while furthering ALG research and development. Antonio studied ALG with David Long and is expanding its use for EFL, TESOL, and ESL.

Watch the video at <http://www.eltweekly.com/elt-newsletter/2010/05/59-video-picture-stories-for-esl-tesol/>

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India's first weekly ELT eNewsletter

News: British Council launches mobile apps

You can now point your English students in the direction of some new, free mobile applications for iPhone/iPod Touch and Android – or maybe give them a go yourself?

On iTunes you'll find Elementary Podcasts, Big City Small World, and MyWordbook, the first two being based on materials on the new LearnEnglish site. Meanwhile on Android devices you can find Johnny Grammar's quizmaster and Wordshake, as well as Elementary Podcasts.

Find out more about British Council Android applications -

http://www.androidzoom.com/android_developer/british-council_fbcd.html

Find out more about British Council iPhone/iPod applications -

<http://itunes.com/apps/britishcouncil>

Research Paper: Teaching how to present 'Opinions and Views' to develop Independent rhetorical writing in the Students of Professional Courses

by Dr. K. Madhavi Reddy, Sr. Asst Professor of English, CVR College of Engineering, Ibrahimpatan, Hyderabad

In the present context of teaching/ learning reading and writing in L2 instruction, most often it is observed that the professional students have necessary technical background but are unable to acquire proficiency in their academic skills (reading-writing) and then deprived of proving themselves in job market later in their career. Therefore, an attempt has been made in this study to identify the needs of the learners arising in an academic context and accordingly develop materials to equip the students with the required skills of reading-writing.

This article primarily aims to help the students pursuing technical and management courses to identify facts and opinions based on the information related to evidences, statistical data, and reports. This kind of exposure related to presenting views and opinions is felt necessary to prepare the students pursuing professional courses for advanced writing skills with special reference to structuring and developing arguments which are duly analyzed and evaluated based on the propositions and issues encountered by the professional students in an academic context. Hence, the task based article focuses on varied texts related drawn from science, technology, and magazines etc. The reading texts enable the students learn and adapt the style of presenting data based on the information given in the text coherently.

I. Introduction : In academic writing it is important to learn how to present views and opinions based on a proposition. It is also important to learn the skill of explaining and discussing view points and opinions based on facts in writing. These skills promote not only efficient decision making skills but also inculcate independent thinking and presentation which are crucial in formal writing.

II. Description and Objectives of the Tasks: In Task -1 the students are required to present their views after reading the text on 'Attendance at Training Courses'. Tasks -2 and 3 are passages based on facts and opinion giving based on case studies . Task- 4 is related to

organization of a text based on 'crime'. Tasks -5 and 6 enable the students write a composition.

III. Objectives of the Tasks:

Gradwohl Nash, Schumacher, and Carlson (1993) opine that writing based on reading tasks requires the writer to perform several activities. Some of these activities include choosing a topic, locating, evaluating, selecting information from the sources, organizing and composing the essay etc. In this portrait of writing from various sources, an attempt has been made to see how writing can support and enhance reading, for example, the analyses of the tasks based on evaluation, justification and organization shows that the students were exposed to the nuances involved in evaluating a specific text type. Some of the objectives of the are:

1. *To enable the students to identify facts, generalizations and opinions in a given text.*
2. *To enable the students to identify and make distinctions between the following*
3. *Facts and opinions*
4. *Evidence and reasons*
5. *Issues /topics in an academic context*
6. *iii. To enable the students to learn the structures, vocabulary, and supporting statements used in the context of opinion giving and composition writing.*
7. **IV. How to differentiate between facts and opinions?**

Academic arguments usually “articulate an opinion.” This opinion is always carefully defended with good reasoning and supported by reliable sources that lend credibility to your position. For example it is not enough to say “capital punishment is wrong because that’s the way I feel.”

Instead, you need to support your claim adequately by finding:

- Facts,
- statistics
- quotations from recognized authorities
- and other types of evidence

When we prepare to read a report it is important to recognize what are facts and what are opinions. For example, Mrs. Sally, the office in charge, says that

Example -1: ‘I feel it’s an extremely noisy printer’

This is an **opinion stated by** Mrs. Sally. She gives no evidence in support of her statement.

Now take a look at

Example-2

'According to my records, there were 10% spoilt copies in Oct

This evidence is a fact.

Expressions such as

- *In my view*
- *In my opinion*
- *It seems to me*

Indicate that the speaker is only giving an **opinion**.

When reading a text, it is important to ask yourself questions about the value of the text. Is this text a fact or an opinion? If it is a fact, is there convincing evidence? If an opinion is it convincing? (These questions can be understood with the help of the fig-3.1 given below). Hence, in this section you will learn how to show a balance between the use of facts based on evidences and also the opinions of the writer both of which are relevant to the argument.

For example read the sentences below related to the Mount Everest, and say whether the statement is a fact or an opinion.

a. Mount Everest is the highest mountain in the world.

It is a fact.

b. To climb the Mount Everest must be the most challenging/ difficult task in mountaineering.

It is an opinion

The writer's opinion in sentence 2 is based on the fact, but it is nevertheless an opinion. Other mountains may not be as high as Everest, but they may be more / equally difficult to climb.

