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Influence Of Peer Interaction On Undergraduate Esl Learners' Speaking Skills: A Qualitative Analysis Of Speaking Practices At University Level In Pakistan



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Abstract

Effective communication in English has been a major challenge for undergraduate ESL students in Pakistan, particularly for those studying in public universities where English is taught as a second language. Although many students receive years of formal English instruction, they often struggle to communicate fluently and confidently in spoken English. This study explored the role of peer interaction in enhancing the speaking skills of undergraduate ESL students guided by Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory. The study adopted a qualitative case study design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations to examine students' experiences and perceptions regarding peer interaction in language learning. The findings revealed that peer interaction significantly improved students' speaking fluency, vocabulary development, self-confidence, and willingness to communicate while reducing speaking anxiety. Collaborative dialogue also facilitated the internalization of grammatical knowledge and the development of pragmatic competence. The findings supported the theoretical concepts of the Zone of Proximal Development. The study concludes that peer-based learning provides an effective, culturally relevant pedagogical approach for improving English-speaking skills in Pakistani higher education. It recommends integrating structured peer-learning activities into university curricula, strengthening teacher training for interactive classroom practices, and promoting extracurricular language-learning opportunities to enhance oral proficiency among ESL learners.

Key words: ESL learners, peer interaction, speaking skills, oral proficiency, Sociocultural Theory, Zone of Proximal Development, Pakistan.

Introduction

English is an important language in Pakistan's education and in the workplace. It is the language of higher education and is seen as a requirement for success in academic pursuits, career growth, and for engaging in the global economy. However, after years of English study in schools and colleges, many undergraduate students, especially the students studying in public universities, still have problems in communicating in spoken English. They might have a good grasp on grammar and reading comprehension; however, they may be reluctant to speak due to limited opportunities to speak, fear of making mistakes and lack of confidence (Krashen, 1982; Richards, 2008).

Traditionally, grammar, reading, and writing with a focus on examination performance are emphasized in the teaching of English in many universities in Pakistan without any emphasis on communicative competence. This leads to the fact that the teaching is often teacher-dominated and students' opportunities for meaningful discussions and interactive speaking are limited. Students are further limited in their oral language development through large classes, assessment-based pedagogic methods and limited exposure to authentic English communication. As a result, many students have difficulty with fluency and pronunciation, and using words in English, and communicating confidently in English (Rahman, 2007).

To overcome these difficulties, language teachers have increasingly emphasized the need to use peer interaction as a language teaching aid which is shown to be effective

in stimulating SLA. Peer interaction is when students engage in joint learning activities such as discussion, pair work, role play, problem solving and group activity. Such interactions foster an atmosphere of learning in which students can share ideas, seek clarification, give and receive feedback, and use language without the stress that one might feel in classroom settings with a teacher guiding the activity. The results indicate that these co-operative experiences can be linked to increased fluency in speaking, enlargement of the learner's vocabulary, communicative confidence and decreased language anxiety (Long, 1996; Swain, 2000).

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Learning Theory is used as the foundation for this study because it has the concept of learning as a socially mediated process. Vygotsky (1978) stated that cognitive development is achieved by interacting with more capable peers and society. The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is a key aspect of this theory and refers to a distance between what a learner can do independently and what they are capable of doing when supported or guided. In peer interactions, students support and guide each other's learning, correct each other's mistakes, and co-construct understanding. By engaging in multiple successive conversations, learners can internalize linguistic knowledge and build up communicative competence (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

Peer interaction is especially significant in the Pakistani educational setting. Cooperative learning is widely accepted in Pakistan and is considered an effective form of learning as the society in general places great importance on cooperation, mutual support and learning together. Students have opportunities to practise English in a less threatening context through pair work, group discussion and peer-assisted learning which helps to promote active participation and enhance students' willingness to communicate in English. As a result of these activities, language competence is enhanced, and the learners' critical thinking, autonomy and interpersonal communication are developed.

While peer interaction has been shown to have a beneficial impact on second language acquisition, few studies have focused on how peer interaction affects the speaking skills of undergraduate ESL students in parallel universities of Pakistani context (specifically semi-urban context of Shaikh Ayaz University in Shikarpur). The existing research in Pakistan is grammar-oriented, writing oriented, or general classroom based, which research lacks understanding about how peer interaction influences students' oral communication skill and learning process. This is of significance to the creation of contextually relevant teaching methods that will improve communicative competence in higher education.

