Fostering the Skill of Communication for Introverts in a Hybrid Learning Context

**BERROUAINE Imene &
SARNOU Hanane**
Université de Mostaganem

Abstract

This investigation represents a study of the pedagogical use of a hybrid learning context to maximize introverts' chances in classroom participation. Today, language instructors have an intensive challenge in foreseeing and adapting to a vast range of threats in their classroom communication. The phenomenon of introversion portrays the fact of the non-communicativeness of learners which itself contributes to paralyzing the normal process of communication. Thus, the core of our study is to investigate the equal abilities of extroverts and introverts in the classroom via forming heterogeneous groups. With the use of multiple data sources including classroom observation, surveys, interviews, and experiment research reports that the pre-course phase preparation in a semi-blended context could improve the introverts' communicative outcome in the classroom during the process of learning; this is while opting for consideration to be given to the appropriate equal opportunity and service to all students in a mixed-ability and mixed-style classroom capitalizing the pre-session knowledge construction

1. Introduction

In classrooms, as communities of practice, the teacher often struggles to involve the non-interactive learners, and might be offering an unbalanced priority to extroverts at the expense of introverts. Contemporary approaches, as the Communicative language teaching approach (CLT), capitalized the integration of the oral communication skill in the curriculum. However,

the attempt to teach communication to the most of different students within the vast learning group still ends up with failure. Along with the opposite direction of "size one fits all", certainly new methods from different approaches should be in harmony with one another to serve different learners' learning styles and personality types. Curricula, even after the implementation of CLT approach, do not take into account different learners' profiles, which has led to over-glorifying and spreading the idea of the ideal extroverted learner at the expense of the introverted one. These assumptions turn out to be biased since there is a zero correlation between the IQ (intelligence quotient) level of the learner and the phenomenon of introversion. There is an urgent need for reconsidering such rigid methods and update them to find out solutions to such sensitive issues.

1- In the prospect of reconsidering the learning standards, what are the possible ways to engage introverts in oral communicative activities and give equal opportunities of interaction to every student in the classroom?

2- Could the topic familiarity maximize the risk-taking in interaction and lessen anxiety in classroom participation?

Attempting to answer the questions above, we start to analyze the issues regarding the communicative- constructivist nature of the two delivery mode of instruction; hybrid learning, and the introverts' opportunities of participation in the classroom. Therefore, implementing the method of forming heterogeneous groups which consist of mixed-ability and mixed-personality type learners would work similarly on two parameters. The first parameter would be through involving all students in interaction via socializing the introverts rather than marginalizing them; this is to give equal opportunities to every single student. The second parameter would emphasize the interaction within the social and the physical context.

This study highlights the social constructivist pedagogy that hybrid learning follows in instructional education and collaboration. Therefore, three main theories are analyzed and developed along our research. The first part of our work includes the review of literature; where the theories are described; namely the CLT approach theory implemented in EFL classroom, the impact of Jung's theory of personality types on learners ' performances, and the socio-constructivist principals in hybrid learning pedagogy. Moreover, two weeks experiment is conducted on two controlled groups of First year college students. The study consists of two phases, in both different qualities of interactive activities are animated serving various objectives. Two teaching modes are integrated; the traditional and hybrid. While the first phase is based only on face-to-face instruction with more stimulus-response activities, the second phase takes another orientation via creating an online community in which the topic to be discussed is introduced beforehand upon which set of follow-up interactive activities are presented in the classroom. The socio-constructive aspects are taken into consideration via forming heterogeneous groups in a collaborative way and using the individual's pre-course knowledge to be discussed and contrasted in order to collectively construct different generalization.

2. Method

This section sheds light on the important elements of the research's practical phase. The chosen approach, aims to investigate the impact of the hybrid approach of learning on the students' performance, especially introverted learners. In an attempt to cover the key steps in this research, the sampling framework is being exposed and followed by the means of data collection. It then introduces and describes the educational

context to which this work relates, the survey's aims, and unveils the activities 'procedures and objectives.

3. Context

Our selected sample is the first year Licence students at *Abdelhamid Ibn Badis*, Mostganem, Algeria. One may question the choice of this particular category of learners. We took into a high consideration the impact of the shift from a less active atmosphere of learning in secondary schools to that of university context where interaction is needed to gain proficiency in the target language. We dealt with two learning groups separately, on which the same experiment is applied. A purposive sampling was used to select the current case study of two controlled groups of First year university students. Two criteria were the core of the selection: the limited opportunities of students' interaction in secondary schools versus the shift in the university.

