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## IMPROVING ENGLISH ORAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF PAKISTANI PUBLIC SCHOOL'S STUDENTS

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**ABSTRACT:** *This paper focuses on the improvement of Oral Communication Skills (OCSs) of Pakistan's Public school's Grade-6 students who have a lack of opportunities and are seldom exposed to the English language generally and OCSs particularly. Since more importance is given to reading and writing skills of English in which results overlook the importance of OCSs and due to which students are found to be silent, shy or have a profound fear of being wrong. It further highlights self developed strategies of students in improving accuracy and fluency in which the National Curriculum for English Language (NCEL) was taken as a guiding tool and action planner through which systematic lessons were delivered in classrooms. Findings of Pre and post intervention phases of four participants revealed that children's OCSs had shown a marked improvement by giving opportunities to practice oral languages, providing conducive learning environment and using new teaching strategies. This study also claims that code switching, Peer and self error correction, short pauses and speech fillers are inevitable to improve speaking skills in the process of second language learning. It shows new ways in order to improve students' speaking skills and has implications for second language learners and teachers.*

**KEYWORDS:** Oral communication skills, Listening, Speaking, Improving, English as a foreign and second Language, National Curriculum for English Language and action research

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### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Due to the increasing demand and importance, the purpose of this research study was to improve students' Oral Communication Skills (OCSs) in Lower Secondary Public school in Karachi by integrating lessons with the National Curriculum for English Language (NCEL) 2006. The study was conducted in urban context in Karachi Pakistan. In Pakistan two school systems work side by side. One is the private English medium schools and second is government Urdu-medium schools. English is learnt as a second language in both cases. "It gives social prestige to one who can speak... In this role, it empowers the elite and keeps the power within it" (Rahman, 2002, P.320). In the context of Urdu medium schools where this research was carried out, as

Bashiruddin (2003) states, “The students have no exposure to English in their everyday communication. Both students and teachers use Urdu or the regional language to communicate inside the class, and almost no exposure to English” (p.7), Khan & Khattak (2011). Our experiences are similar to what Memon (2000) describes the scenario and real picture of Pakistani public school language classroom that, “the teachers tend to see their role in terms of a narrow view of teaching as ‘instructor’ or ‘director’. He further states, “Consequently their students may adopt a ‘surface approach to learning” (p.41). Several other evidences show that language is learned for the sake of passing examinations, not for developing skills such as listening and speaking.

Teachers mostly practice traditional teaching methods which focus on reading and writing skills but productive skills such as speaking is given no importance. As a result this skill is neglected, as Hodson (2006) pointed out, “the explicit teaching of speaking and listening has been neglected” (p.2). Wilkinson as cited in Wilkinson, Davies and Berril (1990) also agrees that “the spoken language in English has been shamefully neglected”. These linguistic scholars explicitly have shown that teaching OCSs are neglected because of practicing traditional methods of language teaching. Even in annual examination there is no specific assessment rule for OCSs. As the National Curriculum (NC) for English Language- 2006 reflects:

Listening and speaking skills are to be developed in the classroom context. Due to resources constraints, it is not possible in this first phase to test listening and speaking skills in all educational settings. However, understanding of appropriate language use in different contexts will be tested through the written exam designed for just this purpose. National curriculum for English (2006)

NC clearly showed that language teaching is based on written examinations and OCS is ignored. Due to this, students’ communication skill remains poor and even language teachers themselves are not able to communicate in proper English. According to Bashiruddin (2003) and Panah (2000) English language teachers (ELTs) are not proficient in speaking English and this is the main obstacle in the way to teaching English in Pakistan. They have lack of awareness of new methods and approaches of teaching speaking skills. Additionally, these teachers “excessively use mother tongue in the classroom discourse and little attention on students listening and speaking skills” (Memon, 1989, p.66). As a result students cannot speak accurately and fluently in classroom and become less participatory. Students are reluctant to speak and whenever they are asked to speak, they feel hesitation, fear and shyness because of the low proficiency of OCSs (Khan & Khattak, 2011). Before the intervention, a pre test was conducted for knowing students’ proficiency and learning level and found it what Kottler & Street (2008) termed ‘preproduction state’ proficiency. At this beginning stage, teachers and other students need to do considerable amount of modeling for beginning students. “Students will rely heavily on the teacher’s body language, so gestures play a key role in the development of understanding” (p.57). In order to get Kottler & Street (2008) ‘Intermediate fluency stage’ at this stage students speak with grammatical errors but they are able to share experiences, generate ideas and give opinion, NC guided in developing teaching materials and activities. Moreover, all Students Learning Outcomes (SLOs) were taken from NC for English- 2006, under the competency of OCSs. Classroom lessons were integrated with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task

Based Teaching Approach (TBTA) which provided enough space for making practice oral language in the classroom (Fitts & Bowers, 2013; Hall, 2011; Ellis, 2011).

## ORAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Communication is exchange of ideas between people either orally or in writing. In this research, communication is taken in the sense of fluency and accuracy. Former refers to proper use of language without hesitation and later talks about use of grammatically and phonologically correct language. Alwright (1994) considers it 'learn by doing approach' in teaching where teacher and students both are involved. Speaking takes place in the presence of listener because listener responds to the speaker's communication. As Byrne (1986) defines, "Oral communication is a two way process between the speaker and the listener and involves the productive skills of speaking and the receptive skills of understanding". It is considered to be helpful in improving learning as Staab (1992) states, "I believe that oral language is important not only as a vital communication tool that empowers us in our daily lives but also as a valuable way to learn" (7). He considers listening and speaking as oral communication skills. As he states, "oral communication skills mean both speaking and listening to oral language, both talking and listening are lifelong activities and probably our most important communication tool" (p.6). Both are integrated skills and supports in developing each other. As (Brown, 1994), also asserts that the integration of listening and speaking skills is termed as oral communication skills because listening can be developed indirectly by integrating it to speaking. The literature states that communication is an exchange of ideas between people either orally or in writing. It is also an exchange of meaning and understanding. Meaning is central to communication. Rahman (2010) considers it symbolic because "it involves not only words but also symbols and gestures that accompany the spoken words because symbolic action is not limited to verbal communication" (p.3). He further defines this "an interactive process" where two communication agents i.e. Sender (S) and Receiver (R) are involved in the process. In this research both speaking and listening skills are considered OCSs. Both supports each other in the development of language proficiency and without either OC remain meaningless. Effective OC cannot be simply 'studied' by reading. It needs to be planned, strategized, practiced and assessed, preferably in an 'authentic' setting" (Chan, 2011, p.72).

Listening is receptive and meaningful process as Stabb (1992) emphasizes that "Listening is an active process of constructing meaning and for this to happen, listeners need active mental involvement. While good instructions and lots of practice can help improve listening skills, this won't happen without meaningful talk in the classroom" (p.7). In the process of developing oral proficiency, speaking comes later. It is a productive skill which comes after receptive skill i.e. listening. In English as Second Language (ESL) contexts, speaking is perhaps the most important of the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Carter and Nunan 2001; Celce-Murcia 2001). Speaking is a linguistic activity which, like language itself, consists of several elements: viz., pronunciation (sounds), morphology and lexis (words and their parts), grammar and syntax (structure), semantics, discourse (conversation and utterances), pragmatics (usage and its rules), fluency (ease of speech, confidence, coherence, and speed), in addition to

topicality (themes and ideas). It is a complex process because “learners need to develop at the same time knowledge of grammar, vocabulary functional language and communicative skills. Attention to the systems of language is crucial, but the development of fluency and contextual accuracy are equally important goals” (Hedge, 2000, p.261). Several studies have examined developing the students' speaking skills. Jassem (1997) was particularly interested in tackling and enhancing Malaysian English majors' skills in academic discussions by using various methods such as written assignment-oriented seminars. This is an interesting work as it handles an EFL/ESL context similar to the one at hand, where Malaysians are usually silent; they are keen on listening rather than speaking. Lee (2009) has examined the reasons for improving Asian students' low participation in class in Australia through combining both writing and speaking. Various other evidences show that the best way to improve speaking skills is to combine both communication (Task Based Teaching and Learning) and Grammar Translation Method (GTM) in teaching OCSs (Chang, 2011; Hall, 2011).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In order to develop in-depth understanding of the main research question “How can I facilitate students of Grade-6 to improve Oral Communication Skills in a Lower Secondary Public school in Karachi, Pakistan”, qualitative research method was selected in order to improve OCSs of young learners in public school context. Within qualitative research paradigm an action research design was adopted as it helped in using different teaching strategies and to develop action plans cycles in the form of lessons to improve and change the situation. As Norton (2009) agrees, “Action research is implying a form of self-reflective enquiry understanding by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practice, their understanding of these practices, and the situation in which the practices are carried out (p.52). In order to improve speaking skills within action research the spiral model of Kemmis and Mc Taggart (2000) was followed that required researcher to move systematically through the spiral of action research, such as to plan, act, observe, reflect and replan again, as they identify the process of action research as “ a spiral of self-reflective cycles of planning, acting and observing the process and consequences of the change, reflected on these process and consequences of the change, re-planning, acting and observing, reflecting and so on”(Kemmis & Mc Taggart (2000) cited in Koshy 2005, P.52). An action plan (see appendix 1) consisted on lessons was developed by integrating it to SLOs of ELNC-2006. It was implemented in classroom by observing and recording students' progress, interacting and reflecting on various aspects of activities and students' outcomes. The implementation and intervention of this action research took seven weeks long duration. Since its pre-intervention, four selected research participants' improvement was assessed through ' individual participant's assessment tool' checklist (see appendix 2).

### **Participants and data collection**

The research was conducted at Grade-6-B whose strength was 61 of whom only four research participants (two boys and two girls) Akram, Hammid, Mehrin and Khatija, all pseudonym were selected for this study. All four participants had mix language ability. They had low socio-economic background and very basic level understanding of the English language. Moreover, the Class Teacher (CT) acted as co-planner and critical friend in teaching and observing lessons however, researchers played dual role as principal teacher and action researcher during the entire

process of research.