Hence, the aim of the present study is to see the effect of peer interaction on the English language skill of undergraduate ESL students of Shaikh Ayaz University, Shikarpur. The study was conducted using qualitative case study design, based on Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which aims to examine students' experiences and perceptions of collaborative learning. Of the three data collection methods, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and classroom observations will be used to get a deep knowledge on peer interaction in developing speaking skills. The findings will be useful to those English language teachers, curriculum planners, and policy makers who want to make communicative language teaching an effective phenomenon in the universities of Pakistan.

Literature Review

This section provides literature review on the topic by utilizing recommended books, research articles and empirical studies conducted in the area in order to find the research gap.

Peer Interaction and Second Language acquisition.

Peer interaction is known to be one of the important processes in L2 acquisition. In the field of applied linguistics, it has been found that meaningful interaction with peers can give learners repeated opportunities to produce language, engage in negotiations for meaning, and get feedback on their work as it is being done. The Interaction Hypothesis (Long, 1996) suggests that language acquisition will be promoted when the interlocutor is unfamiliar with the language and when there is communication problems that make the learner feel the need to negotiate meaning and request clarification. As a result of peer conversation, learners are aware of some gaps in their linguistic knowledge, and adjust, rephrase, and rewrite their speech accordingly, which makes their language more accurate and fluent.

Likewise, Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis pays much attention to the role of language production in the process of second language learning. Speaking, Swain argues, is not only a tool for communication, but a process which is used to recognize linguistic deficiencies and to try to remedy them. Peer interaction thus has two important functions: it affords learners opportunities to experiment with language and prompts them to assess and refine their own language. In peer learning groups, students are more likely to adopt new vocabulary, idiomatic expressions and complex grammatical structures as they can get instant feedback and encouragement from their peers.

Peer collaboration has been proven to enhance students' speaking proficiency in some Asian situations. Nguyen (2013) found that structured peer discussions positively affected the development of student fluency and confidence among the Vietnamese ESL learners. In a similar study, Alghamdi (2017) concluded that the collaborative learning technique among Saudi EFL learners has a positive effect on improving pronunciation, vocabulary learning and willingness to communicate. These results support the notion that peer interaction is a language learning approach that is not only a cognitive strategy but also a motivational approach that encourages the students to engage in language communication.

Sociocultural Theory and Collaborative Learning

The Sociocultural Theory (SCT) of Vygotsky gives a solid theoretical basis to study the significance of social interaction in language learning. Vygotsky (1978) proposed that cognitive development takes place when a person interacts with someone who can provide more knowledge. Central to the concepts of SCT is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is the distance between what learners can do on their own and what they can learn with support from others and/or scaffolding. Other students, in the type of classroom known as ESL (English as a second language), are sometimes co-constructors of knowledge who explain, give feedback, and provide support to help other students complete tasks that they cannot do alone.

Scaffolding was first mentioned by Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976), who defined scaffolding as "temporary support that is only needed while a learner is learning to do a task independently". Donato (1994) extended this idea to collective scaffolding, showing that peers can knowingly build up knowledge and support each other as they engage in collaborative tasks. For instance, if one child cannot remember a word or grammatical construction, another child can help clarify it for both. By engaging in

frequent, joint interactions, learners begin to internalise language knowledge and become independent users of language.

In addition to the cognitive advantages, Sociocultural Theory also emphasizes the role of social interaction in fostering learners' emotional welfare and motivation. Students feel less pressure to not make mistakes when working with peers because they see their peers as partners to work with rather than evaluators. This type of atmosphere reduces speaking anxiety and helps to build a positive attitude among the learners towards English, especially in Pakistan where students lack confidence in speaking English because of fear of being judged negatively.

Peer Learning in Pakistani ESL Classes

There is a specific context to the study of English language in Pakistan in the educational and sociocultural fields. While English is used as a language of instruction in many higher education institutions, its use outside of the classroom is restricted for many students, especially those from rural and semi-urban communities, who are less likely to have opportunities to use English outside of the classroom. According to Rahman (2020) and Mansoor (2005), the teaching of English in Pakistan is mostly teacher-centred, focusing on grammar, reading comprehension rather than on oral communication and exams in written form. As a result, students can acquire passive knowledge of English but do not have confidence and fluency in speaking.