An argument can be centered on personal opinions, but these should be based on facts that can be proved. ***You can decide whether an opinion is valid or not by providing supporting details.***

For example: Read the sentence below which gives information related to the opinion given by the reader in the earlier statement.

Many people climb Mount Everest these days that it is becoming a rubbish/garbage dump.

This week a team of environmentalists reported collecting more than 1.2 tonnes of waste, including empty tins, batteries, ropes, used oxygen cylinders and broken ladders.

Task-1

Now read the following passage and complete the table given below and classify the statements given in the table below 2.1 into facts and opinions (You can mark with a tick in the relevant box)

Attendance at Training Courses

The University certainly has a problem with faculty attendance at special training programmes and refresher courses. This is evidently true with the lecturers' training courses in the afternoon sessions. The University has reported as little as 35% attendance on some courses. I think there are a number of reasons for this situation. First of all, I have the feeling that the course is not made interesting or relevant for senior professors. Secondly, the timing of the course on Friday afternoons is not suitable because the lecturers are tired at the end of the week. A further point is the distance of the University from the city. It is nearly one hour's journey. And finally, it is my view that many of these courses are not suitable for the lecturers. Hence, the work is too hard for them.

Source: (Adapted from 'Business Reports in English' by Jeremy C., etal : 1987)

Table -2.1

Information	Fact	Opinion
Poor attendance at lecturers' course		
Course not interesting or relevant		
Course inconveniently scheduled		
University too far from the city		
The course is not suitable to their needs.		

Task-2

Now read the article and complete the table given below. State reasons for the choice made by you in a sentence.

All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy

All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy finally has been acknowledged by 65% of the parents and teenagers interviewed in a survey. Shaila Tripathy Manu's mother asserts,. It is better not to create a curfew like situation at home and rather help the child sail through

exams like other normal days. “It’s a welcoming change to see this new attitude amongst parents. Parents have started to realize the importance of moderate activities in between study hours that would help children relax and refresh themselves. What is important here is ‘emotional bonding’ and communication which is a bench mark” affirms a psychiatrist. Although a 30% of them contradict the view, of exerting undue pressure on children and teenagers majority of them agreed that boosting the morale of children telling him / her that exams are just a stepping stone in attaining the higher pursuits of life, not only makes the child confident, but also helps them perform better There is nothing like parents minimizing your work pressure and letting you to relax during exam times. ‘After all, they feel if you study hard you have all the right to enjoy and minimize your stress. Exclaims ! Manu Tripathy, an engineering student from Delhi.

Source: (Adapted from ‘The Times of India’ 2, Feb., 2009.)

Information/Statement	Fact	Opinion
All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy finally has been recognized.		
It is very important that parents refrain from exerting undue pressure on the child		
Parents have started to realize the importance of moderate activities in between study hours that would help children relax and refresh themselves		
It is better not to create a curfew like situation at home		
Some parents opine that students need to be consciously reminded of their exams.		

In the above exercise you have seen how an opinion can be distinguished from a fact. You have also learnt how to justify your statements with supporting details. From this it can be deduced that even if the facts are correct, the opinions that are expressed may not be reliable. Therefore, in an academic context it is important to present your argument after evaluating a text carefully by identifying and analyzing facts and opinions.

Now in this section let us take a look at evaluating a case study on evidences and reasons.

Task-3

Now read a case study and identify the kind of structures used in the underlined phrases. Look for the following providing the number of the line.

Introductions _____
Facts –line 11 _____
Generalizations –line 8 _____
Views/ Opinions _____
Predictions _____

Regal Multiplex

As he walked past the main foyer, Siddharth Roy found nothing unusual in the-(1) crowd of people outside in the porch area of the regal multiplex. They were the -(2) usual teeny bopper crowd in jeans and t- shirts, most of them with their college-(3) bags and books alongside chatting away in the cool environs of the complex and- (4) away from the hot sunny Kochi afternoon outside. Yet Roy did feel something- (5) was missing. After spending a considerable amount of money on publicity and-(6) promotional schemes, he was yet unable to attract the main chunk of the movie-(7) going crowd in Kochi, the family crowd. His multiplex was still considered too-(8) expensive for an evening out amongst the mostly conservative Keralite family-(9) population. The student crowd would frequent most of the day shows but evening-(10) shows would run much below capacity. The owners, M/s Jubilee entertainment-(11) had told Roy that the financial drain caused by running the operations of the -(12) theatres at less than optimal occupancy was causing them to rethink the future of -(13) the multiplex. Mulling over the consequences of such a move on his own career-(14) , Roy picked up his espresso from the refreshment centre and tried to figure out-(15) where he had gone wrong.

Source (Adapted from 'Services Marketing: Text and Cases': Rajendra Nargundkar: 2006)

Task-4

Read the following excerpts on “Techniques for Solving Crimes”.

Excerpt -1

There are many methods of crime detection. Detection methods include the study of handwriting to find out who was the author of an incriminating document and the use of a lie detector test that indicates whether suspects are telling the truth by measuring their breathing and pulse and skin movements. Detectives can even use insects to help solve a murder case! By knowing how long it would take certain insects to break down body tissue, scientists can estimate the time of death. Insects can also be used to solve drug crimes. Insects are often found in illegal shipments of drugs. Detectives can use knowledge about where the insects come from to trace the drugs back to a particular location in the world.