A variety of tools were used to collect data throughout the three phases. The methods which used were observations, interviews, and audio recordings of the teaching sessions, reflections and document analysis. Researcher was, as Rossman & Rallis (1998) mention, “a part of the process, continually making choices, testing assumptions and reshaping questions” (p.5). In order to know the existing teaching practices, students’ current language skills, opportunities to language practice and students’ language learning, three classroom observations and interviews were carried out. These all were also audio-recorded and transcribed very carefully.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY**

On the basis of pre-intervention’s findings, an action plan was developed according to the SLOs of the NCEL-2006 in which three action research cycles were covered with delivering systematic lesson plans. Studies on second language learning have found that well planned and activity based teaching enhances students’ OCSs because “High quality of teaching of speaking and listening has direct impact on children’s learning and their standard of achievement” (DFES, 2003) cited in Rask (2006, p.18). Overall three cycles were completed with 14 interventions because one cycle took three lessons to complete. In lesson planning three main teaching strategies were focused such as demonstrations and conversations, discussion and role plays. In pre-intervention stage, three classroom teaching of CT, interviews of him and participants were observed and taken very carefully. Observational checklist was also used to know practiced teaching strategies and students’ behavior to language learning.

### **Reconnaissance findings**

In order to know the current practices of teaching OCSs three classroom observation and interviews with participants were conducted accordingly. The findings of reconnaissance showed that traditional teaching methods such as grammar translation method and rote learning were found to be used mostly in classroom which had made the classroom more teacher centred rather than student centred. Text book was used as main source of teaching. The teacher taught the students a topic from the Sindh textbook regarding ‘using a telephone’ a dialogue in which he translated sentence by sentence in Urdu language. He verbally explained words’ meaning in Urdu writing down meaning on the blackboard and asked them to copy them in their notebooks. After the lesson he wrote down vocabulary on the left side and Urdu meaning on right side as it depicts:

Busy: Masroof hona

Funny: Mazah

Talkative: Ziada batey karne wala

Newcomer: Naya jo abi aye.

Look at that teacher (pointing towards me) is new comer. (F.N, 24/1/12).

It showed that the teacher was not using English words and explanations as these are important steps to improve students’ speaking. These teaching practices revealed that the teacher had been using traditional ways of teaching in which students had very less opportunities to enhance

OCSs. This situation needed to be transformed and changed with new teaching strategies and student centred class in order to enhance students' OC. The teacher spoke most of the time using L1 (Urdu language) and students were provided very few opportunities to speak. This situation is similar to what other researchers (Bahdar, 2009; Hussain, 2008; Bashiruddin, 2003; Sadrud-Din, 2003; Mehdi, 2000; Panah, 2000) found in their research studies. The teacher applied Grammar Translation Method (GTM), which limited the opportunities for improving OCSs. This seemed to be due to teacher's lack of pedagogical skills and knowledge about using various teaching strategies and lack of exposure to the classroom practices of teaching English (Bahadur, 2009; Shughri, 2007; Bashiruddin, 2003). This compelled him to use traditional methods in his teaching English in classroom (Memon, 2000; Hassan, 1998). A recent study of Khan & Khattak as cited in Pawlak (2011) conducted in Pakistan also reveals that:

Most of the classes are teacher centered and provide no room for innovation on the part of the students. As the teacher occupies a place of authority, the students remain submissive. This leads to anxiety. It is evident from the findings that the students get confused whenever they are asked to speak English. This is due to the fact that they are in a high anxiety situation (p.147).

The evidence shows the same situation where teacher's teaching practices neglected development of OCSs and the focus was given only to written tasks, as Bahdur (2009) & Shughri (2007) mentioned. Students used to be reluctant in participation in classroom because lack of opportunities provided by the teacher and there were some other reasons as well such as fear of making mistakes or being laughed at by other students as Ghafoor, 1998; Ashraf, 1998; Shughri, 2007 findings also confirmed. As a result, the students spent most of the time copying the textbook tasks and teacher focused only on reading and written work. There was no separate period for improving speaking and listening skills. It also seemed to be a written exam-oriented teaching/school culture which has also been found by other researchers such as Yaqoob, 2010; Bahdur, 2009; Shughri, 2007).

The teacher frequently used L1 in classroom teaching; therefore students got less exposure to English language (Bahdur, 2009; Shughri, 2007). The findings of Rezvani (2011) shows that code-switching are a frequently applied strategy and a valuable resource for bilingual teachers in foreign language classrooms. Using and shifting continuously to L1 showed teacher's low proficiency and less exposure to different teaching strategies, as other researchers (Lima 2001; Bahdur, 2009; Jabeen, 2005; Bashiruddin, 2003; Gafoor, 1998) also revealed in their studies. It also indicates inability to use accurate and fluent English which remains main hurdle in developing language skills in the context of developing countries particularly in Pakistan. The study conducted in Singapore mixed code is socially disapproved and banned in classroom. Li (2008) study regarding using mixing codes also argued that "teachers' use of mixed code is responsible for their students' declining language standards" (p.84). Teacher used mixed switching strategy to control his class as well as teaching important lessons which are to be learnt by students necessarily. As a result of using code switching to L1, students' OCSs remained the same and never improved.

