STUDENTS' CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION FOR IMPROVED LEARNING IN AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS COURSE: An Action Research Report

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ABSTRACT

The University of the South Pacific (USP) has implemented a skill-development program designed to improve the academic performance of students. This paper looks specifically at ways of improving interactive teaching and learning in the English Language Skills (ELS) class, EL001, a skills-based course requiring active involvement of students in learning and practice. This interactivity is the dominant teaching method, and students are required to undergo a number of assessments, including written tests, assignments, discussions and participation. To compare and evaluate ways of improving interaction in the ELS classes, this research focuses on the students' behavior in paired discussions. Their responses to questions posed by the instructors during the class discussions are evaluated. Three specific methods are adopted to determine the outcomes: the 'one book referral strategy', the 'instructor monitor strategy' and the 'own book strategy'. The participants are 33 existing students from the Arts and Science Faculties at USP who are studying the EL001 English Language Skills course. Implementation of 'one book referral strategy' and the 'instructor monitor strategy' have proven to be most effective in an interactive learning environment.

~~1.0~~1.0 INTRODUCTION

The views of learning theorists such as Vygotsky on learning and instruction challenge the wisdom of traditional pedagogic practice quite significantly (Beck 2001). William (1989), however, argues that activity-based learning is influenced by institutional and interactive social factors; whereas Vygotsky's theory characterizes learning as an individual's concrete perception of real world objects. He states, moreover, that cognitive learning takes place through social interactions through which knowledge is internalized. The traditional classroom regards learning as a process of student absorption of knowledge that has been pre-digested and imparted by the teacher. The new approach emphasizes active participation of both the learner and the teacher. While the teaching in the tertiary setting is acknowledged to have some exceptions, largely this rule of learning remains the same at all levels of teaching and learning. Biggs (2003) highlights the need for some changes in tertiary teaching and instructional design to bring about better teaching and learning outcomes. He further states that according to Halligan (1988), reciprocity is a hallmark of good interaction, especially in pupil-pupil exchange, which enhances learning. This emerges as a common criterion for 'good quality' interaction in a range of teaching-learning contexts. Biggs (2003) further suggests that active learners are able to achieve a higher level of engagement and thus a higher level of cognitive learning in their academic work. This study, which clearly demonstrates that when students interact more intensely their performance improves, supports Biggs's assertion.

The argument of Biggs (2003) about the correlation between social interaction and learning impinges upon the experiences at USP, where students of various social and cultural backgrounds interact in the learning environment. If the arguments about interaction and the learning process are correct, then different teaching methods that involve interaction between the learners and the instructor must have significant effects on the learning outcomes. This paper brings out some of the outcomes and experiences of teaching and learning at USP, where new strategies are experimented with on a continuous basis. The Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) at USP is heavily involved in this developmental task with student learning.

In strengthening students' academic skills, CELT experiments with and adopts various teaching and learning strategies. EL001, English Language Skills, is an important part of this preparatory program; mastery of the English language remains the crucial academic skill in this university. To achieve this developmental task, the CELT has currently adopted collaborative learning as the dominant strategy for learning and teaching in this course, the main aim being to translate research findings into a set of concrete teaching strategies for the EL001 tutors to employ to improve teaching and learning.

Questions have been raised about the relevance and appropriateness of group activities in such learning circumstances. This research examines some classroom activities in this course to verify the issues regarding the effectiveness of collaborative learning. Three distinct approaches are used to identify the nature of the learning process, which provides grounds to separate the level of interaction in each of the activities in the classroom. Hence, the outcomes from these activities were identified with the level of collaboration or interpersonal interaction in each case. The three interactive teaching techniques used here are: 1) one-book referral strategy; 2) teacher-monitor strategy and 3) own-book referral strategy or two-book referral strategy. In the 'one-book referral strategy', instructions were given to the students to use one course book between two students for paired discussions to do the assigned task in an allocated time. In the 'teacher-monitor strategy', the instructor monitors and prompts the students' involvement in paired discussions while they use their own books as reference materials in doing the task. In the 'own-book referral strategy', students use their own workbook while working in pairs to do the tasks. In this case the teacher does not monitor their interactive involvement. The 'one-book referral strategy' here is considered to present high intensity interaction since the two people are compelled to discuss the tasks between them to answer them. The 'teacher-monitor strategy' is also considered to be giving a high level of interaction between the students since they are frequently prompted to interact and constantly reminded of their need to discuss the problem. The 'own-book referral strategy' is regarded to show a low level of interaction as the students are left on their own to interact to complete the tasks. In this case the students have no compulsion to discuss or interact with one another. The marks obtained by the students in each case were analyzed for variances in performance for the three strategies.