Excerpt -2

There is also the issue that DNA can be used to reveal much information about a person's genetic code. It can show, for example, whether the person has genes that relate to particular illness or to particular kinds of behaviour. For reasons of privacy, therefore, it is important that DNA testing be strictly limited to simply identifying the person, and not used for other purposes without the person's permission. Special legislation may be needed to protect this genetic information.

Source: (Adapted from 'Academic Encounters': Brown and Hood: 2006)

Now identify if the excerpts present the following. Choose any one.

Excerpt-I

- a. Facts and explanations
- b. A point of view
- c. Past events

Excerpt -II

1. Discussion of an issue
2. A point of view
3. Data.

Now that you have learnt how to identify facts based on evidences and opinions based on reasons, in the next section you will learn to write a composition giving views and opinions following the stages/ guidelines.

Writing a composition on views and opinions:

In academic writing you are required to identify, evaluate and analyse the issues. Now observe the plan below for writing a composition.

Writing your views and opinions

Step-1 Introduction – explaining the importance of the subject

Step-2 Support- explain the first reason for your opinion

Step-3 Support- explain the second reason for your opinion

Step-4 Conclusion – Summarize and write your opinion. Include a suggestion, if possible.

Expansion of the guidelines given above

Step -1

Given below are some hints related to introducing and developing the subject.

How to develop an introductory paragraph

Read the introductory steps which explain the importance of the subject. You can put forward your own opinion by including appropriate features of formal writing.

Time fixers

- Nowadays / these days/recently/until now/in the past/ twenty years ago/ in the last five years .

Generalisations

- Nearly all / many/a large number of /several
- Opinion phrases
- I think/I feel/I believe/As far as I am concerned

Step -2 How to explain the first reason (i.e., Second Paragraph)

Begin the paragraph with one of the following phrases:

- Firstly/ in the first place,/ first of all,

Step -3

Third paragraph (How to explain the second reason)

- Begin the paragraph with a phrase like:
- Another reason

Step -4 How to conclude your composition (i.e., Fourth paragraph)

When you conclude a composition, summarize and write your opinion. Include a suggestion, if possible. Make sure you include the following in the concluding paragraph.

- **Phrases to introduce points**

To sum up,/in conclusion,

- **Opinion phrases**

In my opinion, / I believe (that) / personally,/ in my view,
I am very much in favour of/ I strongly feel / I am against

- **Suggestion phrases**

It would be a good idea if/ because / as / since

Sample Text

Read the following statements. Write your opinions on the given topic using the hints provided for and against zoos.

'Zoos provide safe environment to the animals'

Now look at the arguments in favour of the topic

- Save animals from extinction
- Provide a safe breeding environment
- Offer day trips
- Offer educational experience
- Provide employment for local people
- Need less space than a safari park.

In this case as there are more points in favour of zoos, you would take this as your opinion.

Sample answer:

Paragraph -1

General introduction explaining the importance of conservation

Nowadays, (*time fixer*) a significant number (*generalisation*) of naturalists (*say who*) have been campaigning against zoos (*explain what the problem is*), arguing that (*views and arguments*) it is cruel to keep wild animals in cages, away from their natural environment.

However, (*linking ideas*) like many other people, (*generalisation*) I believe that (*opinion*) zoos have a positive role to play.

Paragraph-2

Explain the first reason for your opinion.

First of all, (*introducing point*) many species (*generalization*) of animal are in danger of extinction because their natural habitat is disappearing, due to deforestation (*support*). Some, like the elephant, (*example*) are hunted for their ivory or the tiger for their skins. Therefore, if animals are kept in captivity they can breed in safety, which will prevent the species from dying out (*support*).

Paragraph-3

Explain the second reason for your opinion.....

Paragraph-4 Conclusion

To sum up (*introducing point*) in my opinion zoos should not be closed down (*suggestion*) because they are beneficial both to humans and animals (*support*).

Task-5

Now look at the arguments against the topic

- Zoos confine the animals to the iron bars.

- Zoos take away the freedom of living in their natural territory.
- The food habits are determined by the authorities.
- Negligence on the part of the higher authorities can be harmful.

Now using the plan and hints related to presenting your views and opinions listed above write your views against zoos.

'Zoos are cruel to animals and should be closed down.'

Task-6

Present your views and opinions on the following topic. Use the hints based on the topic given below to write the composition

What according to you is an ideal job?

Step-1 General introduction explaining the importance of an ideal job

Step-2 Support- explain reasons for your opinion

- a. an ideal job should extend a challenging environment.....
- b. should provide scope for innovation and creativity.....
- c. should be resourceful.....
- d. the authorities should be cooperative and treat the employees with dignity and concern
.....
- e. the work should yield productive results in the society.....

Step-3 Conclusion – Summarize and write your opinion. Include a suggestion, if possible.....

(Hint: Most of the corporate / IT companies do extend the above said statements / views with some limitations. But it would be a good idea if the companies extend the required resources to the employees for better productivity and prosperity.)

Conclusion:

Spack (1988) states “to become better writers, students need to become better readers.” Techniques of reading are actually a part of L2 composition instruction. The findings reveal that the students had a rich exposure of reading a variety of text types that are used to promote reading-writing skills. The findings also reveal that the quality of students’ performance in writing improved substantially. The students are able to write in a more accurate and appropriate way.