It was also revealed when students' notebooks were analyzed that more concentration and

attention had been given on writing and reading skills as one specific sentence written with a red pen in students' notebook shows, "Good, well done, try to improve your writing. Concentrate on your writing". In interview CT shared the similar response by giving reason:

Look, we have to complete syllabus for examination purpose. If tomorrow someone comes from our higher authorities, he will directly check the notebooks of these children. He will never ask about how are you, what is your name etc. he will check the notebook (TI,27/1/12).

Akram also shared in an interview that teacher always focuses reading and writing as he stated, "No. not speaking, He..... always read and writing. Work, work, work, bla, bla, bla." (PIS, 27/1/12).

Data showed that there was a very limited space for learning English OCSs while literature on second language learning emphasizes on providing more opportunities to practice OCSs in classroom (Bahdur, 2009; Hedge, 2000; Slattery & Willis, 2001; Fitts & Bowers, 2013). If a teacher uses an encouraging language and gives confidence to students and creates conducive environment then students' learning of OCSs could be enhanced.

### **Intervention and post-intervention findings**

"Teachers can make changes in their teaching practices if they are introduced to new teaching techniques" (Bashiruddin, 2003, p.33). Keeping in mind the hope of change and improvement, a journey was started by applying new teaching strategies such as demonstration, role play, discussion through pair and group work which encouraged students' participation in classroom activities and improving OCSs (Cameron, 2001; Hall, 2011). Shughri (2007) in his study concludes that, "these strategies brought real life situations into the class, where students were provided with rich opportunities to express their ideas and exchange their opinions" (p.72). As a result of using these strategies in intervention phase some key themes emerged were students' participation and responses in classroom activities increased, accuracy and fluency skills were developed, very limited code switching was observed, self and peer correction helped in accuracy and fluency, imitation and questioning skills enabled students at sustaining oral skills. These thematic findings clearly indicated towards the improvement of students OCSs.

In first classroom session, an activity was demonstrated before assigning to students. Thereafter, students were also given an opportunity for describing their likes and dislikes with demonstrations. Two participants instantly came as volunteer in front of class as either had called their names out since in previous observation it was found that without calling their names out they would not come to perform any activity. They were more attentive and listening to the sounds and conversation of English in classroom. However, they were laughing and enjoying which showed that they had been exposed to English language in a friendly environment. With it they kept speaking continue of having a lot of fun and imitation each other in a class. The class was kept as social as possible by understanding that language learning occurs in a social setting (Vygotsky 1978).

Before assigning task, it was demonstrated so that students could get ideas and complete it with understanding. Demonstrating the lesson and activities dramatically enhance interactions and

facilitate spoken English as students got exposure to listening English in classroom (Bahdur, 2009). In demonstrating the lesson English was kept medium of instruction strictly. Research also suggests that to bring students up to speaking level they should be encouraged to participate in listening activities such as one student may listen to his partner so that listening goes forward and speaking may take place. It further revealed that listening proceeds and paves the way for speaking, training for effective communication must therefore be preceded by training in listening (Tickoo, 2003; Stabb, 1992; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). In this regards students get to see gesture, facial expression and understand action of the role player. Researchers such as Grove, 2006; Sasikumar, Dutt & Rajeeva, 2005 also support demonstration for improving students' speaking skills because it gives clues of what the person speaks. In participants' assessment interview Khatija shared the same view:

Agar ham mistakes kar de tu English mai tu children is laughing karte hai, wo hansna shorow karte hai. Mazaq udatey hai jaisa k mai abi direction padhaney k liye khadi hoi thi chair per, up chair tu usama is very laughing. I am shy, I am go to take my seat...shy, this children is very laughing. Kuch students intelligent hai wo en batoom ko samajte hai lakin kuch are very weak" (if we make mistakes in English then the children laugh. They start to laugh make a fun of us/me. As I stood on the chair to read out the 'direction words' Osama was laughing very much. I was shy. So I went to take my seat. The children laugh a lot. Some students are intelligent and know these things some are very weak. (SIT, 9/2/12).

This conversation gives a clear picture of the classroom where students were learning with fun in an encouraging environment. It was a new environment for them because they had more freedom to laugh, joke and talk. This also helped in developing their social skills such as respecting others' views and participation in classroom activities. For getting it done more meaningful, some rules were set up for classroom such as respecting each other's ideas and talking in English which boosted their confidence and removed hesitation and shyness. It has also been observed that speaking language can be learned in social interaction, as Rask (2006) cited in Jones and Hodson (2006) says "language takes place most effectively within a context of social interaction through the joint construction of meaning. Through collaboration and group discussion, pupils learn to take account of the views of others and to listen with attention and accuracy" (P.18). These fun learning and talking in classroom greatly impacted OCSs and helped in getting it improved. Many research studies (Block, 2001; Dobson, 1992; Sadruddin 2003) informed that an encouraging environment facilitates students to perform better in speaking skills. These studies also suggest to encourage speech, first, a teacher researcher establish a comfortable, safe environment, one in which the students feel accepted and worthy. (Houk, 2005). It revealed that students' participation could be improved by involving them in activities and keeping very close relations with them. If teacher encourages students it will enable them to do a task in good way. It was also learnt that participation can also be improved setting social roles.