3.1 Participants

This section offers details about the two-controlled groups on which the experiment is similarly applied due to the almost 90% similarity of introversion among the two learning groups after the observation. Concerning our participants 'profile, we dealt with the average of 30 students per group. More specifically, there were 27 participants of group One and 25 participants from group two. Therefore, the sample size allows limiting the large volume of data as well as double-checking the validity of the outcomes in each group. Moreover, we throughout the experiment investigate the possibility of optimizing and maximizing introverts' opportunities to communicate in the classroom. The two-phases experiment holds different objectives via experiencing the traditional communicative approach of teaching in the first two sessions and implementing the socio-constructivist aspect of hybrid

learning by emphasising the pre-course knowledge construction in the second phase.

4. Research Instruments

4.1 Observation

As any phenomenographic study, a primary observation to the phenomenon is imperative. Therefore, two sessions are devoted to classroom observation for both groups. There was a grid which includes set of items and variables to be observed. In an attempt to emphasise the mutual impact of teaching on learning, the study did not neglect the vision of teaching. Thus, we laid much focus on given variables related to the two interlocutors in classroom, i.e. the teacher and the student. A narrowed observation spotted students' risk taking, motivation, lack of interest, anxiety, and frequency of interaction. On the other hand, there was an urge for having an eye on the teacher's sociability, interpersonal skills, attitudes with learners, and the speech distribution in classroom.

4.2 The Primary Test (Introversion / Extroversion)

Due to the research's nature and given psychological parameters, it was imperative to start the experiment with a pre-test in a form of a questionnaire. The latter sought to identify given characteristics of the target population that are related to both phenomena of introversion and extroversion in and out class doors. The test contains a set of questions which seek to get a close look into the interpersonal characteristics of the learner as a social individual and in the educational context. Testing the sociability of the student had to be gradually diagnosed starting from the plain social context to the educational setting, i.e. classroom interaction.

4.1.1 The Structure of the Test

This experiment starts with the Personality test encompassing two parts. The first part is devoted to personal information whereas the second section contains twelve questions. The questions gradually investigate the learner's attitude from personal, to social behaviours, and then shift its orientation with an attempt of the researcher to relate it contextually to the classroom setting.

5. **The Activities Procedure and Objectives**

5.1 Phase One

During the first two sessions of our first phase, information gap activities are introduced to the classroom. "One way interaction" is emphasised through *Guessing games* (e.g. Spot the word in the picture). Those who tend to be introverts may express their thoughts better since not all students can guess and depict the details of the picture. This activity does not work on interaction as much it does on the cognition and concentration, through which intelligence may be reflected. The "*what is in your flash card"* activity' objective was to create an enjoyable and interactive atmosphere. By responding yes / No, students had to think of further questions to ask, in order to get the required information, which is though provoking and at the same time making a good use of the vocabulary they have.

5.2 Phase Two

We, as a learning group in the classroom, decided to move to another dimension to prepare such activities. We have created an online group (on Facebook) on which the teacher posts his instructions for the next session. The interactive activities in the classroom are based on the online instruction. They are named as followed.

In the first session: What do you think of?/ Get to know your classmate, (the video posted online)

In the second session: What's your story about? (Conversation grid for the stories 'details)

Duration: One hour minimum.

6. The Informants' Reflections

a. The Students' Feedback Sheet

By the end of the two weeks experiment, students are handed a feedback sheet. The latter consists of ten questions which seek getting students' comments, point of views, and suggestions about the whole experiment they went through.

b. Teacher's Interview

An online interview is designed to get teacher's feedback about the whole experiment. Details about each phase are discussed. The interview seeks an evaluation to the material provided in the experiment, the quality of instruction, and the teacher's feedback on what could work better. Taking advantage from the teacher's years of experience in the field of teaching, teacher's attitude towards the phenomenon of introversion is investigated.

7. Data Processing and Analysis
c. The Result of the Test Introversion/ Extroversion

The test, as being earlier described, is made up of two types of questions: Profile, self assessment, and scenarios. The profile section is concerned with the background information of the learner. For the second section, self-assessment is the part which indicates to what extent the question statement would apply on the student whereas in the scenario part, in each scenario the student was asked to interpret his/her answers

according to how s/he would be mostly reacting in similar situation.

As L1 students, two main reasons pushed us to emphasise on the age element. First, it is related to the consequences of the poor quantity and quality of English oral sessions if they ever existed in the secondary school. Second, fresh students meeting at the first time having few months together in first year university, are likely not to interact. The unfamiliarity with one another creates a challenge of crossing boundaries, and fear of risk-taking. Introverts, unlike extroverts, in both groups tend to have the large percentage. This test, therefore, has been the starting point to our experiment.

d. The observation Grid[1]'s Results

The 45 minute session of observation per each group gave room to evaluate the quality of students' interaction with each other as well as with the teacher. Having an anticipated idea about the learning population and the level of their communicativeness was crucial before starting up the experiment.