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Article: English Language Communication Skills Laboratory for Engineering Students: Syllabus, Objectives, Advantages and the Role of Teacher

by A. RAMESH BABU

Abstract:

English Language Communication Skills Laboratory, a course for undergraduate engineering and technology students studying at colleges affiliated to the Jawaharlal Nehru Technology University, Hyderabad, India was introduced in August 2005. The main objective of the course is to develop students' communication skills and send them for campus placement or recruitment. It would help not only for the rural and regional medium background students but also English medium students to improve their communication skills. Many students are in hesitation and worry to come on the dais to present a paper. This paper gives a detailed picture of the English lab syllabus, objectives and advantages to students by lab which make develops students' communication skills in English, the problems of the students and the role of teacher in guiding students in the English lab.

Like Intermediate English course, the first-year *Engineering English* course has also focused on reading and writing skills. Final examinations are based on only the student's these skills. In this context, it was decided that students should be trained in the skills which recruiters look for engineering students who prepare for on-campus recruitment so English language communication skills laboratory was introduced in August 2005. The main objective of the lab is to prepare the students for campus recruitment. The lab makes the students to habit of listening and speaking with accurate pronunciation. Students can record their own voice and play back for self evaluation. It acts as a platform for learning, practicing and producing language skills through interactive lessons and communicative mode of teaching. Language laboratories are for drills and for listening comprehension. It is also used for consolidating the learning. Language lab may have the following objectives, purposes, functions to work upon.

The components of the course are:

- Introduction to the sounds of English-Vowels, Diphthongs and Consonants phonetic sounds
- Introduction to Stress and Intonation
- Situational Dialogues / Role Play
- Oral Presentations- Prepared and Extempore
- 'Just a minute' Sessions (JAM)
- Describing Objects/ Situations/ People
- Debates
- Telephonic Conversation
- Giving Direction

Objectives:

1. To expose the students to a variety of self-instructional, learner-friendly modes of language learning.
2. To help the students cultivate the habit of reading passages from the computer monitor, thus providing them with the required facility to face computer-based competitive exams such GRE, TOEFL, GMAT etc.
3. To enable them to learn better pronunciation through stress on word accent, intonation, and rhythm.
4. To train them to use language effectively to face interviews, group discussions, public speaking.
5. To initiate them into greater use of the computer in resume preparation, report writing, format-making etc.
6. To maintain good linguistic competence- through accuracy in grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary.
7. To enrich the discourse competence, to prepare the learner to be able to produce contextualize written text and speech.
8. To acquire strategic competence to use both spoken & written language to use in a wide range of communication strategies.

To get a job in companies for engineering students, they should have communication skills in English. The student's communication skills are noticeable in an interview by the panel of judges. Students can easily learn English by using the communication lab which helps them to speak with exact pronunciation. Many students in India have lack of communication skills in English. Even though they are good at English, their stage fear and poor body language make them out side from the companies. Some people may be good at communicating

through writing but they may have problems speaking in front of an audience. Some may be good at interpersonal communication, but may not feel comfortable making presentations.

Language Lab Advantages:

Acoustics: English Lab provides an opportunity to all learners to hear the instructions. Each learner can listen to the lesson material at a level set by the Instructor and also receive guidance from the teacher. Individual head sets give the students the accurate and correct pronunciation.

Developing Listening Skills: We know that listening skill is very important aspect in language learning. Language lab helps learners to develop good listening skills. Learners hear the correct language patterns all the time through their headsets. The students might be attentive towards the sounds in the lab more careful than the theory classes.

Privacy and Effective Learning: Individual headsets provide learners with a psychological privacy. They promote not only speaking ability but also effective learning. It encourages the students to speak so that the mute and shy people including other students get benefit from it. They can practice the sounds according British pronunciation which help them to speak with correct pronunciation. The shy learners can get more benefits from the lab. Students can be supervised individually by the monitor so that their doubts can be clarified easily. In theory classes, the students usually stop speaking when teacher communicates with an individual learner but in a lab they will continue working without interruption. The students can improve their language skills effectively by listening the material in the lab.

Overcoming Shyness: The use of Language learning system encourages learner to talk freely and loose their shyness when talking in front of the people. Lab systems tend to make students more anonymous.

Attention and Concentration: Since the language lab allows the learner to listen to the program individually, each individual learner's attention may be focused on the program material being studied. The attention and concentration to students by lab make them to learn more things in the lab.

Oral Testing: The students can test their voice by producing the sounds. The testing will make the students to speak without fear and to bring the students on one path which focus on learning English.

Record / Comparing: The learners have the ability to record their own voices along with the master stimulus. Each learner can be working interactively on different segments within the same program or be working with completely different program material.