Recent research indicates that peer learning is a way to counterbalance these limitations. Jabeen and Kazemian (2015) found that the use of structured peer discussion enhanced the speaking accuracy and confidence level of ESL learners in Pakistan. In the same way, Zafar (2021) revealed that collaborative speaking tasks such as debate and role-playing enhanced students' engagement, motivation and desire to communicate in the classroom. The results suggest that peer interaction is especially useful for educational purposes where opportunities for real-life oral communication are scarce.

Collectivist culture also enables the use of peer-based learning in Pakistan. Most students appreciate cooperation, mutual support and team work, and collaborative learning is the norm in the culture. Peer interaction helps students take responsibility for each other, problem solve together, and become more confident while practicing conversation skills. Therefore, using structured peer interaction in ESL classes is a pedagogically and culturally sound method to enhance the oral proficiency of ESL students.

How peers interact: Peer Interaction Mechanism

Peer interaction promotes language development by several interrelated processes. First, learners negotiate meaning in conversations by asking questions, seeking clarification, paraphrasing ideas and reformulating utterances to make meaning clear. Through these processes, the learners' grammar, vocabulary, and pragmatic competence are reinforced. Second, peers give immediate feedback – corrective and supportive – in a low anxiety environment. Learners are more likely to be willing to try a new form of language and to take correction when interacting with their peers, as they feel less intimidated than by teachers. Thirdly, peer interaction boosts learner motivation and engagement. Cooperative learning environments are conducive to integrative motivation in that they motivate students to learn a language to communicate, not for examination (Gardner, 1985).

Technological tools also provide the opportunities to interact with peers outside the classroom. With WhatsApp, Google Meet, and Moodle, students can collaborate on group projects, share feedback, join in with a group and practice speaking in online

environments. These digital platforms are being used in the classroom to supplement and augment language learning, and to offer more opportunities for students to engage in language practice together.

Gap in the Literature

While previous research has shown that peer interaction has a positive impact on second language acquisition, there are still several gaps to be addressed. Firstly, few studies have been conducted on the peer interaction of the undergraduate ESL students in a public University situated in rural and semi-urban areas of Pakistan, Shaikh Ayaz University, Shikarpur. The majority of the research conducted has been at the urban institution or at the secondary level. Second, the majority of literature on which most of the research is based focuses mainly on quantitative research data generated from achievement tests and surveys, which are unable to give a full understanding of the lived experiences, perceptions and interactions between the classroom and the learner. Focusing on peer interaction in the context of collaboration, scaffolding, and meaning negotiation, a need exists for qualitative research on how peer interaction contributes to speaking development.

The current study tries to fill these gaps by investigating peer interaction effects on the English proficiency of the undergraduate ESL students at Shaikh Ayaz University, Shikarpur. The study adopts the qualitative case study approach with the tools of semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and classroom observations to analyze the experience of learners in the collaborative learning process. The results will offer context-specific evidence to support the practices of English language teaching and development of curriculum in higher education in Pakistan.

Theoretical Framework

The study is based on the Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (SCT) that considers learning as a socio-cultural process whereby learners learn by interacting and collaborating with others (Vygotsky, 1978). SCT language acquisition is based on meaningful social interaction, not on individual learning. The central idea of this theory is the difference between the tasks a learner can do independently and those the learner can do with the help of more competent learners or teachers, called the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). In the ESL classroom, the process of peer interaction offers students opportunities to negotiate meaning, exchange ideas, seek feedback and scaffold each other's learning. Students can build vocabulary, correct grammar knowledge and enhance their fluency of speaking through joint activities like pair work, group discussion, role play and so on in an encouraging atmosphere. Mediation, another key principle of SCT, is the understanding of language as a tool to think, problem solve, and communicate. In peer interaction, learners engage in language to make sense of things, to make ideas clear, and to develop knowledge together. The learning process of such social interactions is repeated, which helps learners internalize the language and move on to independent communication. In the Pakistani ESL context where most undergraduate students have very limited opportunities for authentic communication in English and are often afraid of making mistakes, peer interaction provides them with a low anxiety learning environment, which encourages them to participate, develop confidence and build up oral language skills. Considering this, the conceptual framework of this study is drawn from Sociocultural Theory which has an underlying concept of collaborative learning and interaction among the students.

