The role of student negotiation in improving the speaking ability of Turkish university EFL students: An action research study

Submitted by

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Abstract

Teaching speaking is an area of language education which is frequently neglected in English classes in Turkey. This dissertation reports on an action research study designed to address this problem. The study involved data collection through interviews, questionnaires, and observations, as a way of eliciting students' views as a means to improve speaking classes and to outline the impact of student negotiation on students' classroom participation and performance. The research, conducted in the ELT Department at a university in Turkey, comprised three different stages. In the first reconnaissance phase, initial data were collected to understand the classroom context. This informed the second stage, comprising eight weekly-based interventions that involved planning, action, observation and reflection, in which students were given a voice and classroom activities were designed accordingly. In the third stage, the final data were collected to understand the effectiveness of student negotiation.

According to the findings, students wanted more opportunities to practise spoken language in class. Student negotiation allowed for the design of classes according to students' needs and wants, with students becoming more motivated to engage in classroom activities. This led to the development of more positive attitudes towards speaking classes, and more positive perceptions of their speaking ability were reported at the end of the term, together with increased classroom participation, greater willingness to communicate, higher self-esteem, and lower levels of anxiety. The findings also suggested that student negotiation is likely to impact on students' and teachers' professional development.

The study has a number of implications for both the teaching of speaking and for research: it demonstrates the significance of student engagement in classroom activities, made possible through designing activities which take into account students' views and perceptions. Student negotiation and attention to students' needs and wants would appear to promote a high level of student participation, increased motivation and more positive attitudes towards speaking classes. Further research studies, and specifically, more action research, should be conducted in Turkey to generate practical implications to improve classroom practice.

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