Role Playing Exercises: Using the random pairing/random-grouping feature that all advanced modern language learning systems incorporate, instructors can generate a variety of exercises structured around role-playing. Learners can be grouped together in small numbers and hold conversational practice with each other

Teacher Monitoring: Since the instructor is not concentrating on producing the next question or drill, he/she can concentrate more on the student responses. The instructor has more time to produce materials and oversee class activities due to the automatic, rather than manually, controlled instructor console features

Role of English Language Teachers in English Language Communication Lab:

Some years ago, the role of an English teacher is to teach English lessons and explain the lessons in regional language but in the modern age, English language teachers have expected to play different roles:

1. As an English teacher, he has to teach the lessons and grammar with full of examples.
2. As a communication skills consultant, English teacher works out and plans for improvement of students communication skills by introducing new activities like group discussion, debates, situational dialogues or other activities.
3. As a soft skills trainer, he must train the students to empower them.

Though we have had students who are quite experienced with computers, we have also had some students who had seldom used a computer; lacked basic knowledge such as how to operate a mouse or open a folder; and lacked the vocabulary, reading, and listening skills to follow instructions for using the computer. We know that most of the students have the communication problem. Sometimes they do not have adequate language proficiency.

Communication and soft skills and ability to learn on their own are very important for those who join the company. Teachers of English have a responsibility to help the students in overcoming their fears about communicating and to assist students in developing more positive perceptions of communication activities. I present here some of the important points to the learners to overcome their communication problems.

1. Try to know about your communication nervousness.
2. Accept your mistakes and if you have fear and nervousness when you are asked to speak in front of an audience.
3. Keep the point in your mind that speech anxiety is a natural emotion.
4. Write your mistakes and find out all these where you are committing errors.

5. Take steps to develop your confidence level.
6. Share your communication problems with your teacher.
7. Have an outline plan of your presentation.
8. Take steps to improve your English and your pronunciation.
9. Utilize the lab for your communication improvement.
10. Try to participate in all kinds of topics actively so that you can acquire language.
11. The teacher should identify the areas in which students have communication problems and training should be individualized.

Conclusion:

The paper has given a detailed picture of advantages of the English language communication lab. The syllabus for engineering students and its objectives were given in the paper. The English language teacher is not just a teacher of grammar and sentence structure; he/she is expected to play an active role as a diagnostician, counselor, communication specialist, soft skills trainer.

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Research Paper: The effect of gender on error correction: An SLA perspective

By Ehsan Rassaei and Abbass Eslami Rasekh, University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran

Abstract

A substantial body of research has recently focused on different aspects of classroom interaction and its role in language acquisition. Different researchers have provided theories to account for mechanisms involved in learner-learner as well as teacher-learner interactions in the classrooms. Such theories are mostly concerned with psycholinguistic mechanisms involved in learning. Few however have provided sociolinguistic explanations for such mechanisms. One area of interest which has recently attracted the attention of researchers and practitioners is the role of gender on learners' success in classroom interactions. Most research in this respect has focused on the overall effect of gender on second language acquisition. The current study aims at investigating the possible effects of gender in classroom interactions on the effectiveness of the feedback which is provided in such interactions by considering a number of psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic explanations involved in dynamics of second language classrooms. To this end, 20 Iranian EFL learners received feedback from their interlocutors of either the same or opposite gender. The results of the study revealed the superiority of feedback directed from an opposite-gender interlocutor rather than a same-gender interlocutor.

1. Introduction

An important aspect of research on L2 development concerns the role of interaction in L2 classrooms. Equally important within this area is the investigation of different factors which influence the quality and quantity of interactions among L2 learners during class interactions (c.f., Swain and Lapkin 1988; Ross-feldman 2006; Gass and Varonis 1984, 1985b). Among various factors influencing classroom interactions, the effect of gender on such interactions seems appealing. A number of studies have investigated the effect of gender on interaction opportunities which arise during classroom interactions with the assumption that such opportunities may in turn promote second language acquisition. Classroom interactions according to Long (1996) may promote language learning by (1) providing L2 learners with comprehensible input, (2) pushing them to produce modified output, and, (3) providing learners with opportunities to notice the gap between their output and the feedback which

they receive . While the body of research has primarily focused on the ways gender differences promote the amount of interactions in the classrooms which consequently give rise to acquisition of an L2, the role of gender in enhancing the effectiveness of feedback which is provided during classroom interactions remain inconclusive. Furthermore the relationship between gender and classroom interactions seems to rest on sociocultural factors as well. To this end, the purpose of the current study is to investigate the influence of interlocutor's gender on the effectiveness of feedback in classroom interactions.