In demonstration, questioning techniques was used not only 'what and how' but also 'why' which helped students in improving OCSs. The findings of many studies (Cameron, 2001; Chin, 2006; Fisher, 2006) found teachers' questions fruitful for involving in classroom activities which finally help students improve OCSs. While teaching lesson three, more questions were asked to get students involved in learning. Students started to give good responses, as in warm up activity



(lesson three) students were asked by showing a chocolate that if they asked for it in correct English it would be given him/her. An interesting responses were observed such as “A chocolate”. ‘My chocolate’. ‘I love chocolate because it is protein’. ‘I like chocolate. Can I take chocolate sir” (CTT, 9/2/12). These small utterances showed that one participant responded with reason ‘because’ as in the first lesson they had been taught ‘giving reason’ using of ‘because’, so he applied previous learned lesson which showed progress in real setting environment. Similarly in another participant’s utterances message is exactly clear and fluent. Thus, it indicated that students had been improving with passage of time.

It was also noticed in last two cycles that accuracy and fluency had also got improved by encouraging students’ mistakes and errors in speech (Bahdur, 2009; Ashraf, 1998; Hall, 2011). “An ‘error’ then is not something that hinders a student’s progress, but is probably a clue to active learning progress being made by the student as he or she tries out ways of communicating in the new language” (Yule, 2007. P.116). It was depicted from the presentation of group activity work whose aim was using past tenses in describing their room by given picture. Hammid came in front of class and started to describe his kitchen:

I had a ...kitchen....kitchen and he was um....a ....., it was a very big kitchen and it was a table on the um...table...on the table it was flower. On the table and glass on the table and some glass...and beautiful flower....and kitchen wall had a very beautiful picture on, ...plant, a picture of plant (CTT, 16/2/12).

This utterance showed that he himself corrected twice. First ‘he’ was used for kitchen but he realized and corrected speech by using ‘it’ and second time again he recalled by saying ‘a picture of plant’. Both accuracy and fluency can be seen to have been improved as the language was sustained and meaning is clear. It was an improvement because then onward students had started to realize and understand the structure and using of vocabulary. As a result student made self correction which is independent learning and plays a key role in self-directed learning schemes. It was also noticed that pauses and speech fillers such as ‘Umm’, ‘Uh’, ‘Er’ were reduced but verbal fillers such as ‘well’, ‘I mean’, ‘you know’, ‘you see’, were produced by students. While doing group work activity some students got angry at others but interestingly they used English with each other. For example in group work Mehrin shouted at a boy that, “you are very very bad boy you are the problem in this group” (CR, 10/2/12). This conversation does not have any speech filler and longer pauses. The mode of communication is clear as she used accurate language without making any major grammatical mistake because students had more space for talking and more freedom to express oral language. Role play and discussion were used to give opportunities for students practice oral speeches as these also provided students with ample opportunities to get involved in classroom activities and lesson interactive. Several other studies such as Shughri, 2007, Jabeen, 2005; Cameron, 2001; Ghafoor, 1998; Ashraf, 1998 also found these strategies useful in improving students’ OCSs if the activities are made related to real life situations and their own experiences. While chart presentation in group work, two participants Khatija and Hammid explained it verbally, “We agree with this statement because girls is..um are very intelligent. She is very good hearing... girl is very hard work and good... girls are very good student. Girls are beautiful... (Laughing)....” (CTT, 10/2/12). Here it is clear that they accurately used ‘is’ with singular verb and ‘are’ with plural which gives a sign of improvement. It was previously mentioned that they made this mistake but now it got improved. It also

appeared that exposure to new strategies enhanced and improved students' speaking skills. As Jabeen (2005) states, "Role play gives the learners the opportunity for realistic spoken language in the classroom (p.8) and it helps in building confidence and in the development of speaking skills"(p.22). Moreover, pair work and group work were also found to be effective in language classroom as they involved students and motivated towards learning language. This seems to be supported with other research findings (Bahdur, 2009; Shughri, 2007; Jabeen, 2005; Ghafoor, 1998; Ashraf, 1998).

As from intervention stage, students had been instructed on using English conversations in classroom, as a result all cycles revealed that code switching of language1 was used very less and English was used more frequently. During an activity in last session in which students were supposed to take interviews with each other's and then to present by role plays. They asked about their ability (what someone can do). The participants, Mehrin and Khatija presented their interview in front of class:

M: What can you do for.....umm Can you swim?

K: Of course, I can swim very well.

M: How fast can you swim?.

K: I can swim faster than anyone I know.

M: How can you cook?

K: My home umm..with my Mother and I can cook better than..um than anyone I know.

M: You can sing a song?

K: Yes, I can sing a song very well.

M: So sing naa? I say you sing na (Laughing...)

K: No.Thank you.

(CTT, 22/2/12).

