Taking Lead in L2 Speaking Skill through Teachers’ Motivation: A Retrospection of Private Universities in Bangladesh

Md. Rabiul Alam, Md. Zahangir Alam and Shamsi Farzana
Department of English, Asian University of Bangladesh, Uttara, Dhaka 1230, Bangladesh

Abstract

English has earned its undeniable importance as it is usually spoken and considered as the common language almost everywhere in this global world. Hence, learning English speaking has been a merry part for the learners of non-speaking English countries. How to develop the L2 speaking fluency of English as a foreign language learners through the role of teachers’ motivation, many research have been carried out in this field. Likewise, this research aims at picking up the current scenario of the tertiary level English as a second language learners’ speaking skill in Bangladesh, and the importance of teachers’ motivation to accelerate their oral proficiency. This study also shows that teachers’ motivation enable students to improve their verbal performance, leads toward greater success in the future, and most importantly keeps learners highly interested and ease in the L2 learning process. Finally, it suggests that teachers can help instill intrinsic motivation among the learners to improve their speaking skill.

Keywords: Tertiary Level; L2 Speaking; Teachers’ Motivation; Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation; Short-term and Long-term Motivation

1. Introduction

Speaking, in most languages, always takes the lead position amidst all four skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing in terms of communication. To emphasize the importance of four skills of English, Kohli, A.L (2003) said “English be studied in high school and universities in order that we may keep in touch with the stream of evergrowing knowledge. This would prevent our isolation from the world and help us to take advantage of the wider reach of the English language.” Speaking concedes the importance of learning culture besides enrolling all subskills and subsystems of English language. Learners must not encumber adopting only forms of a language to hone abilities for oral communication. They must feel and internalize language over a long time. The ability to speak fluently implies knowledge of language features as well as the ability to process information and language “on the spot,” and success in spoken production depends on rapid mental and social processing skills (Harmer, 2001).

The reluctance of learners to develop L2 speaking, in majority cases, fails to go unnoticed as speaking includes mastering something else beyond the language. To enhance the learners’ interest in learning speaking skill of L2, motivation plays a very vital role in this regard. A learner can be motivated from various points of views. Among all the motivational forces, teachers’ motivation is the key factor, because a teacher, in language class, acts as a monitor, corrector, mentor, an orchestra, and a preceptor as well. Teachers, the instructors in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom, can motivate the
learners using various methods, such as delivering the speech on the importance of being a fluent speaker in L2 (intrinsic motivation), rewarding them on the basis of their performance (extrinsic motivation), and so on. Although intrinsic motivation has the long-term sustainability, extrinsic motivation, in some respects, may supersede the prior one. In this connection, Krieger (2005. p. 10) observes, “EFL students who lack intrinsic motivation may have high-extrinsic motivation if their education system emphasizes the extrinsic rewards flowing from high scores. Even though these forms of motivation are important but maybe are not as good as intrinsic motivation, they can still inspire students to work hard.” Learners’ motivation makes teaching immensely pleasant and more productive. When their success appreciated by the teacher, it invades added advantage for the learners and it makes teaching and learning immeasurably easier. However, according to Brown (2001), “if learners have the opportunity or desire to learn for its own sake, such as to become competent users of that language, they will have a higher success rate in terms of long-term learning than if they are driven by only external rewards.”

2. Problem of the Statement

In brief, people say motivation can work as a driving force for any person to succeed in life. Language learning does not go against the trend and it is rather deeply inclined with it. Learners of this century are more stressed for their personal life, academic life, or professional life and there comes the role of motivation for all sorts of spontaneous learning. EFL learners can gain motivation from different sources to keep themselves on track of learning and improving L2 speaking. In this study, it has been tried to show teachers’ motivation is dominant source among many other sources to encourage learners for improving their L2 oral proficiency. Instructors can instill intrinsic motivation and can keep learners motivated extrinsically.

3. What is Motivation?

Motivation, which includes variety of meanings, drives the learners to stay mesmeric and focused to their goals. According to Dornyei (2001. p. 91), it “is one of the key factors driving language learning success.” This abstract insight motivation merely predominates for cognitive and attitudinal issues. “Motivation is an issue that refers to the way of rousing and supporting aim-guiding attitudes” (cited in Bencharef, 2009. p. 13). Motivation insists learners to put more efforts, grow massive intensity, be hell out, and most importantly tolerate patience to meet their goals.