2. Literature review

2.1 Interaction research in L2 studies

In order to investigate the role of interaction in L2 acquisition, we must return back to the time when Krashen (1978, 1982) proposed his input hypothesis to highlight the primacy of input in second language acquisition. Inspired by the then emerging Chomsky' ideas of universal grammar and the role of language acquisition device in L1 acquisition, Krashen (1973, 1982) claimed that learners just need exposure to comprehensible input to build second language knowledge. However his theory soon came under attack. First, different researchers (for example, Sharwood Smith 1986, Faerch and Kasper 1980), expressed their skepticism regarding the role of comprehension in acquisition. They argued that learners can either by drawing on their schematic knowledge or simply faking comprehension appear to be comprehending input without necessarily attending to some aspects of the language. Swain (1985, 1995), argued convincingly that beside comprehensible input, comprehensible output can also play a crucial role in L2 language acquisition. Long (1983) proposing interaction hypothesis (IH), adopted Krashen's view about the role of comprehensible input, but stressed the role of interaction as a source of input. He claimed that if interaction generates comprehensible input and comprehensible input causes acquisition, therefore interaction leads to acquisition. While a number of studies, (for example Pica, Young, and Doughty 1987) showed that interactionally modified input results in better comprehension than premodified input, Long early version of interaction hypothesis was questioned on such similar grounds as Krashen's input hypothesis. Hawkins (1985) for example showed that learners can fake comprehension when involved in meaning negotiation. In other words, such ostensible signs of meaning negotiation are just strategies to express solidarity and to keep communication going rather than genuine interactions (Aston 1986; Hawkins 1985). This is not the case according to Swain (1985) with language production or output, because in production learners are forced to put the words in some order. According to Swain output hypothesis' production may force the learner to move from semantic processing to syntactic processing' (Swain 1985: 249). Swain impetus for positing output hypothesis was her observation that children lacked success after years of receiving input In immersion programs. To account for the shortcomings of the early version of interaction hypothesis, Long (1996) in his updated IH emphasized that the role of negotiation, is to facilitate the

kinds of conscious noticing and attention that Schmidt (1990,1994) has argued is necessary for learners to process input for intake. Similarly Long (1996) stated:

...It is proposed that environmental contributions to acquisition are mediated by selective attention and learners developing L2 processing capacity, and that these resources are brought together more usefully although not exclusively during negotiation for meaning'(p.414).

Long's (1996) updated version of interaction hypothesis highlighted two mechanisms through which interaction and negotiation of meaning contribute to learning(1) interaction provides learners with the necessary input or positive evidence which they need to develop their language knowledge; (2) interaction provides learners with negative evidence through the feedback which they receive while interacting with others especially with native speakers. One of the major ways by which this takes place is through recasts. Recasts are the utterances which rephrase and correct learners' ungrammatical utterances. Investigating the role of negative evidence in language acquisition in terms of the feedback which learners receive seems appealing to many researchers. Such studies include both the use of feedback in learner-learner Interactions as well as learners-native speakers' interactions. Porter (1986) compared the quality of interaction as well as the incidents of feedback in learner-learner as well as native speaker- learner interactions. She found that native speakers more consistently corrected their own as well as learners errors. Similarly Mackey et al. (2003) compared the amount of feedback in learner-native speaker (NS) versus learner-learner dyads. They also focused on the differences between child and adult dyads. In the case of adult interaction they found that NSs provided significantly more feedback than learners.

However they found that feedback provided by learners created more opportunities for modified output than feedback provided by NSs.

2.2 Gender and interaction in L2 classrooms

The influence of gender on speech has traditionally been within the realm of sociolinguistics. Holms (1994) for example documented the differences between ways males and females interact with each other. Although different researchers have investigated the differences between males and females in conversational interaction (for example Bohn and Stutman 1983; West and Garcia 1988; Tannen 1990; Holms 1998) the role of gender in SLA 'continues to be under-theorized and under- researched'(Piller and Povelenco 2001: 1) . One framework in which the study of the role of gender in L2 classrooms might be relevant is ,as it was mentioned before, the framework of interaction hypothesis. That is, by exploring how gender differences influence the negotiation of meaning in L2 classroom interactions, we can shed some light on some ambiguities, in terms of gender differences and classroom interactions. A number of studies have examined the influence of learners' gender on negotiation of meaning and second language classrooms interaction. Gass and

Varonis (1986) found that male-female dyads results in more interactions than male-male and female-female dyads. They also found that male-male dyads results in more interactions than female-female dyads. Gass and Varonis (1986: 349) summarizes their findings as follows:

Men took greater advantage of the opportunities to use the conversation in a way that allow them to produce a greater amount of comprehensible output, whereas women utilize the conversation to obtain a greater amount of comprehensible input.

In a similar study Shehadeh (1994) compared the performance of 35 adult subjects including 8 native speakers (NS) and 27 non-native speakers (NNS) across mixed-gender versus matched –gender dyads and groups. Using three communicative tasks to collect the data Shehadeh found that for females, same gender dyadic interaction provided better context to produce more comprehensible output and self-initiate repairs; whereas for males, group mixed-gender interactions were more suitable.

Aries (1976) found that, males discussed wider range of topics in mixed-gender groups than male only groups; however, females tended to restrict their conversations in mixed-gender groups. She concluded that males more than women benefit from mixed-gender groups. Bohn and Stutman (1983) found similar result adding that females allocate such control to males by expressing statements indicating solidarity and agreement with this control. Ross-Feldman (2007) indicated that the gender composition of dyads ‘as well as the tasks they are engaged in influence the interactional patterns in terms of the incidence and the resolution of language-related episodes’(p.71), lending support to the role of gender in classroom interaction.

Having considered some of the previous research which has focused on the role of feedback and gender in classroom interactions, this study aims at exploring the role of gender on the effectiveness of the feedback which is directed to learners in learner- learner dyads. In other words this study aims at answering the following research question:

Does interlocutor’s gender influence the effectiveness of her feedback in classroom interactions?