A brief literature review provided in the next section describes current perspectives on learning and teaching. Section 3 discusses the methodology in some detail and section 4 provides the results. Conclusions are drawn in the fifth section of the paper.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of studies have been carried out in the past to determine the effectiveness of teaching and learning strategies and a number of methods have been proposed. However, these strategies cannot be applied in every teaching and learning situation, particularly in multi-cultural tertiary settings, and they need careful consideration while being implemented in such situations. There is a need to identify how these strategies can be applied most effectively into the classroom, giving special consideration to various factors and the mechanisms in the learning process, such as time allocation for the task, applying the correct teaching strategy, the teaching-learning environment and the quality of instruction to engage the students in the learning task. These entail the level of student involvement in the class discussion and the learning activity. As argued by Biggs (2003), the learning process depends on the level of

student-student interaction and student-teacher interaction in a conducive learning environment. The formation of appropriate interactive groups and the effective use of materials with clear instructions are essential tools in the teaching-learning process.

Williams (1989) states that Vygotsky's common concept in his writing about learning, the 'Zone of Proximal Development', indicates that range of skill the learner is developing but has not yet been able to master. He strongly believes that what a learner is able to achieve with assistance at one point in time, he or she will eventually be able to do unaided. If learning inside the classroom is done through interaction, the learners develop the skills through peer assistance, and hence become able to do it on their own.

McIlrath and Huitt (1995) strongly believe that models are very effective in facilitating action research in learning and teaching. One way of applying these models is for teacher scholars to look critically at their own teaching strategies, frequently conducting research in their own classrooms to find out the effectiveness of their methods. His discussion on the model of learning clearly focuses on a number of issues. One of these is the dominance of time and the quality of instructional inputs. He argues that sufficient time allocations and opportunity for practice and remedial intervention are essential for archiving the required level of mastery of the subject. In this research I analyze my interaction with the students in the teaching-learning process. In the context of USP, students may be characterized as passive learners, for whom it has been found that classroom interaction tends to be a one-way process. The present study uses a structured questionnaire to investigate this aspect of weakness in the teacher-student interaction process. Another crucial factor in effective teaching and learning is the correct implementation of cooperative learning. Many studies have shown that correct implementation of the technique yields improved results in acquisition and retention of the subject and contribute to the development of interpersonal communication skills and self confidence (Johnson, Johnson and Smith 1998).

Oakley et al., (2004) strongly believe that students should be involved in discussion that is strongly interactive. This enhances student cooperation for positive learning outcomes and confidence building. According to Johnson and Johnson (1985) where group interactions are strong, student learning outcomes are more desirable and a higher level of self-esteem is achieved. This produces a more open learning environment where students speak out more freely with confidence and acquire related skills. Additionally, students involved in interaction in classroom learning tend to display higher motivation to learn, especially intrinsic motivation. By this process the students are also encouraged to assist their peers, thus promoting more effective learning. Where the instructor intends to apply interactive learning, specific strategies are need. This has to be identified and practised in a constructive way to monitor group characteristics and behavioral trends to maximize the interaction and hence the learning process (Johnson and Johnson 1985).