In this interview dialogue both completed the dialogue without using and switching to L1. First Khatija made a mistake but later corrected after taking pause 'than anyone I know'. In the last question in which Mehrin laughed and demanded Khatija to sing a song, she used only a chunk of language 1 but the message is clear and grammatically correct too. They used very few pauses and no switched to Urdu but they used alternative words, such as Mehrin had done at the start. To be able to speak fluently and accuracy in a foreign language requires a lot of practice and involvement. Rask (2006) cited in Jones and Hodson (2006) herself says, "Speaking and listening skills can be gradually enhanced and exploited through the provision of vivid visual and concrete experiences, and this can provide an additional gateway through to emerging literacy skills (p.22). Speaking practice starts with practicing and drilling set phrases and repeating models. A great deal of time in language classroom is often spent on these repetitive exercises. After these practices, students started using English in classroom and rarely switched to L1 that was a sign of progress because initially they were reluctant to say even a few words. As Scarcella (1990) cited in Kottler& Street (2008) says, "Code switching can be a sign of advanced proficiency in both languages" (p. 64). Students used it whenever they came across a new word or got stuck between conversations. It supported students in fluency development and sustaining language. It also encouraged them to use English as targeted second language. Thus, code switching is used as an additional resource to achieve particular conversational goals in interactions with other bilingual speakers" (Hedge et al 2010, p.28). This study claims that code

switching is inevitable to develop speaking skill in second language learning. The learners sustain their speech with the help of code switching but finally it should be reduced. A teacher should understand that code switching is not hurdle in language learning but using it frequently is not helpful in learning and enhancing English OCSs. In the beginning students' mistakes and errors were neglected, and more attention was given on maintaining anxiety free environment. Many research studies such as Block, 2001; Dobson, 1992; Sadrud-Din, 2003 informed that an encouraging environment facilitates students to perform better in speaking skills. To encourage speech, first, establish a comfortable, safe environment, one in which the students feel accepted and worthy. (Houk, 2005). In all lesson students were provided conducive learning and engaging environment which enabled them to improve OCSs. For that students were treated with respect using encouraging language such as the one who speaks out even incorrect or wrong language is much better than one who never tries and I learn and improve when I am involved and engaged in the process of conversations. Researchers such as Kottler & Gallavan (2008) have suggested that ELT should use inclusive language as police officers use because it will allow students to see how language is used in different circumstances. "Recognizing that you are a role model, use communication that is gender-neutral and culturally sensitive" (P.36). Mercer and Littleton (2007) cited in Cremin (2009) also believe, "The benefits of dialogic teaching include improvement in learning, in reasoning and in problem solving in groups and individually" (p.15). It was found that encouraging environment enhanced students learning of OCSs and they started to participate in pair and group work and it further helped them to realize their mistakes and errors and also supported them for self and peer correction. While teaching a lesson, two participants Khatija and Mahrin presented their verbal dialogue in 'question- answered' form in which they corrected each other:

Menrin: Can you play tennis very well?

Khatija: yes, I can play tennis very well.

M: Are you reading in English? Any one know...(Confused)

K: ...laughing.... Yar tumhara jawab tha...(that was your answer), yes, I am reading English very well.

M: And you... can drive?

K: Yes, I can drive very well umm I am fast driver.

Self and peer correction also reflects from the dialogue of Akram and Hammid:

Akram: Can you speak Japanese?

Hammid: No, I can not speak Japanese. I can speak umm only two languages, .....English and urdu.

A: Can you play tennis?

H: Yes I can play tennis.

A: Can you swim?

H: Yes, I can swim anyone I know.

A: How you learnt swimming?.

H: I umm..my teacher teach me swimming. What are your abilities?

A: My abilities? Swimming...playing...writing..

H: What playing....umm what play can you nice?

A: I play cricket very well.

H: How play cricket? You play very nice cricket?

A: Hmm..Despite that anyone I know....

H. Galat bola yar.(you said it wrong). Say, I play cricket better than anyone I know.

H: Really. What .... How you .... What about you writing and reading?

A: Kia poch rehey ho tum, samaj mai nai aa raha?

H: Kitna acha lekh sakte ho aur padh sakte ho? (How good reading and writing are)

A: I... my reading umm..is better anyone I know.

(C.T.T, 21/2/12).

The above mentioned dialogue clearly revealed that both were using English and correcting each other. They realized their mistakes and sometimes switched to Urdu when one did not understand other's question. Hammid skillfully used pronoun 'My' instead of 'I' and he also asked appropriate questions while being stuck between utterances. There is also evidence of improvement when Akram made a mistake using 'despite that anyone I know' instantly Hammid corrected him by saying that I play cricket better than anyone I know. He remembered this structure which had been taught in previous lesson. Akram also corrected his own mistake as he used correct pronoun 'my' instead of 'I' in last sentence. First he used 'I' but after short pause he used 'My' correct pronoun. Both corrected themselves and also realized their own mistakes. They sustained their dialogue by using speech fillers, having pauses and switching to L 1. These are the strategies used by students in order to improve their OCSs in real classroom context. The dialogue showed that students improved their speaking skills because when correction and self realization starts then it is a sign of improvement. It is also revealed by other research studies that errors support in developing oral proficiency (Bahdur, 2009; Ashraf, 1998; Ghaffor; 1998). "An 'error' then is not something that hinders a student's progress, but is probably a clue to active learning progress being made by the student as he or she tries out ways of communicating in the new language" (Yule, 2007. p.116). As a result student made self-correction which is independent learning and plays a key role in self-directed learning schemes.