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The participants for this study were Persian L2 learners of English In an adult English language learning institute which is located in an Iranian urbane area. Our final sample was selected based on two criteria among 78 subjects enrolled in intermediate intensive English

courses of the above-mentioned institute. These criteria included: (1) performance on a general proficiency test: The Oxford placements test (Allan: 1992) which consists of a multiple-choice listening test and a multiple choice grammar test, and (2) an interview. Following the administration of the proficiency test 5 participants who were outliers were discarded from the study. Since the maximum possible score for this test is 200, 30 subjects including 18 male and 12 females whose scores ranged from 90 to 110 were selected and interviewed afterwards. Based on the interview results, 20 subjects including 10 males and 10 females were selected as our final sample and were randomly assigned to two independent experimental groups. As a result, one group included 4 males and 6 females and the other group included 6 males and 4 females. Participants ranged in age from 22 to 48. All participants held graduate degrees and learned English in EFL classes in Iran. Furthermore during the interview session all of the participants claimed that they are motivated to improve their English.

Beside our main 20 subjects in this study, 4 English language teachers who were teaching English in the same institute were chosen as assistants to the researcher in order to provide feedback to the subjects (henceforth interlocutors). These interlocutors formed either mixed-gender or matched gender dyads with the learners in order to provide feedback during the tasks whenever learners made mistakes

3.2 Procedures

3.2.1 Treatment

The data collection procedure for this study was performed at four sessions during two weeks with each group participating in two sessions. At the first and third sessions the participants in the mixed-gender group took part in the study. Picture description tasks were used to tap on learners' specific linguistic features. Each subject was presented with 10 pictures followed by some questions from the interlocutor. The question aimed at directing learners' production to specific linguistic targets which was the focus of the study. Each subject was asked to make a possible story out of the pictures. The pictures were arranged in such a way to elicit the desired linguistic features. In the second and fourth session the same procedures were conducted for the matched-gender group. Notice that in matched-gender group the subjects performed the same tasks with partners whose genders were the same. During the sessions the interactions between the subjects and their interlocutors were tape recorded in order to be used for subsequent post-tests. Linguistic targets which were examined in this study included: 1: auxiliaries, 2: determiners including articles, demonstratives and quantifiers, 3: prepositions and 4: negation. In order to ensure the similarity of procedures across all learners and thus maximize the validity and reliability of the study the interlocutors participated in several training sessions with the researcher before the data collection sessions.

3.2.2 Post-tests

This study used tailor-made post test design in order to investigate the learning gained through feedback with reference to the interlocutors' gender. The concept of feedback episode was used in this study to highlight those interactional turns which contains an error. The definition of feedback episode is the same as what has been used in other interactional research (for example R.Ellis, Bastorkmen, and Loewen 2001a). Following the picture description tasks, those feedback episodes which contained an error followed by a feedback from the interlocutor were used to create post test items. Examples 1 and 2 display how feedback episodes are used for the construction of test items.

Example 1:

Learner: he is drive a car.

Interlocutor: he is driving a car

Learner: driving? Yes

Learner: he is driving a car

Based on this feedback episode a multiple choice test item which contained both *drive* and *driving* items was created in order to measure this structure.

Example 2:

Learner: a man entered restaurant

Interlocutor: restaurant or the restaurant?

Learner: the restaurant?

Learner: a man entered the restaurant

Based on this feedback episode a test item checking the acquisition of articles was created. After the tape recording of all learners' interactions and the coding of all feedback episodes, all errors within feedback episodes were detected and ranked based on their frequencies. The following error frequency was emerged: 1 auxiliaries², negation³, determiners and 4, prepositions. Based on the types and frequency of errors found in feedback episodes a 30-item grammar test was created. In fact the frequency of linguistic targets in the test was based on the frequency of error types found in feedback episodes.

4. Results

For all learners in both groups the percentage of items which evidenced learning was calculated for each structure type. Tables 2 and 3 illustrate the mean percent of correct responses in both groups by structure.

Auxiliaries	Determiners	Prepositions	Negation	Total
60%	68%	76%	55%	67%

Table 2-mixed-gender group (mean correct)

Auxiliaries	Determiners	Prepositions	Negation	Total
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45%	50%	72%	40%	57%
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Table 3-matched-gender group (mean correct)

Figure 1 displays and compares the overall distribution of learning across 4 structures for 2 groups. As can be seen in figure 1 there are moderate to high rates of learning for all structures in both groups. However it seems that feedbacks was favored more by learners in mixed-gender group than the other group, for, unless proposition category all other categories evidence apparently significant learning in mixed-gender group compared with matched- gender group.

Figure1. Mean total performance for both groups

5. Discussion

This study addressed the question: Does interlocutor’s gender influence the effectiveness of feedback? Therefore our aim in conducting this research was to assess the effectiveness of feedback with respect to gender in learner-learner dyads. Findings of this study suggest that learner’s gender may influence the effectiveness of the feedback that is directed at the interlocutor. Five linguistic targets were investigated in this study. Except one structure (proposition) which appeared impervious to the effect of gender other three structures revealed high rates of sensitivity to gender role. Before we explore the reasons behind this sensitivity to gender and possible discrepancies in such sensitivity among deferent structures, it is emphasized that since feedback is an essential and integrated component of interaction, the findings of this study is intended to provide some guidelines for classroom interaction and specifically for the role which interlocutors of the same or opposite gender can play in providing feedback to learners in classrooms. In this section we will provide some explanations for the mechanisms through which feedback leads to learning in classroom interactions in order to pave the ground for the interpretations of the results of this study.

