

A Study of Classroom Interactions of Students with Hearing Impairment at Elementary and Secondary Level

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ABSTRACT

This article reported on a qualitative study which was conducted to identify the classroom interaction of students with hearing impairment. The sample of study consisted of twenty classrooms of students with hearing impairment of elementary and secondary level selected from four schools (government schools=2, private schools=2) from Lahore, Pakistan. The instrument of study was developed according to "Flander Interaction Analysis". Observations were conducted in the selected classes. Data were analyzed through transcribing and coding on different measurement levels. It was found that there was a difference in nature of classroom interaction between government schools and private sector schools. Students were facing many difficulties in classroom interaction regarding modes of instruction used by teachers in Classrooms, teachers' inability to use sign language, use of A.V. aids during instruction etc. It was recommended that nature of classroom interaction can be improved by making appropriate arrangements to meet the special needs of students with hearing impairment.

Keywords: Classroom interaction, students with hearing impairment, elementary level, secondary level

INTRODUCTION

Interaction is more than an action followed by a reaction. It includes acting commonly, or performing with each other (Dagarin, 1994). Interaction is, in fact, the heart of communication. It is what communication is all about. Interaction is a process through which people act in relation to one another. Interaction occurs between people and it is considered the most unique event in nature which results in variations. Ultimately, these variations lay foundations of all further social activities (Browns, 1987).

Classroom interaction plays an increasingly important role in the success of the deaf students. Through interaction, they get a chance to communicate not only with the teacher but also with the students and other members of community. It was found that Classroom interaction went hand in hand with the theoretical shift in perspectives on learning and teaching that began to emphasize the active role of individuals in meaning-making and knowledge construction. For most of the students, a classroom is a major source to contact not only with the teacher but also with other classmates and friends. It plays a vital role for the development of child's social competence. Social setting theory suggests that the social process in the classroom context can influence the outcomes and results of the student (Luckner, 2011).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), formerly the Education of the Handicapped Act (P. L. 94-142), includes "hearing impairment" and "deafness" as two of the

categories under which children with disabilities may be eligible for special education and related services programming. Hearing impairment is defined as “an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance.” Deafness is defined as “a hearing impairment that is so severe that the child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification” (NICHCY, 2003).

The participation of deaf students in the classroom and their communication varies from student to student. There are many approaches available to interact and communicate with students with hearing impairment and the best approach is to talk with students and ask them to define their needs (Bailey, 1998). For the provision of education to students with hearing impairment the main problem which a teacher, a sign language interpreter, a physical education instructor, and a music teacher has to face is to communicate with these children. As a result, the students with hearing impairment perform badly in academics as compared to their hearing peers (Moore, 1996).

The most common way of organizing classroom interaction, depends on who communicate with whom. Dagarin (1994) describes four major categories of talk in classroom: (a) Teacher – learners; (b) Teacher – learner/a group of learners; (c) Learner – learner; (d) Learners – learners. The first form of interaction (teacher – learners) is established when a teacher talks to the whole class at the same time. The teacher performs the role of a leader and classroom controller. The second arrangement (Teacher – learner/a group of learners) is directed when the teacher talks to the whole class but he points out one student or a group of students to answer the question. The third form of arrangement (Learner – learner) is known as ‘pair work’ where the student have to work in groups to fulfil their task. The last way of arrangements (Learners – learners) is beneficial to the motivation and encouragement of interaction among students. The students use more language functions in pairs and in group work than in other forms of interaction (Dagarin, 1994).

Flanders (1970) defines teaching as an interactive process which involves both teachers and students. In this process, teacher influences the students; students also interact with the teacher. Interaction takes place among the students themselves too. It means, in the process of teaching, everybody interacts with every other person involved in the process. Cameron (2001) has already given the general description about teaching. She emphasizes that teaching is a process to construct opportunities for learning and to help learners take advantages of them. There are many tools available to measure the classroom interaction patterns. One can identify more than one hundred categories and sign-system to analyse the classroom interaction. Among them the most popular analysis category is 'Flanders Interaction Analysis Category System' (FIACS). Many educationists considered it as the most popular and effective classroom interaction pattern and classroom instructional process (Shahi, 2010).

Nunn (1996) states that only one out of every forty minutes of class time is dedicated to the student’s interaction and participation in the class. The statement shows that the ways of teaching that most epitomises in high school classrooms right now is that the teacher tells and the students listen, then the students tell or regurgitate information on a written test and the teacher evaluates (Wray, 2001).