One could notice that students belonging to the two different groups are likely to have the same characteristics. The almost identical observation remarks recorded in the two sessions made it nearly impossible to conduct a comparative study between these two groups. Therefore, a decision has been made to reaffirm the reliability of the experiments' data while working on two controlled groups. The majority of the classroom population do not encounter problems when it

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[1]. An Observation Grid is a classroom grid where the teacher/ researcher collects anecdotes, information about some variables -usually about students' behaviors- sometimes followed with feedback. The data are arranged in a grid and evaluated progressively according to the researcher's objectives.

comes to expressing ideas regarding the poor quality of expression and word choice. Most of them show a good interest in the topic discussed. Yet, that interest and motivation are reduced throughout the session. Another remark has been made is about the classroom setting. Risk takers are usually sitting at the front seats. Much attention has been addressed to them.

e. The Teacher's Attitudes

The teacher, in attempt to motivate the other non-communicative students, asks them unpredictable questions where they have to react and answer on the spot. Consequently, anxiety and inhibition seem to float to the surface. At this moment, the teacher's interest shifts ultimately to the extrovert students. The teacher's flexibility in terms of generating follow-up questions is highly present, yet creativity in designing an interactive activity is still poorly performed.

f. The Results of Students' Feedback-sheets

At this current step, as our experiment journey has come to an end, it is high time we investigated students' feedback about the whole learning experience. An experiment that took place in a university setting combined two phases of online and traditional instructions. The feedback(s) sought to be obtained from the target case study are based on three levels: process-based, material-based, and self-impression. In the prospect of evaluating the pre-phase experiment, informants from both groups relate their poor performance to *the limited vocabulary package*, while the majority of them justify that the over-participation of few students and teacher's unequal distribution of speech to the students is the reason behind the almost no chance to perform in class. On the other hand, the participants have shown a positive attitude toward creating an online learning community and seemingly felt encouraged to

communicate using it out class doors. Findings also indicate their agreement upon the co-consequential effect of being informed about the tasks' nature and having an overview about the topic in the pre-course phase, in this case online, and the improvement of their performance.

g. Results of Teacher's Interview

Six questions are structured and designed online. The semi-structured interview consists of only open-ended questions, the element that aims to encourage the teacher to reveal individual teaching experience and challenges rather than being limited by closed-questions.

Students -directed activities are appreciated as a tool to provide learners with the opportunity to negotiate topics, discuss ideas, and create their own learning experience. Furthermore, far more than providing information or designing classroom activities, guided participation and mentoring are the key two categories of the pedagogical interaction. The teacher, therefore, thinks that it is "*a must*" to take care of every single student in the learning group by giving them equal chances as they initiate their learning experience in the classroom.

Moreover, the pre-course period of time is where there is a pre-construction of knowledge by getting familiar with the topic to be discussed later in classroom. Such a preparation, according to the teacher, would *"definitely"* make a difference in students' oral performance once in the classroom. The pre-phase would create easiness to the process of interaction.

The teacher's feedback toward the message of this experimental study is by far positive and supportive to a potentially successful adoption and application to the method in the near future.

Conclusion

Maximizing introverts' chances of participation in the classroom tend to be the core objective of our study. The so called "non-communicative learners" face big challenges to voice out their ideas without being hugely terrified due to social anxiety. The study carried out via an experiment reflected the concrete variation in the students' performance by manipulating external factors that in a way or another impact the individual's performance.

The findings, therefore, portray that the pre-course phase lowers to a great extent the anxious habit of reacting to stimulus –response questions on the spot in the classroom session. This is while allowing the learner; especially introverts to work on two archetypical aspects of constructing knowledge. The first, is to construct it individually once at home in the pre-course session, in this case online; while the second, is to construct it collaboratively once in the classroom by comparing, contrasting, discussing different point of views that have been already well-structured.

Introverts' reasons behind their reluctance of interaction in the classroom have been crystal clear throughout the data of students' feedback sheet. The case study's responses were basically related to social anxiety and topic unfamiliarity. The data along the experiment have proved our hypothesis. Virtually speaking, all the sections of this investigation contribute to test a hypothetical solution to the phenomenon of introversion in the classroom. Yet, the sections above along with the genuine experiment carried out in this study offer a practical demonstration to what extent the adequate match between various aspects from totally different approaches can be realized.

Communicativeness and expressiveness can be significantly increased when the personality type of the learner is given the same value as their individual' efforts in evaluating the contribution in the classroom interaction. For not only an EFL learner but also an introverted type of learners, communication and social interaction is a subject to lifetime training. Yet, it is the school's mission to work on this aspect using the target language as a rich medium rather than an articulating device

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