Instructors' input in the interaction process also influences the learning process in many important ways, particularly learners' attitudes towards the instructor, the peers and the subject matter. Johnson and Johnson (1985) argues that clarity of instructions is instrumental in both the interaction process and the learning outcomes. Deutsch (1962), Johnson and Johnson (1983), Sharan (1980) and Slavin (1977) strongly support structuring of the classroom to facilitate cooperative work among students, which they point out is an essential feature in interactive strategies (Johnson and Johnson, 1985). Researchers argue that discussing issues with one another in the group and supporting each others' ideas with reasoning enhances student learning and builds self-confidence. Further, they argue that a strong sense of positive interdependence among group members builds better coordination and helps in the exchange of ideas (Johnson and Johnson, 1985). The results of this study support these views.

Moreover, Johnson and Johnson (1985) found in their research that cooperation is preferred to be the dominant interaction pattern in the classroom compared to the competitive or individualistic setting Kaufman and Felder (2000). They found that in a cooperative setting, achievement improved and learners developed a more positive attitude towards the subject. At the same time, they found that the positive response is not universal; students who were reluctant to interact with others may be negatively affected. Therefore, caution is needed when interactive learning is being encouraged, to recognize that such learners need special attention to develop the right attitude towards the interactive process. This requires the application of appropriate instructional strategies as the instructor monitors the program in operation.

The formation of groups is also an important task in the process of enhancing interaction. The instructors should be instrumental in the formation of groups based on appropriate strategy to enhance the interaction. For example, weaker students should be coupled with the stronger ones, to facilitate the learning and interaction. Failing to do this could result in adverse outcomes for the weaker groups, which could have long term adverse outcomes. Normally, the stronger students tend to seek other stronger ones leaving the weaker students to group with each other Oakley et al (2004).

If stronger and weaker students are combined in the groups, the weaker ones are able to gain from the stronger students in tackling the assigned tasks. In this way, but indirectly, the weaker students are receiving peer tutoring. On the other hand, the stronger students gain confidence in the subject matter and are encouraged to interact, reinforcing the teaching and learning process (Oakley et al., 2004). They further argue that continued interaction could transform the pair groups into effective teaching-learning team. It is important therefore, to set out clear guidelines for team functioning and formulate a common set of expectations for the group task.

Time is another factor that affects learning outcomes. In McIlrath and Huitt (1995), Huitt supports Proctor's (1984) claim that in academic learning time is one of the process predictors of student achievement. McIlrath and Huitt (1995) further state that student involvement, as defined by Carroll (1963) refers to the engagement time or time-on-task,. This implies that the time given to the students for a particular task determines the learning outcome. If the students are not provided enough time to learn or engage in the activity, then the outcomes are likely to be poor. The time allocated should be sufficient for the students to decipher the materials and engage in the learning activity.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In measuring the output of interactive learning processes this research uses both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Stringer (1999) recommends a scientific approach to such research as there are control mechanisms used and the arguments are based on

inferences made from the sample data. Two structured questionnaires were used to collect students' responses on their observable behavior during interaction, one designed to collect data on student-teacher interaction, the other on student-student interaction for paired groups. The same method was used to capture students' reactions on a number of strategies implemented with the intention of making paired discussions more effective. Teacher's observations of students' behavior and their performance following three different paired discussion strategies were used. The three strategies were: 'one-book referral strategy'; 'instructor-monitor strategy'; and 'own-book referral strategy'. The learning outcomes from these interactive sessions were measured by observing the percentage of time students' are involved in actual interaction and their achievement in getting correct answer while doing the tasks. In addition feedback from students' journals were used as a tool to assess the learning process and activity involvement. A comparative analysis gauges the students' participation in the interactive learning process.

Use of the structured questionnaire was effective in this study as it was quite easy to obtain feedback from the students. Independent opinions on issues like effectiveness of interaction in paired discussion and the teacher-pupil interaction were extracted through this structured questionnaire. The easy to understand questions meant that clear and exact answers could be obtained from the students. The other method, teacher observation, was used in the assessment of the effectiveness of the three interaction strategies, though students were not made aware of intentions in making them do the paired discussions. In combination, these two methods effectively enabled the systematic collection of the first-hand data. As a qualitative approach, the journal studies assisted well, allowing students to give independent opinions on the effectiveness of the teaching methods. The literature provides support to the methods chosen in this research.