Research Methodology

In this study, the qualitative approach is used and the case study design is followed to

explore the influence of peer interaction on the English-speaking proficiency of undergraduate ESL students at Shikakh Ayaz University, Shikarpur. A qualitative approach is suitable as it allows the researcher to investigate the lived experience, perceptions and attitudes of its participants in detail (Creswell, 2014). The use of a case study design enables a whole-of-peer interaction as part of a real-life educational context to be understood (Yin, 2018). The participants were twelve undergraduate students with an age range of 18-23 years, which were selected by purposive sampling as they had previous experiences in peer based speaking activity in the Department of English. The sample comprised people of varied linguistic background such as Sindhi, Urdu and Punjabi. The data were gathered with the application of semi structured interviews and focus group discussions. Both individual and focus group interviews were conducted with four and eight students respectively, enabling the researcher to gain insights into individual and group discussions. Interview questions covered students' experiences with peers, the support they received when speaking English, and the impact they felt peer interaction had on their English proficiency. The focus group discussions allowed participants to share their experience on pair work, group discussion and collaborative classroom activities and showed how they negotiated meaning, corrected each other and gained the confidence of speaking. All interviews and focus group discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim from the audio recordings for analysis, with the informed consent of the participants. Voluntary participation, pseudonyms of participants and confidentiality of all collected data ensured ethical principles were upheld during the study.

Findings and Discussion

Five emergent themes were identified from the analysis of the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The results of the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were analyzed into five major themes on the influence of peer interaction on English speaking ability of undergraduate ESL students at Shaikh Ayaz University, Shikarpur. These themes are: (1) greater confidence and less speaking anxiety, (2) more collaborative scaffolding and meaning negotiation, (3) better speaking fluency and language competence, (4) more motivation and learner autonomy, and (5) greater teacher and institutional support. The results are discussed in terms of Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory (SCT) and other previous research conducted on peer interaction in L2 acquisition.

Higher Speaking Level of Development

The peer interaction in learning was found to have a positive impact on the learners' confidence and the positive effect of this was one of the strongest theme that emerged during the interviews. Most learners indicated that they had greater comfort level with communicating in English with their classmates rather than with their teachers. They thought that their fellow students could provide a supportive learning environment in which it was okay to make mistakes as part of the learning process.

One participant stated:

When I make mistakes in my conversations with my friends, they don't criticize me, but encourage me; so, whenever I make a mistake, they support me and I feel confident to keep talking.

The discovery is consistent with Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis that states that language is learned best when anxiety is low and motivation is high. Peer interaction fostered a friendly environment, which in turn decreased students' fear of negative evaluation and increased their engagement in English conversation. The

results are also consistent with Jabeen and Kazemian (2015) who concluded that collaborative speaking activities had a significant effect on the ESL learners' confidence in Pakistan. Similarly, Nguyen (2013) discovered that structured peer discussions enabled the learners' willingness to communicate and boosted their speaking confidence.

From the results, it can be inferred that there is an affective importance of peer interaction in language learning that helps students to practice English without fear of committing errors because it helps them create a psychologically safe environment.

Collaborative Scaffolding and Meaning Negotiation

Collaborative scaffolding was also found to be very significant in the process of peer interaction. Participants described how they were often helping each other with pronunciation, with the correct words to use, with grammar, and with understanding in conversations. Students were not only seen as important learning resources by their teachers, but by each other as well.

One participant explained:

If I am unable to recall a word or commit a grammatical error, my partner tends to help me right away and I remember it in the future and use it in the proper way.

This result is quite in accord with the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory by Vygotsky (1978), which suggests that learning is more efficient when it is accomplished with the aid of more capable peers. Students could work together to carry out communicative purposes which they might not have been able to do alone. Likewise, Donato (1994) called this process collective scaffolding, in which learners build knowledge together in a collaborative manner. The present study shows that peer interaction can facilitate the students in negotiating meaning, resolving communication problem and gradually internalizing new language structures. The results also reflect Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis which focuses on the importance of negotiating meaning in the interaction in L2 learning.

Speaking Fluency and Linguistic Competence: Improvement

Participants regularly reported having improved their fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammatical accuracy as a result of their regular interactions with their peers. Students reported that they learned new words, phrases and sentence structures in their conversations with peers and used them in their own speech.

One participant commented:

"With different topics we discuss, I get new words and expressions from the other class students and later I would try to use them in the presentation and when talking in the classroom."