5.1. *noticing the gap through feedback*

Current research in classroom interaction suggests that in order for learning to take place learners must actively be involved or attending to L2 forms. According to Schmidt and Frota (1986: 311) ” a second language learner will begin to acquire the target like form if and only if it is present in comprehended input and noticed in the sense of the word, that is consciously” .Swain and Lapkin(1998) similarly believe that the productive use of language is an enactment of mental processes. For Gass and Varonis(1986: 318) interaction plays a central role in language acquisition by providing learners with’ a forum for testing out hypothesis about the target language’. One important procedure by which learners may attend to forms is feedback. Many interaction studies have focused on the role of feedback in the L2 classrooms and most of them associated feedback with L2 learning (see Mackey and Gass2006). Different types of feedback have been identified. While Clarification requests, confirmation checks, repetitions and recasts are among implicit types, feedback can also take

more explicit form in terms of metalinguistic explanation which has also been utilized in this study. For instance in the following example from this study after the learner, produced the following ungrammatical sentence, the interlocutor correct the learner:

The sentence: I never been to India.

The interlocutor: no, you need *have* before been to form present perfect

In another example, the learner judges the following ungrammatical sentence as grammatical:

The sentence: she parted with reluctantly her money.

The interlocutor: no, you can't put an adverb between the preposition and the object.

Therefore the type of feedback which is provided to learners is explicit. The advantage of explicit feedback over more implicit types has been documented in literature. According to Egi (edited in Mackey 2007) recasts which are implicit types of feedback may not be effective as far as the learners interpret them as being focused on the communication of meaning. Havarank (2002) also suggest that feedback which overtly directs learners' attention to form, may be more effective than other more implicit types of feedback such as recasts. Similarly Ellis and colleagues (Ellis *et al.* 2006) argued that interactional feedback in the form of metalinguistic information followed by learners' responses may be more effective than implicit forms of feedback.

The crucial question which can be raised in this juncture is that how gender differences may contribute to noticing the gap in second language learning. To answer this question we now turn to some sociolinguistic explanations which may fuel such discrepancy in noticing the gap in second language learners.

5.2. Gender differences and language performance

There is nowadays a growing awareness about gender-related differences in language performance. The gender-related differences in men and women speech range from the choice of vocabulary, topic, and even syntactic organizations. In conversations involving both men and women, most researchers agree that men speak more than women do (Wardhaugh 1986). Most researchers believe that the male –female communication patterns and styles available in one's native language are also available in second language. Research has also suggested that in L2 interaction both males and females negotiate more in mixed-gender pairings than in matched- gender pairings(Gass and Varonis 1986). It was also

discovered that female native speakers are more inclined to interact with male learners than with female learners (Pica *et al.* 1991). This raises the possibility that learners as is the case with native speakers are sensitive to the influence of gender. This sensitivity to the gender may cause learners to pay more attention to the feedback which they receive in mixed-gender dyads than in matched –gender dyads. This argument is in line with the finding of this study, that is feedback directed at learners in mixed- gender dyads is more effective than such a feedback in matched- gender dyads. Furthermore it was observed that in mixed-gender dyads, the feedback which is provided by males are more effective than the other way round. In other words females are more likely to pay attention to their errors than males when they receive feedback from the opposite gender. Such finding again, can be argued, stems from stereotypically feminine behavior in society. As Holms and Marra(2004) points out, some behaviors such as attending to others’ needs are stereotypically feminine. It may be that when males and females interact with each other, females are more concerned with their stereotypically decent and correct performance. It follows that when they receive feedback on their behaviour they are more willing to respect it than males.

6. Conclusion and implications

This study investigated the role of gender in effectiveness of feedback. In particular it explored the possibility that participants in mixed-gender and matched-gender dyads perceive feedback differently. The results showed that in mixed-gender dyads feedback is more effective than in matched-gender dyads. In other words based on findings of this study in classroom interactions the role of gender should be taken into consideration. Furthermore it was observed that in mixed-gender dyads females benefit from feedback more than males. In sum the important conclusion of this study are as follows: Learners in mixed-gender dyads benefits more from feedback than in matched-gender dyads. The causes of this mismatch in males and females responses to feedback are possibly rooted in psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic mechanisms involved in learning. It seems that feedback from an opposite gender is more efficiently considered and processed than from the same gender. The implication for second-language classrooms is obvious: mixed-gender interactions are possibly more efficient than matched-gender interactions for feedback generated in the former are more beneficial than those of the latter.

7. Limitations

In generalizing the results of classroom research one has to always consider such generalizations with caution. Ongoing circumstances and processes in classrooms take place against a cultural background in which social, ideological, and political factors are at work. While the interpretation of the findings of the current study is best valid within Iranian socio-cultural context, research in other socio-cultural contexts can lend support to

universality of the study findings and its applications and implications in other classroom settings. Therefore generalizability is not our intention in this study, for, the influence of gender as a social construct is strongly affected by sociocultural factors. Another criticism which may be leveled against this study is the use of oral description tasks to collect feedback episodes while measuring learning gains via written exam. While using oral production tasks is much more difficult to score, it may also cause extraneous variables creeping into the study due to familiarity with test items, rater, etc.

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