4.0 RESULTS

The data analysis is used here to discuss three aspects of this research. The structured questionnaires were administered to 33 EL001 students belonging to three tutorial groups. In this data analysis the effects of teacher-student and student-student interactions on the learning outcomes are investigated. The 33 students in the sample represented wide range of cultural backgrounds from social science and pure science faculties. Table 4.1 summarizes the data from the student-teacher interaction questionnaire.

Table 4.1 – Students' responses/reactions to questions asked by their teacher in EL001

Questions / Student Responses	**Do you like the teacher asking questions in class?**	**Do you feel shy when asked questions in class?**	**What type of questions do you prefer in class?**	**Do you often have difficulty answering questions in class?**	**How do you feel about asking questions in class?**	**What is your first reaction when asked a question in class?**	**Do you fear being questioned in class?**	**How do you feel when answering questions in class?**	**Are you shy when you are with the opposite sex?**	**Do you prefer the teacher to call your name in class?**
	Sometimes (5)	Sometimes (9)	Open (26)	Sometimes (21)	Sometimes Shy (5)	Shy (9)	Sometimes (5)	Fear (6)	Yes (4)	Yes (30)
	Yes (27)	Yes (11)	Closed (4)	Yes (8)	Ok (18)	Frustrated (2)	Yes (8)	Shy (3)	No (29)	No (3)
	No (1)	No (16)	Both (6)	No (6)	Difficult (3)	Answer the question (7)	No (18)	Ok (17)	NA	NA
	NA	NA	NA	NA	Panic (6)	Start thinking (7)	NA	Excited (1)	NA	NA
	NA	NA	NA	NA	Confident (2)	Not sure about my answer (4)	NA	Not confident (2)	NA	NA
	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Nervous (10)	NA	No Response (4)	NA	NA

Source: Data obtained through a structured questionnaire.

The data in the first and last column of Table 4.1 indicate that students generally like to be asked questions in class but more so, to be asked in person. Majority of the students (91%) felt personalized questions were a good way of seeking responses. The data also show that most students have a positive attitude towards teacher-student interaction in class ; about half the sample reported feeling OK when answering questions (third last column). About 52% of the students say that teacher asking questions in the class was a good thing. However, 20% felt apprehensive and 10% felt uncomfortable when asked to respond in the class. While only about 10% felt shy about questions being asked in class, 33% percent felt shy about answering question in class and only 21% said they answer questions promptly. The same percentage indicated that they start thinking about the answer at the first instance of being asked a question. About students' first reaction when asked questions in class, about 30% of them said they felt nervous. This means the

majority of the students are not in a position to respond promptly to questions, which may be the reason why students do not volunteer to answer questions when not asked in person. When asked what type of questions they preferred to be asked by the teacher, 79% preferred open-type questions where the responses were not expected to be specific. With regard to the gender issue, the majority (85%) of the respondents said that they did not feel shy answering question in class when amongst the opposite sex. This observation may also suggest that students may respond more frequently and promptly if the questions were explicit where the students could use their knowledge to answer the questions. Ninety one per cent of the students prefer the teacher to ask questions in person as this saves them from embarrassment and personal risk-taking even if volunteering to answer questions. Often the voluntary response from students is taken as an indicator of the learning outcome and a failure to receive an expected response could lead to wrong conclusions about their learning outcomes. It is clear from the data that a personalized questioning technique leads to significant interactive gains in a teaching situation.