Flanders coding system consists of ten categories of communication which are said to be inclusive of all communication possibilities. Seven categories are used to categorize various aspects of teacher talk and two are used to categorize student talk.

Teacher Talk	Indirect Influence	1. Accepts Feeling: accepts and clarifies the feeling tone of the students in a non-threatening manner. Feeling may be positive or negative. Predicting or recalling feeling is included. 2. Praises Or Encourages: praises or encourage student actions or behavior. Jokes that release tension, not at expense of another individual, nodding head or saying “um hum?” or “go on” are included. 3. Accepts or Uses Ideas of Students: clarifying, building, or developing ideas suggested by a student. As a teacher bring more of his own ideas into play, shift to category five. 4. Asks Questions: asking a question about content or procedure with the intent that a student answers.
	Direct Influence	5. Lecturing: giving facts or opinion about content or procedure with his own ideas, asking rhetorical question. 6. Giving Directions: directions, commands, or orders to which a student is expected to comply. 7. Criticizing or Justifying Authority: statements intended to change student behavior from non-acceptable to acceptable pattern; bawling someone out; stating why the teacher is doing what he is doing; extremely self-reference.
Student Talk		8. Students Talk-Response: a student makes a predictable response to teacher. Teacher initiates the contact or solicits student statements and sets limits to what the student says. 9. Students Talk Initiation: talk by students which they initiate. Unpredictable statements in response to teacher. Shift from 8 to9 as student introduced own ideas. 10. Silence or Confusion: pauses, short periods of silence, and periods of confusion in which communication cannot be understood by the observer.

The Flander System of Interaction Analysis is used to define whether a teacher directly or indirectly motivates and controls the classroom. What is the level of interaction?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was designed to achieve the following objectives:

1. To identify the nature of classroom interaction of the classes of hearing impaired children in government sector schools.
2. To identify the nature of classroom interaction of the classes of hearing impaired children in private sector schools.
3. To highlight the school sector wise difference regarding classroom interaction of students with hearing impairment.
4. To recommend further research in this field.

METHOD

The following method was used for the study:

Population

The population of study comprised all students with hearing impairment studying at elementary and secondary level in public and private sector schools for students with hearing impairment.

Sample of the study

The researchers selected conveniently a sample of 20 classrooms of students with hearing impairment from the following four schools of Lahore city:

1. Government Special Education Center for Children with Hearing Impairment, Johar Town, Lahore.
2. Hamza foundation Academy for the Deaf, Johar town, Lahore.
3. Anayat Foundation Academy for Children with Hearing Impairment.
4. Government Deaf & Defective Hearing High School for Girls, Gulberg, Lahore.

Development of Instrument

After reviewing the related literature and Flanders' Interaction Analysis, an observation form was developed to study the classroom interaction of students with hearing impairment. It was based on the components of hypothetical framework. Observation form consisted of three parts. The teacher's observation form consisted of 25 items. On each item, it was required to observe on three different measurement scales. The students' observation form consisted of 20 items. It was required to observe on three scales (ranging from 1 to 3, 1 = no, 2 = To Some Extent, 3=yes). The general observation form consisted of 16 items. On each item, it was required to observe on three scales (ranging from 1 to 3, 1 = no, 2 = To some extent 3= yes). Content validity of the instruments was ensured by taking opinions of three special educationists who had expertise in teaching to hearing impaired children.

Data Collection Procedure

First of all, the written consent of the principals of selected schools was obtained. Time schedule was adjusted with the class teachers. Researchers observed twenty classes of hearing impaired children for twenty five minutes. Out of twenty five minutes, ten were allocated to teacher observation, ten for students' observation and five for general observation of the classroom. After data collection the data was analyzed, the results were drawn and recommendations were made.

Analysis of Data

After data collection check list were coded through coding scheme. Responses to each statement of the observation form were tabulated, analysed and interpreted.

FINDINGS

Major findings are being given under three headings:

1. Observation of teachers
2. Observation of students
3. General observation of the classrooms

Observation of Teachers

The demographic information regarding observation of teachers is as under:

- i. 25 % observations were done in Govt Training of the teacher of deaf 25% in National Special education centre 25 % in Anayet Foundation academy for deaf and 25% in Hamza foundation academy for deaf.
- ii. 35 % observations were done in A sections of five classes from 5th through 9th and 75% observations were done in B sections of the same classes.

