

**Research Article**

## **THE IMPACT OF SOCIO AFFECTIVE STRATEGIES ON IRANIAN INTERMEDIATE EFL LEARNER'S SPEAKING ABILITY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study was conducted to investigate the impact of socio affective strategies on Iranian Intermediate EFL learner's speaking ability. For these purpose 90 learners of English at Shokouh language institute participated in this study. Having being homogenized by a TOEFL test, they were randomly assigned into two groups of 45, control and experimental. Then both groups sat for a pre-test, which was a speaking test. The purpose of this test was to measure the learner's initial subject knowledge of speaking ability. Afterwards, the experimental group received treatment based on socio affective strategies. However, the control group received no treatment and approached the traditional way of teaching. The treatment procedure took seven sessions. Finally at the end of the course both groups sat for the post test of speaking ability. Then the statistical analysis was run through T-test. It was explored from the study that learner's speaking ability improves more when they are provided with socio affective strategies. However, this study provides a significant contribution in curriculum innovation and policy with respect to the learner's speaking improvement.

**Key Words:** *Socio Affective Strategy, Speaking Ability*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Language learning strategies are broadly conceptualized as cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective strategies (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990). Students consciously or unconsciously employ language learning strategies in language learning. Nevertheless, a number of research studies (Chamot and Kupper, 1989; Goh and Kwah, 1997) have discovered that students rarely utilize socio-affective strategies. These studies provide the evidence that learners overlook the efficiency of socio-affective strategies (Chamot and Kupper, 1989; Goh and Kwah, 1997).

Learning how to speak English fluently and accurately is always a grand task for Asian students who study abroad. Due to the significance of interaction between the instructor and students, students and students at U.S. education institutions, speaking competence can hardly be overvalued. However, because of the limitation of speaking competence and the influence by Confucianism, some Asian students are not inclined to express opinions in class; some appear conservative and uncomfortable, and seldom ask questions that they do not understand (Brice and Roseberry-Mackibbin, 1999; Lim, 2003). In other words, "influenced by Confucianism, students tend to value quietness, and be less opinioned" (Lim, 2003). Commonly, they rarely ask questions even though they do not understand the content that the instructor lectures, and they seldom express their own opinions (Lim, 2003). Lack of speaking competence prohibits the opportunities for Asian students to interact with the instructor and peers in the ESL classroom. Moreover, due to the difference between Asian and the United States' educational systems, Asian students are likely to express a conflict with peers and the instructor in the ESL classroom (Lacina, 2001). Because the teaching and learning styles in the United States are student-centered, dynamic and lively way to learning and teaching, discussions and communications naturally occur in the classroom (Lacina, 2001). Without the target language speaking competence and strong motivation, Asian students have a propensity to talk to each other in their native language and murmur when encountering questions (Lim, 2003). These behaviors suggest Asian students have difficulties engaging in the classroom activities and discussions without the speaking competence and motivation. As a result, both language teachers and

### **Research Article**

learners should take into account knowing how to use socio-affective strategies to advance learner's speaking ability and simultaneously help those learners actively engage in the classroom activities.

Researchers (O'Malley *et al.*, 1989; Chamot, 1993) have studied the results of language learning strategies that were taught to English as second language (ESL) learners in numerous different tasks, including vocabulary, listening, and speaking tasks. The outcomes of the studies reveal that language learning strategies are primarily of benefit for the speaking task (Chamot, 1993). It is patently attainable for learners to accomplish the goal of communicative competence in the target L2 by language learning strategies. Additionally, Bialystock (1978) recognizes that when learners communicate in the target L2, they can consciously apply language learning strategies in order to deal with the difficulties they encounter.

As commonly accepted, socio-affective strategies are the strategies that help learners regulate and control emotions, motivations, and attitudes towards learning, as well as help learners learn through contact and interaction with others (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990). For example, by means of socio-affective strategies, language learners can lower anxiety by using some mental techniques and solve problems through teacher-student or peer interactions (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990). Therefore, socio-affective strategies can be regarded as a useful approach for Asian learners to accelerate their speaking competence and vigorously interact with native speakers and instructors in the ESL classroom.