According to Gardner (1982), motivation is perceived to be composed of three elements: Effort, desire, and affect. Effort refers to the time spent studying the language and the drive of the learner, desire indicates how much the learner wants to become proficient in the language, and affect means the learner’s emotional reactions related to language study.

4. The Research Context

Motivation in language learning does not go beyond the tradition as most of the efforts demand it to be accomplished with great success. It works as a great healer for improving students’ L2 speaking ability. To be proficient in L2 speaking, learners can gain motivation from varied number of sources. Among all, teachers’ motivation is the predominant one. Feng and Chen (2009) highlighted the impact of teacher’s behavior on learning (Feng and Chen, 2009. p. 64).

“An enthusiastic and considerate teacher can offer satisfaction to the learner’s extra needs. This helps strengthen the learner’s study motivation. On the other hand, a teacher’s attitude toward the learner has major influence on the learner’s learning. As regards emotional cramming, a teacher’s physically and mentally pouring into his teaching, and being filled with affection, will help arouse the learning enthusiasm of the learners. However, if the teacher only works as a ‘teaching craftsman’ and puts no emotion into teaching, the classroom will become static to lessen the learning enthusiasm of the learners.”
Motivation from instructors can strengthen risk taking abilities among learners which attenuates their inhibition and prejudice against L2 speaking. Each of the learners in tertiary level grows with very distinctive personality, and he/she is deeply concerned about it. The adult learners do not advance any real learning unless they find their teachers are friendly, reliable, and very easy to communicate. L2 practitioners need to be able to evaluate psychology of learners and must perform like a doctor. For instance, they can provoke learners’ mind through talking about their goals and future. Teachers can tell them L2 speaking will surely add advantage to their journey. Malallah (2000) finds out in his study that high school Kuwaiti students had high motivation to learn English because of their favorable attitudes toward English native EFL teachers. Experts, even, believe to advance any real leaning in the L2 speaking classroom, teachers emotional connection with students is highly involved. Once the learners get to know their instructors like them, they try to back him/her through advancing language. They feel learning and improving their language will keep their instructors pro for them. Dornyei (1994. p. 278) believes that the most important of teacher-related motives, that have been identified in educational psychology, is the affective drive which means: The students’ need to do well in the school to please the teacher (or other persons like parents) whom they appreciate. Although this usually happens with pre-intermediate learners, this is also true with learners from all ages.

To keep learners focused and confident, teachers can adopt alternative options albeit lecturing and using words. They can set classroom which provoke students to express themselves without feeling any inhibition and inferiority. For example, teacher along with the students might decide nobody will laugh regardless any mistake done by any participants in L2 speaking classes. Teachers should not perform as pedants who are prompt at finding mistakes of students and very enthusiastic to provide feedback. If the students are corrected all the time, they can find this very demotivating and become afraid to speak. They suggest that the teachers should always correct the students’ mistakes positively and with encouragement (Baker and Westrup, 2003). Pedantic teaching merely restricts learners to put their opinion freely and encumbers to make any sort of communication in the class. Harmer (1991) asserts that the decisions that the teachers make about how to react to students’ performance will depend on the stages of the lesson, the activities, the types of mistake made, and the particular student who is making that mistake. If the teachers correct whenever there is a problem, the conversational flow as well as the purpose of the speaking activity will be destroyed.

Classroom teachers can encourage their learners through demonstration L2 speaking. They must use L2 for any instructions instead of L1 so that students feel speaking in English is very obvious expectation in the classroom. Meanwhile, this will create a positive vibe among learners that this language has some usages and we can communicate with this it in their daily life. MacDonald (1993; cited in Turnbull, 2001. p. 532) feels that teachers should use L2, rather than L1 as much as possible for motivational reasons. Learners see the TL as immediately useful, as opposed to being so at some distant point in the future. This motivation leads to enjoyment and success; both important factors in the contexts of English as a second language and EFL. To be precise, learners use L1 in the classroom if they fail or feel hard to communicate in L2. The instructors, in EFL class, should design classroom that motivates learners’ self-efficacy and keep them connected to improve their learning. According to Dornyei (1994. p. 277), self-efficacy refers to “an individuals’ judgments of his or her ability to perform a specific action.” Attributions of the past accomplishments play an important role in developing self-efficacy from observational experiences; for instance, by observing peers, as well as, from persuasion, reinforcement, and evaluation by others, especially teachers or parents (for example, “you can do it!” or “you are doing fine!”). Failure may not have much impact since a sense of efficacy is developed. Dornyei (2001. p. 11) adds that the sense of efficacy will determine the choice of the activities, the amount of effort exerted as well as the displayed persistence.