The results are in line with Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis that says that when language is produced, learners become aware of their lack of something in their system and they adjust their language production. In multiple speaking and feedback sessions, participants began to develop greater fluency and linguistic proficiency, refining their speaking over time. The results are also consistent with Alghamdi (2017) and Nguyen (2013) who concluded that an ESL peer collaboration method contributes to the acquisition of vocabulary, pronunciation, and communicative competence for ESL students. Moreover, students said they knew more about pragmatic aspects of communication, such as choosing expressions and adapting language for various situations.

The ability to become motivated and act on one's own

The results show that students' motivation for using English outside of class was

facilitated by peer interaction. Some reported that they practised the English language independently with friends in informal groups, through study groups and via online communication tools like WhatsApp.

One participant shared:

Most of our WhatsApp group is in English, we ask questions, discuss assignments and even communicate in English, this helps us to practice daily.

The results are consistent with Gardner's (1985) theory of integrative motivation which is based on the idea that people are more motivated to learn a language when it is used for real communication than for academic evaluation. Learners said that learning was fun and enjoyable with the help of peers, and they felt they should learn to speak on their own by interacting with their peers. The results also reflect greater autonomy of the learners. Participants actively looked for ways to use English with their fellow classmates, as they sought to supplement their teachers' instruction. Participants looked outward rather than inward to find ways to use English with peers, instead of relying solely on teachers. This means that through peer interaction, self-directed learning, collaborative problem-solving, and increased language learning process ownership are promoted.

Role of Teachers and Institutional Support

While peer interactions were seen as very useful participants also noted how important teachers and institutions are to providing opportunities for collaborative learning. Speaking activities were reported to be relatively limited as most of the classroom instruction was still teacher-centred, many of the students remarked.

One participant stated:

More debates, role plays and speaking activities are needed for teachers as it helps us to be more confident in practicing English.

The finding is in line with the findings of Rahman (2020) and Mansoor (2005) who concluded that English language teaching in Pakistan is still grammar-oriented and does not aim at the communicative competence of the students. The participants felt that it would be very beneficial to have pair work, group discussions, presentations and English language clubs included in the programme of the university as this would enhance their opportunity for learning to speak. The results thus indicate that the peer interaction works best when teachers develop collaborative learning tasks and institutions which promote communicative language learning outside the classroom.

Conclusion

To conclude the discussion, the article has discussed the interaction effect of peers on English speaking abilities of ESL undergraduates in Shikarpur Shaikh Ayaz University. The research found out the group work of the learners in the process of language acquisition in relation to both cognitive and affective learning as per the Sociocultural Theory of Vygotsky (1978). It was determined that one of the intermediate variables was the peer interaction, which helped the learners to transform the individual competence into high communicative proficiency as an element of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

The most important results were that, the influence of peer communication increased confidence levels among the child students, decreased anxiety and willingness to make linguistic risk. The peer discussions were less formal and more educative since it involved the learners being more at ease using the English language in a more natural manner devoid of being judged poorly as it would have been with teacher-centered teaching. The collective scaffolding provided the learners with the opportunity to

correct each other, give feedback and meanings. The communications were used to support the improvement of the fluency and the vocabulary and the general formation of the communicative skills.

The other research result was that, peer-based learning boosts self motivation and self direction to learning. The students reported that they started speaking English in non-classroom settings and this is an indicator of integrative motivation (Gardner, 1985) and learning how to learn. Moreover, as collaborative learning belongs under the collectivism values in Pakistan, this made collaborative learning acceptable and effective, and compared with the practice of oral in English which is but an aiding part of the system of the teacher-centered methods, and in which the teacher and the learners are not in the close proximity to one another, peer interaction is a feasible and culturally responsive mode of acquiring English language skills.

The whole work can be taken as the reminder of the fact that the language development is not the field of the purely cognitive activity being employed on the personal level but the process which is mediated by the society, which is clarified by the contacts, instructions and mutual responsibility. The cooperation with peers has been structured as a type of learning and cultural resources, which will lead to the linguistic competence, emotional stability, and the engagement of the learners.

The results of the current study reinforce the principles of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) which is language learning as a social process. Peer communication was a mediation that helped the students to build knowledge together, interpret meaning, and little by little internalize communicative skills. Pupils were able to scaffold each other's learning through collaborative dialogue, leading to improvements in fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, confidence and accuracy of speaking.