### **Pre and Post intervention comparison**

After intervention phase, in order to know the improvement of students' OCSs a focus group interview test of four participants was taken which was compared to pre-intervention interview test. The comparison analysis of pre and post intervention phases test clearly indicated change and improvement in participants' oral responses.

**Table 1: Comparison of participants' improvement pre & post interventions**

Activities for assessing OCS	Pre-interventions focus group discussion and interview test	Post-intervention focus group discussion and interview test
Introducing someone to others	<p>“Who is <u>hamza</u> and hamza is very bad boy...laughing....”                      “She is girl, she is big and...(laughing) ..amm, she is not listening... laugh...”</p>	<p>“My friend name is <u>meher</u> and umm..meher is very good girl and listen um...is very good listening. This is very intelligent girl”.</p>
Can you tell me what you are wearing today?	Jean. Shirt	I’m wearing Cloths, blue Qamiz. My summer coat is red and white. I’m wearing white sock(s) and pink trainer(s).
Can you tell me what you see in the picture?	Belt	It’s a belt. A leather belt. It’s red. It’s for (a)* boy (pointing at me)
Describing an object ( a pen)	<p>“Pen..... <u>he</u>..... <u>you are color</u> ....., You are silver”.</p>	<p>“<u>It is a pen</u>. This pen...um pen is very...thing to write. <u>It is green pen</u>”.</p>
You are in the restaurant, you want to take meal, what will you say to hotel staff?	<p>“Please take a chicken dishes and coffee”.</p>	<p>Two participant role played.                      “Khansa staff: yes madam, what you want?                      Meher guest: please...bring a biryani and coffee.                      K: Many dishes....chicken dishes, fish dishes..                      M: fish fry is the best, if you have..                      K: Here you are                      M: Thank you”.</p>
What are your daily routines? What do you do?	<p>“<u>I am..coming to school</u> and bas sara din yahan nikal jata hai sir”.</p>	<p>“<u>I am get up early in the morning</u> and say my prayers. I go to school at 7;30 and I come to home by school...from school..from school. evening is watching TV and some subjects learning and I go to sleep at 9 PM”.</p>
Any interesting story of your life in the past.	Sir! Ek dafa ham school gaye they aur sub gaye ham Akeley rehgate. Hameybukhar chad gayatha”.	“Sir! I see my dream, I see...um saw a very big cat. Sir..(laughing).cat is..was jumping on my body. (Lauhing). Next one moth”.
What is your future plan?	No response	<p>“I want to become a teacher, in university lecturer and in English talking. and my future plan is...um fun with children like you”.</p>
What do you know about your school?	<p>“My school is a very beautiful. My school building is very big. Umm..teachers is ... very very good. My school is ..umm 20 rooms”.</p>	<p>“My school name is Sm public school. It is a very big school and this school’s students are very intelligent and teachers are good teachers and intelligent.</p>

### **Comparison of participants' improvement pre & post interventions**

The table of both pre and post- intervention verbal responses and utterances clearly revealed that there is clear difference between both of them. As the first response of the participant such as who is Humza was replaced correctly in the post intervention stage with my friend name is Humza. Initially 'who' was used incorrectly but later it was improved with 'My friend'. Additionally, pre-intervention responses shows that there are long pauses and very short answers but in post intervention short pauses and long answers with clear message and free of grammatical errors can be observed. Since, "A large number of students enrolled in second language classes are there because they want to learn to speak the language" (Chastain, 1976, p.332). This purpose was seen to be achieved as there was more accuracy and fluency in post-intervention speaking activities and responses. Initially none of the four participant was able to introduce his/her colleagues but at the end all of them introduced not themselves also their friends too. This comparison testing of their OCSs completely shows improvement which was brought by new teaching methods such as demonstrations, discussions, role plays, using worksheets, providing vocabulary in connection with lesson and finally continuous feedback.