Table 4.2 – Students' responses on Interactive learning (pair discussion) in EL001 class

Statements	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5
Like doing tasks – pairs	18	3	0	0	0
Learn better	16	4	1	0	0
Perform better	16	5	0	0	0
Perform better when teacher moving in class	7	6	7	0	1
Perform better with same ethnic gp	2	3	7	4	5
Perform better with same gender gp	1	5	7	3	5
Seating arrangements – side by side is better	7	6	3	1	4
Seated face to face is better	4	2	9	3	3
Difficulty in communicating in Eng with different ethnic gp	2	2	4	5	8
One book reference is better	7	7	3	1	3
Lively classroom atmosphere with pair work	14	6	0	1	0

Source: Data collected from students' questionnaire responses on pair discussion.

Note: Ranks 1 and 2 are taken as agreeing with the statement. Ranks 4 and 5 are taken as disagreeing with the statement and Rank 3 represents 'not sure' or mixed reaction. The Rank 1 is taken as fully agree and 5 completely disagree.

Table 4.2 shows results obtained through the questionnaire. The data give an account of the student response to the effectiveness of paired activities in the EL001 class. It is obvious that 100 per cent of the respondents agreed that they enjoyed doing paired activities in class, and almost the same percentage believed that with collaborative work, they learn more and perform better. Sixty two per cent of the respondents said their performance improved when the teacher is moving around in class and paying attention to their task.

Socio-metric issues such as student behavior while working in pairs is also investigated. In this experiment students' behavior and performance in various environments were studied. For example, performance of students in various ethnic combinations was studied. The student population enrolled in the EL001 course is rich in diversity, which comprises of students from the regional countries like Solomon Islands, Samoa, Kiribati, Tonga, Cook Islands, Vanuatu and some developed countries. Students responses about their performances when paired with students of different ethnic groups and gender varied. Of particular interest to this research was the response of the students on intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic combinations. Thirty two per cent of the students indicated that they were not sure whether they performed well when paired with students of the same ethnic group. Twenty-five per cent indicated that they perform better with the same ethnic group. A higher percentage (43%) disagreed that they performed better working with students from the same ethnic group. Twenty-four per cent felt they perform better when paired with persons of the same gender. Thirty-three per cent of the respondents were not sure whether there was any dependence between their performance and the gender of the person they were paired with. A larger 40% of the respondents disagreed that their performance was better when paired with student of the same gender.

From observations made during the student paired activity in EL001 classes, it has been noted that the majority of students would sit in a side-by-side position rather than face-to-face position. This is confirmed by the 66% of the respondents stating that they prefer sitting side by side while 29 per cent stated they prefer the face-to-face arrangement. One reason for this kind of preferred sitting arrangement is that sitting side by side helps students have access to each others' work, which is a fundamental requirement for this form of classroom interaction.

Classroom interaction strongly depends on ease of access to shared resources and book sharing is one important aspect of interaction in this study. The data in Table 4.2 show that more students (66%) preferred using one book during discussion sessions. This may be due to their willingness to share and depend on each other for doing the joint task. This response may be different if each student had to report separately. Nineteen per cent of the respondents preferred using their own books while discussing in pairs. This could possibly be due to personal preference for using own books. This, however, has not been verified by the data. Ninety-five per cent of

the students said that paired discussions in ELS class were a lively activity that enhanced the learning atmosphere. Biggs (2003) stated that active participants are able to achieve higher levels of engagement and cognition in their academic work; the present study tends to support this observation. The results in this study show a clear correlation between level of interaction and performance (see Table 4.3 and 4.4 for details).

4.1 TEACHER OBSERVATIONS

The student behavior during paired discussions in normal EL001 class is constantly being observed. It was observed that unmonitored paired activities led to less intensive interaction. This it seems was due to lack of initiative or a general reluctance to interact. Initially, this observation prompted us to implement two different strategies to find out whether they were effective in getting students to work in pairs. As noted, the two methods used were 'one-book referral strategy' and 'own-book referral strategy'. The students' behavior and performance were recorded and analyzed. The results show that where students used one book to do paired discussions, there was 100 per cent interaction, which implies that the students were interacting at all times during the discussion period. This is an obvious result as one book reading in itself meant cooperation and interaction. The interactive behavior in this strategy may be interpreted as obligatory interaction where improved learning outcomes were obtained as shown in Tables 4.3 and 4.4.