- iii. 20 % teachers were male and 80% of teachers were female of the schools with hearing impairment.
- iv. 15 % of observations were of Urdu, 35% were of English, 25% were of Math and 25 % were of General science

Findings

The following findings were derived on the basis of data analysis:

- a. Majority of the teachers (75%) gave eye contact to students with hearing impairment whereas 55% of teachers gave good facial expressions to them.
- b. Only 40% of teachers used writing and signs as a method of communication with the students of hearing impairment.
- c. Only 50% of teachers used audio visual aids during instruction.
- d. 45% of teachers did teach students in a friendly manner.
- e. Majority of the teachers (65%) maintained discipline in the classroom and 50% seemed to cooperate with students.
- f. 60% of teachers showed inappropriate flow of lectures.
- g. Lesson planning was done by 50% of teachers.
- h. 55% teachers gave primary reinforcement to students with hearing impairment.
- i. It was good to note that 80% teachers neither hit the students in the classroom nor did they separate misbehaving students from their class fellows.
- j. Only 45 % of teachers did not praise the students with hearing impairment.
- k. Teaching in total communication mode was being carried out by only 45% of teachers.
- l. Almost 55% of teachers did not adapt lessons in the class of students with hearing impairment.
- m. A large number of teachers (60%) used to ask questions and accepted the ideas of students.

Observations of Students

- i. 55% of students with hearing impairment did give feedback to the teacher and fulfilled the desire objectives to some extent.
- ii. All of the students with hearing impairment had friends.
- iii. 50% students maintained discipline in the classroom.
- iv. Majority of the students (80%) gave eye contact to the teacher.
- v. 55% students did not work in peer group.
- vi. Only 10% of students were having unfriendly relationships with their classmates.
- vii. Majority of the students with hearing impairment (55%) interacted with teachers.
- viii. A large number of students (90%) interacted with other students.
- ix. 50% of students showed interest in the lesson.
- x. A good number of students (60%) did not distract during the lesson.
- xi. Only 40% of students did not sharpen pencils during instruction.

General Observation of the Classrooms

- i. 50% of the classrooms were clean.

- ii. In majority of the classrooms (90%) the size of tables and chairs was according to the special educational needs of children with hearing impairment.
- iii. In (50%) of the classrooms, lighting was appropriate.
- iv. In 50% of the classes, there was sufficient space to move in the classroom.
- v. 50% of the classrooms were colourfully decorated.
- vi. In 70% of the classrooms, books were available and in 50% of the classrooms educational material was available.
- vii. The overall atmosphere in 50% of the classrooms was good.
- viii. Majority of the students with hearing impairment (95%) had stationery with them.
- ix. 50% teachers remained on task.
- x. In 50% of the classes discipline was maintained.
- xi. In 100% classes students did not misbehave with teachers.
- xii. 55% of students did not misbehave with other students.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of study regarding classroom interaction of students with hearing impairment the findings show that majority of the teachers working with students with hearing impairment gave good facial expression to them. Their body gestures were good and appropriate and most of them used speech and sign language as a method of communication to students with hearing impairment. Teachers showed friendly attitude during instruction in classrooms and they were good at conflict management. Teachers maintained discipline in the classrooms. Most of the teachers were lacking in fluency during instruction. They cooperated with students and gave primary reinforcement to the students. Teacher did not hit the students. They used total communication as method of instruction. Their behavior was polite. The overall atmosphere of the classrooms was good, safe and attractive.

Majority of the students fulfilled the desired objectives and gave feedback to teachers. They had friends. They maintained discipline in the classroom. They gave eye contact to the teacher and an understanding atmosphere developed between the teacher and the student. They did not work in groups. But they cooperated with their friends and as a result social relationship of the classroom was good. Majority of the students did not get distracted during the classroom.

Majority of the classrooms were neat and clean. Lighting was appropriate in most of the classrooms and there was safe place to move in the classroom. Walls were decorated and the overall atmosphere of the classroom was good. Students had stationery with them and maintained discipline in the classroom. The overall environment was attractive and safe in many of the classes. Students did not misbehave with the teachers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are given on the basis of major findings:

1. Teachers of students with hearing impairment should use audio visual aids during the classrooms along with sign language, written and speech to communicate the students with hearing impairment.
2. Method of teaching must be according to the needs of the students with hearing impairment.
3. Nature of classroom instruction can be improved by making appropriate arrangements to meet the needs of the students with hearing impairment.

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