When teachers use L2 in their classroom and illicit real life examples and topics for class facilitation, learners can connect themselves subconsciously. They prepare their mind for improving their language as they find the learning relevant in practical life. In this regard, authors such as Canale (1983), Nunan (1991), and Littlewood (2007), communicative language teaching focuses on language as it is used in real contexts, that is, language for “real life” communication and so the students are given opportunities to express their ideas and opinions. The teacher acts as a facilitator during classroom activities so that
students will ultimately be equipped with tools to generate a spontaneous language use outside the classrooms boundaries. It is rightly considered as the means of developing fluency in the real-learning situation. However, the facilitators must be very acumen since real-life languages alone cannot ensure the learning, authentic context is subsequently paramount. Teachers should speak referring context and create pragmatic situation in the classroom which certainly welcome learners to express. Paran (2012) thinks the most obvious changes in teaching spoken English resulted from focusing on naturalistic language data: “Teachers now realize how long it takes for learners not just to incorporate elements of sociopragmatic competence into their linguistic behavior, but even to just develop some awareness of these phenomena.” Teachers’ motivation can help learners inculcate interest for learning or improving L2 speaking. Their verbal appreciation, class room design, online and offline feedback, and so on carry immense outcome for students though many of the times negative comments from facilitators can put learners in dilemma for the further advancement. Likewise, a weak appreciation of the goals involved in the process of learning may weaken the determination to succeed. This could also be factual if the goals of learners seem to be at odds with the teacher’s approach to the learning setting (Lockhart, 1994).

Finally, significant change has been found over the ages in the field of language learning and teaching. Teachers’ dominant classroom has been replaced by students’ favorable classroom where teachers facilitate and motivate learners for improving their L2 speaking ability. Motivation from teachers, rather than from any other sources, keeps EFL learners intensely on track to spice up their L2 oral communication.

5. Methodology

This study is exploratory-descriptive type. Survey among tertiary level learners provides the main ground to support the data of the research. The participants of the study are tertiary level students from 5 private universities of Bangladesh. To get data for the study, one hundred students from different faculties were chosen to answer the questionnaires. The participants are mostly from the first and second semester who studied English for 12-13 years as compulsory subject. They were focused for mastering all four skills of English in their academic life.

The students’ questionnaires were designed with 20 close-ended questions. There were two types of questions: One multiple choice where students selected the best option the one they preferred and two order of frequency type where they put tick marks to show their rate of frequency in case of learning and using different tools and sources to improve L2 speaking.

6. Data Analysis

In response to the question in Graph 1, a significant number of the respondents have agreed strongly in favor of teachers’ motivation, and a very few of them (<10%) showed their slight interest. Surprisingly, no student is found to go against the statement.

The Graph 2 illustrates that a substantial number of learners stay confident, whereas 68% of them crave for teachers’ motivation to improve their oral proficiency in the target language.

In response to the question in Graph 3, 56% of the total respondents believe that they lack motivation hinders their verbal response in EFL classroom. The remaining options such as lack of confidence, speaking ability, and others more or less represent the same figure 12%, 16%, and 16%, respectively.

Survey shows that 60% male and 40% female participants are interested to earn university degree and find good job after that they show the importance of learning second language. On the other hand, only 10% male and 33.33% female disagree the idea because they think learning L2 should be given more importance (Graph 4).

The given combo Graph 5 shows that a very good number of male and female students 50% and 66.67%, respectively, think that mastering over target language can make them knowledgeable, skillful, and educated persons. On the contrary, the very insignificant number of them disagrees with this statement.
The aforementioned scatter Graph 6 entails 40% male students and 73.33% female learners have good rapport with their instructors. Simultaneously, 10% male and 26.67% female students carry considerable association with their facilitators. Friendly relationship can motivate the learners in the progress of their L2 speaking.

The given Graph 7 shows that exactly same figure (80%) of students from both sexes think that teacher–student sound understanding helps to advance the ability of second language speaking skill. There are even a few number of respondents found showing their reluctance to teacher–student relationship for the betterment of L2 speaking.
Almost 70% participants from male and exactly 50% of female students cast their opinion in favor of the statement that teachers’ motivation can supersede inhibition, shyness, and fear. In response to the same question, near 30% respondents answers’ is for the option OFTEN (Graph 8).