The same groups, when allowed to use own books, generally showed reluctance to work in pairs. They tended to do the activity on their own without much interaction with one another. It is observed that at the beginning of their activity session all paired groups started their tasks individually with minimum or no interaction with their partners. However, the interaction could be improved even when they used own books, but only through continuous intervention or monitoring by the instructor. This instructor monitoring, a third strategy employed here, was the one that showed positive results, as indicated in Table 4.3 and 4.4. In this strategy, students used own books and were given specific instructions about the nature of their involvement in the collaborative work. Results showing 100 per cent interaction were associated with collaboration that was continuously implemented by the instructor. The variation in this figure may show but very insignificantly. In this situation, students were 'obliged' to collaborate fully due to pressure from the instructor, and utilized their allocated time in the paired discussion activities well, as shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 – Group Interaction – % Time Spent on Group Interaction and Performance Analysis (Group 1)

Group (Pairs)	Teacher-monitor Strategy		Own-book Strategy		One-book Strategy	
	Time (%)	Score	Time (%)	Scores	Time	Scores (%)
1	4	86	7	63	10	75
2	4	100	6	57	10	88
3	4	71	7	63	10	100
4	4	71	7	53	10	75
5	4	86	6	63	10	75
6	4	86	6	47	10	75
7	4	71	7	63	10	88
Average	**100%**	**82%**	**66%**	**58%**	**100%**	**82%**

Source: Data collected from students' classroom activities, considering time and their performance

Note: Table 4.3 gives the time spent in minutes and marks achieved by students for the paired activities in class. The comparison of time spent in interaction and marks obtained in different tasks using three different methods are presented.

Table 4.3 indicates three tasks done by students from Group 1. These were done under three different strategies as mentioned above and their performance was recoded. The interaction time during the paired discussion and the marks scored by them were recorded. The same exercise was replicated with group 2. This replication was done to ascertain the result obtained for group 1. The tasks administered here were of objective type where the answers were either right or wrong, hence subjectivity was minimized. The tasks were short (maximum of 10 minutes) thus other environmental variation could be ruled out. The data obtained and presented in Table 4.3 and 4.4 are consistent and as expected (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4 – Group Interaction – % Time Spent on Group Interaction and Performance Analysis (Group 2)

Groups (pairs)	Instructor-monitor Strategy		Own-book Strategy		One-book Strategy	
	Time (%)	Score	Time (%)	Scores	Time (%)	Scores
1	5	71	6	42	10	88
2	5	86	6	58	10	88
3	5	71	4	42	10	88
4	5	71	5	47	10	88
5	5	71	4	37	10	75
Average	**100%**	**74%**	**63%**	**45%**	**100%**	**85%**

Source: Data collected from students' classroom activities, considering time and their performance

Students spend more time interacting while doing the task under instructor-monitor strategy and one-book strategy compared to own-book strategy. As a result of the higher level of interaction, the students performed better. Data in Table 4.3 and 4.4 clearly show that 100% of the time was utilized by students interacting in paired work while doing the tasks under the teacher-monitor strategy and one-book strategy. These two strategies led to better learning outcomes when compared with the own-book strategy, where interaction was generally much weaker. It shows that time spent on collaboration under own-book strategy was much lower than that observed for the other two strategies. For Group 1, the teacher-monitor strategy and one-book strategy yield identical results with an average of 82%. A similar outcome is obtained for Group 2, where the average score for the activity under one-book strategy is 85%, and 74% for teacher-monitor strategy. The average time for interaction under the own-book strategy for Group 1 is 66%, and 63% for Group 2. The average scores for both groups are also lower under this strategy (58% and 45% respectively). This proves the initial expectation that instructor-monitor strategy and one-book strategy are better in both respects. That is, they facilitate collaboration and thus lead to better performance. This is consistent with Biggs's (2003) findings that student collaboration in the teaching and learning environment leads to better learning outcomes.