### **IMPLICATION**

This act of improvement and change in students' learning of English language in a multilingual context showed that an action research had a potential to bring desired change and improvement in students in any context of the classroom. As literature on second language learning also shows that teachers are change agents and action researchers, thus through an action research they can get students involved in the process of English language learning in real classroom environment. Many researchers noted that classrooms are social environments (Hall, 2011) and ELTs are active participants in the creation of classroom realities, how teachers talk and how teachers talk to learners is key element in organizing and facilitating learning. Our study marked significant improvement in enhancing OCSs as we had incorporated communicative and interaction-based approaches to ELT which have suggested that teacher talk should be minimized in the classroom, thereby providing opportunities for learners to talk, and to practice and produce language. It has implication all the classrooms where English as language is taught because the way language is used in the classroom remains broadly similar because whenever they are and whatever they are teaching, teachers in schools and other educational facilities are likely to face some similar practical tasks. Our study also found that Students who are acquiring English as an additional language need to be afforded opportunities to practice their language skills and negotiate meaning with more proficient peers (Fitts and Bowers, 2013). English language learners should have the chance to work with and communicate with their fluent English speaking peers on a regular basis and engage in instructional conversation that require critical thinking and more elaborated forms of language production (Zwiers,2007). This also suggests having engaging and enabling environment in language classroom so that learners may get more opportunities to practice their language skills because it is evident from the study of Khan and Khattak (2011) that in Pakistani schools "students get confused whenever they are asked to speak English. This is due to the fact that they are in a high anxiety situation. (P.147). For it to happen, TBTL and CLT approaches as our study claims to redress this balance by placing meaningful language use

at the centre. This is done by organizing lesson around a series of pedagogical tasks in which the learners actively engaged (Ellis, 2011). These are the mistakes and errors, speech fillers, switching to first language which supports in sustaining oral language and bringing improvement. This has implications in order to use these strategists in language classroom. These should be taken as learning opportunities rather than hurdle in language enhancement.

## CONCLUSION

Broadly stated, this article suggests that in the context of second language learning the practice of teaching English language needs to be changed. The teacher centered classrooms are to be changed with student centered classes and the traditional methods of language teaching and using grammar translation methods have to be replaced with modern methods such as communicative approach and task based teaching approaches. A language teacher also has to be very careful in using language and keeping English medium of instruction in classrooms. It is an enabling and conducive learning environment which provides exposure for developing OCSs where students should be out of hesitation, fear of being wrong and being shy. It demands ELTs to encourage speech, first establish a comfortable, safe environment, one in which the students feel accepted and worthy. (Houk, 2005). In such situations more focus is given on listening. Listening paves the way in developing speaking skills. This needs to be focused more on having undertaken it interactive processes. The improvements of OCSs are seen in term of accuracy and fluency. The belief of focusing accuracy in order to get oral language developed is proved to be wrong. The oral proficiency must be improved by taking fluency as first step because it encourages learners using English as medium of instruction. Students should be provided specific learning opportunities of OCSs in the classroom through activity-based teaching in which students should be given tasks in groups and pairs. It would develop both accuracy and fluency. They gradually realize their own mistakes and it leads towards self and peer correction process. It also helps in reducing code switching in real classrooms. Although code switching is inevitable to develop speaking skill in second language learning and learners sustain their speech with the help of code switching but finally it should be reduced. It is the language teacher who has been considered to be a catalyst whose continuous feedback motivates students and gives chances to improve OCSs. An encouraging language used by teachers sparks an inspiration and excitement in students for improving and learning English language. It develops intrinsic motivation within them. It was found that using teaching strategies such as demonstrations, role plays and discussions were effective ways to improve students' oral proficiency. Thus, this study argues that until and unless teachers and school principals take responsibility of students' learning and provide opportunities to students to practice language in classroom, the real purpose of language teaching will not be achieved.

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**APPENDIX 1**

<b>Action research plan</b>			
Cycles	Students' Learning Outcomes National curriculum of English language 2006	Language function and form	Activities
1			
L1	Express reasons for likes and dislikes. Engage in conversation	Expressing personal feelings through likes and dislikes with reason. (why question with because).	Demonstration/ <u>conversation</u> Pair work and making a small conversation by using why and because.
L2	Ask and answer simple questions of personal relevance.	Introducing and making conversations through questions.(present tense). This is/I am etc.	Pair interviews and conversation. Individual presentations.
2			
L 1	Seek and respond to permission. Request and respond to request.	Seeking permission and making request by using different Modal verbs in daily life. (May, Can, Will, Would, please etc.).	<u>Discussion and group work.</u> Practice of dialogue in group and practicing conversations.
L2	Show willingness and unwillingness to do something.	Expressing agreement and disagreement. (You are right but... I do not agree with you because....)	Discussion in group on agreeing or disagreeing. Chart presentation
3			
L 1	Give and follow directions/ instructions. Express personal needs.	Giving directions and instructions to others. (There is/are using present tense form and preposition).	<u>Role play</u> Individual task and presentations in front of class.
L 2	Express ability/ inability to do something	Express ability/inability to do something. (can, could and anyone I know...etc).	Role play in pairs. Asking questioning in pairs about their ability.
L 3	Give and follow directions/ instructions.	Giving directions. (There is/are,was/were, preposition, any/some etc.)	Picture description and Presentations

**APPENDIX 2**

Individual participant’s assessment tool

Topic/ content Day/date

Students	Interaction			Pauses		Hesitation		Mode of communication		Pronunciation			Expression	
	With Pair	With other classmates	With teacher	Shorter	Longer	More	Less	Taking long turns	Taking short turns	Less grammatical errors	More grammatical errors	More use of language 1	conveys general meaning fairly clearly	Limited expression conveys general meaning less clearly

Key: more use of L1= use of Urdu sentences

Less use of L1= use of only single Urdu words