From the Graph 9, it is got that 80% of male and 60% of female students feel motivated when their teachers say very good, well done, or excellent. Teachers have an important role and effect on students. Student’s success and failures can be directly linked to a teachers’ effectiveness. In here, only 10% male and 6.67% of female student are little bit confused.

Finally, the last Graph 10 shows the opinion of the students that is important for speaking skills. 40% of male and 46.67% of female student’s support that about 60-70% teachers’ motivation helps them to improve their speaking level. On the contrary, only 10% male think that 70-80% and 6.67% female think that 50-60% teachers’ motivation helps them to improve their speaking level.

**7. Findings**

Analyzing all the aspects of this research article, it is found that without motivation, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, learners in the EFL classroom feel disinterest. They may continue the classes, but their enthusiasm in the class cannot be as much as the motivated learners. As the data of this paper were collected from the tertiary level learners, it is evident that they immensely feel the necessity of learning English since it has been treated as “Lingua Franca.” Here, it is noteworthy that both teachers’ motivation and L2 acquisition are very intrinsically connected with each other. Any kind of positive
attributes from teachers’ part can accelerate students’ attitude toward L2 learning which result them to be highly proficient in verbal presentation.

The findings of this paper can be paraphrased within the following points:

• To be a fluent speaker in L2, motivation can function as a great healer
• Teacher–student good bonding can be a key source of motivation
• All the activities of the instructor carried out in favor of the learners can wipe out the shyness, nervousness, and inertia problems of the student
• Last but not the least, teachers’ motivation can be an important driving force that can augment the confidence, self-belief, interest, and most importantly risk taking the ability of the L2 learners.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

Various studies have revealed that motivation is very strongly related to achievement in language learning (e.g., Garder and Lamber, 1972). The most successful learners are those who are clearly associated with motivation. Teacher’s duty is to ensure their:

1. Positive task orientation: Learners are willing to tackle tasks and challenges and have confidence. Teacher’s duty is to encourage them
2. Need for achievement: Teachers should create such situation where he has a need to achieve it and to overcome difficulties and succeed in what he or she sets out to do
3. High aspirations: Teachers should create goals and make them ambitious to attain them or direct his or her efforts toward achieving them
4. Perseverance: The learner consistently invests a high level of learning and is not discouraged by setbacks or apparent lack of progress

5. Tolerance of ambiguity: The learner is not disturbed by situations involving a temporary lack of understanding; he or she can live with these patiently, in the confidence that understanding will come later

6. Teachers’ reflection: Teachers should think back to their own classroom learning and try to recall a teacher of them who was outstandingly good for whom they learnt well. Remembering how much effort this teacher implied on him or her to motivate for foreign language learning.

There are three sources of motivation in learning: (1) Intrinsic motivation, (2) extrinsic motivation (teachers’ external reward), and (3) the combination of satisfaction and reward.

• Intrinsic motivation: Some teachers provide intrinsic motivation using words games, songs, and puzzles. This raises the motivation

• Extrinsic motivation: Many teachers reward the good students and punish the slower ones students. The success system may be motivating for the weaker students

• Success in the task: Teachers can impress them by saying “we like to do well and like to do it again to put it more effort. Feelings of being able to do something and feelings of motivation cause is to commit ourselves to do what we’re done and to improve.”

• Perception of failure: Weak students get weaker, facing failure, and bright students become brighter with success, self-esteem, and confidence can help the weaker students to overcome their failure. In such cases, teachers should try to develop, their feeling of success through tasks appropriate to the weak students. A feeling of success will motivate them to learn more. Their confidence will lead to motivation.

1. Combination of success and motivation clear goals: Learners should be aware of the objectives of the task both language learning and speaking, for example, guessing games

2. Varied topics and tasks: Topics and tasks should be selected carefully so that it will cover a wide range of areas over line

3. Tension and challenge games: Game-like activities provides pleasurable tension and challenges through the process of attaining some fun goal while limited by rules

4. Entertainment: Entertainment produces enjoyment, which in its turn adds motivation. Entertainment can be teachers produced (jokes, stories, perhaps songs, dramatic presentations) or recorded (movies, video clips, television, documentations)

5. Open-ended cues: A cue which invites a number of possible responses is usually much more stimulating than one with only one right answer. Participants’ contributions are unpredictable, and are more likely to be interesting, original, or humorous.

References