5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Some important issues concerning interactive teaching and learning in English language skills class have been dealt with in this paper. Student-student and teacher-student interactions in the teaching and learning process work in many rewarding ways. First, it enhances the learning process and secondly facilitates good relationship between the teacher and the learner and amongst learners. If applied in right doses and at appropriate occasions, it reinforces learning through peer interaction. In this study, it is established that teacher-pupil interaction is very important to create the positive attitude in the learner. Teacher probing and monitoring induces an interactive environment around the learners. When the teacher keeps interacting with the students during an activity, the students keep at work and interact with each other in the learning process, which leads to better performance.

The EL001 course at USP has been designed to teach students basic academic skills and to a large extend it forms the basis for wider academic performance. This program has been implemented to achieve this objective. In it, academic skills are taught, requiring students to be involved in active learning and practice. To fulfill the requirements of the course, the students are required to undergo a number of assessments, which include written tests, assignments, discussions and participation. As mastery of some skills take longer, many students do not perform well, and hence a failure that could have a long-term repercussion on the students' academic performance. Therefore, there is a need for more time allocation and practice exercises, to improve the performance on this task. In the case of this course, students faced difficulty in fully mastering the skills in 'Causes and Effects' topic where students are given a number of model paragraphs expressing causes and effects to study and practice the skills in the given tasks. The time allocated to learn the skills and practice the tasks is found to be insufficient and hence these students were not able to fully master the skills.
Another example of lack of time for practice is the 'note-taking' skills, where the students have shown concern about their inability to master the skills completely. It is clear that students did not perform well in their note-taking assessment task because there was insufficient time allocated for enough practice in note-taking skills. Additionally, the assessment was done few weeks after the actual coverage of the topic. The students have indicated in their reflective journals the need for more time to be allocated and for the scheduling of assessment immediately after the coverage of the topic. While allocation of more time may not be possible, a better quality of delivery of the subject matter may be a partial remedy. This is where a student interactive teaching model may be useful. A rescheduling of the teaching activity may be possible if teaching and learning become generally more effective as a result of the implementation of the interactive model.

The entire course is structured on continuous assessment, which includes the assessment of class activity, a time consuming and teacher intensive task. Despite the broadness of the skills taught in this course, some depth and proficiency are also required, which need sufficient time and practice. Since the allocation of more time for this course may be a practical impossibility, quality teaching which includes correct implementation of teaching strategy, teaching/learning environments and quality instructions to deliver the

materials is the only answer to the constraint. Therefore, student-student interaction in class activities needs to be enhanced and thus considered as the dominant teaching method for this course.

This study has also shown that target questioning is useful in getting the student response. That is, personalized questions compel student to participate positively. A host of things get to work when a targeted questioning technique is applied. First, the student anticipates questions and remains alert in the class and second, the student maintains a close relation with his peers for keeping abreast of the subject and assistance. This also leads to student-student interaction. The former often happens quite naturally as a learning mechanism and the latter happens occasionally and in quite subtle ways through whisper or signals. The latter aspect of the interaction brings the learners into close contact with each other and enhances learning. In tertiary institutions, instructors use a number of strategies to teach. However, it is important to investigate the appropriate teaching strategy to implement positive reinforcement. This aspect is often taken for granted in tertiary teaching, mainly because the subject matter is so daunting that there is hardly time for it to be considered. However, it is important that some of these issues are brought out from time to time to remind tertiary teachers of its benefits.

McIlrath and Huitt (1995) pointed out in their study that time allocation and quality of instructions matter a lot in the final outcomes. Encouraging interaction by means of engagement is an effective way of setting the tone for student participation. These methods are essential elements that are recommended for paired discussion strategies for maximum interaction and better outcome. ELS teaching and learning could be the starting point for this. The instructor's role in monitoring and keeping close tabs on student activities and their interactive modes is a key to success in enhancing the teaching-learning environment.

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