The results are also congruent with Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis which focuses on the importance of meaning negotiation when communicating as well as Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis which stresses the importance of language output in the development of linguistic competence. Also, the decrease of speaking anxiety found in the present study provides supporting evidence for Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis and the boost in willingness to communicate is encouraging evidence to Gardner's (1985) theory of integrative motivation.

Peer interaction seems especially important in the Pakistani context, since group learning, group assistance and cooperation are widely accepted in Pakistan. Learners' attitudes towards learning English by using collaborative learning strategy in higher education institutions were considered as natural and supportive learning strategies that can be used by learners. The results indicate that peer interaction not only enhances learners' cognitive growth in developing speaking skills, but also influences their emotional state, confidence, motivation and autonomy. Based on these findings, it is concluded that adding structured peer-learning exercises to the ESL undergraduate oral course can be very beneficial for improving oral skills.

Recommendations

According to the findings, it can be concluded that the following recommendations should be adopted to enhance English language teaching in higher education institutions in Pakistan.

Curriculum Integration of Peer Activities

Systematically designed peer-based activities such as dialogues, role plays, debates, and group presentations should be integrated into English language programs. These activities will enable students to negotiate meaning, engage in authentic

communication, and receive immediate feedback from peers. The inclusion of collaborative exercises in the syllabus will ensure that oral fluency is developed and assessed on a regular basis alongside formal language competence.

Teacher Training and Capacity Building

Teachers play a crucial role in ensuring the success of peer interaction. Therefore, they should be trained within communicative and learner-centred teaching approaches that encourage teamwork and collaboration. Teacher training workshops may focus on facilitating group discussions, providing constructive feedback, managing interactive tasks, and setting appropriate learning goals.

Such training will also promote reflective teaching practices and help teachers adapt peer-based activities according to students' linguistic levels and cultural backgrounds. In addition, institutional support is required to ensure that teachers are actively involved in decision-making processes related to classroom practices.

Creation of Supportive Learning Environments

Universities should provide opportunities for informal peer interaction outside the classroom. English-speaking clubs, language cafés, and peer mentoring programs can create low-anxiety environments where students can practice spoken English freely. These platforms will complement formal instruction and encourage voluntary participation, fostering a culture of collaborative learning.

Peer Assessment, Feedback, and Evaluation

Evaluation systems should include peer assessment to promote shared responsibility and reflective learning. Through structured peer feedback, students can develop critical thinking, teamwork skills, and awareness of linguistic accuracy. Rubrics should be designed to ensure that feedback remains constructive, specific, and developmentally useful.

Motivation and Learner Autonomy

Teaching practices should be designed in a way that encourages learner autonomy and intrinsic motivation. Students should be given opportunities to lead group discussions, develop mini-projects, and participate in interactive language games. Such activities promote ownership of learning and encourage students to use English beyond the classroom context.

Integrative motivation can be strengthened when learners use English for meaningful communication rather than only for academic evaluation.

Future Research Directions

Future research may adopt longitudinal or mixed-method approaches to gain deeper insights into the long-term effects of peer interaction on language development. Extended studies could explore vocabulary retention, pronunciation improvement, and sustained fluency development over time.

Comparative studies across different universities and regions of Pakistan would also provide broader insights. Additionally, future research may examine the role of digital tools and online platforms in enhancing peer interaction and spoken language development.

Implications for Language Education in Pakistan

The findings of this study have several implications for English language teaching in higher education institutions.

Pedagogical Implications

Peer-based learning should be recognized as a central component of language teaching. Integrating collaborative speaking activities into daily instruction will provide students

with continuous opportunities for meaningful language practice.

Curriculum Design

Language curricula should allocate structured time for pair work, group discussions, role plays, and other interactive tasks. A balance between grammar instruction and communicative practice is essential to ensure both accuracy and fluency.

Teacher Development

Teacher training programs should emphasize interactive teaching strategies, including scaffolding, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), and cooperative learning approaches. This will enable teachers to effectively support peer-based learning in classrooms.

Cultural Compatibility

Peer interaction aligns well with Pakistan's collectivist culture, which values cooperation and group support. Incorporating such culturally compatible strategies can make language learning more engaging and effective.

Policy Implications

Educational policymakers should formally include peer-based learning strategies in national language education policies. Institutions should also promote English-speaking clubs, mentorship programs, and peer evaluation systems to strengthen oral proficiency development.

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