Various researchers have devoted themselves to identifying the strategies used by students. Some Researchers (Chamot and Kupper, 1989) assert that the cognitive strategies are the most frequently used strategy. Meanwhile, learners apply far fewer metacognitive than cognitive strategies, and seldom employ socio-affective strategies. Some researchers (Goh and Kwah, 1997) report high use of metacognitive strategies and low use of socio-affective strategies; in other word, students regularly employ metacognitive strategies in language learning and rarely utilize socio-affective strategies. The previous research studies have shown a consistent perspective that language learners tend not to use socio-affective strategies in language learning.

### **Purpose of the Study**

As it is said earlier, the present study is an attempt to ameliorate the pedagogical and practical implication and application of the impact of socio affective strategies on Iranian Intermediate EFL learner's speaking ability. However the study tries to answer the following question that might yield message to curriculum innovation and policy.

- Does socio affective strategies have any effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL learner's speaking ability?

The present research can be useful for material designer and material selection and preparation, which might be a paradigm shift in curriculum innovation.

### **Research Question**

In order to tackle the problem of the research in a very consolidated way, the following research question has been formulated as follows:

**RQ:** Does socio affective strategies have any effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL learner's speaking ability?

### **Research Hypothesis**

In order to answer the research question, the following null hypothesis has been formulated:

**H0:** socio affective strategies do not have any effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL learner's speaking ability?

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Introduction**

This part introduces the method of the study. More specifically it details the design of the study, the subjects who participated in the experiment, the instrumentation, procedures and statistical analysis.

### **Design of the Study**

The design of the study was quasi-experimental design, which is a pre-post test design.

## Research Article

### Participants

The participants of the study were 190 learners of English from Shokouh language institute. Having being homogenized by a TOFEL test, 90 male and female language learners were randomly selected (from among almost 190 learners) to take part in the study. Having confirmed their homogeneity, they were randomly assigned into two groups, an experimental group and a control group, each consisting of 45 students. The experimental group received treatment based on socio affective strategies. And the control group received no treatment however they approached the traditional way of teaching speaking.

### Materials

This research scheme takes advantage of three types of tests for the sake of data collection. A TOFEL test not released and publicized in order to measure the subjects' current status of proficiency level. The test covered the areas of reading, grammar, and vocabulary proficiency the subjects in both groups were screened and equated as far as their proficiency levels were conducted. A pre-test of speaking was given to the subjects to measure the subjects' initial differences in speaking ability. And finally a post test of speaking ability was administered to both groups to find out the effectiveness of the treatment.

### Procedure

As it was already mentioned, the speaking pre-test was administered to both experimental group and control group to take their initial knowledge of speaking ability. the participant were randomly assigned into two groups .one group served as the experimental group in which students received treatment based on socio affective strategies in speaking ability. The other group served as the control group in which students received the traditional way of teaching in speaking. The whole research project took place in almost seven sessions. At the end of the sessions, speaking ability development of the students in both groups was tested using the post-test, which is the same speaking test. On the basis of these tests the efficacy of socio affective strategy in speaking ability was determined.

### Statistical Analysis

The data of the study was computed based on computer assisted program (SPSS) software. T-test was used to present the analysis and result of the study based on the hypothesis of the research.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part represents the result and analysis of the data. In order to begin the study, the researcher administered a pretest to both control and experimental groups unexpectedly. Table 1and Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the pretest for control and experimental groups:

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the pretest for control group**

No	Min	Max	Mean	SD
90	5	27	19.22	8.30

**Table 2: Descriptive statistics of pre test for experimental group**

No	Min	Max	Mean	SD
90	4	18	11.50	3.40

And finally with the end of the course, the post test was administered to both experimental and control group. The descriptive statistics of this test are shown in table 3:

**Table 3: Descriptive statistics of the post tests for control and experimental group**

Variable	No	Mean	SD	S.E. of mean	DF	2-tail sig.
EXP	45	52.65	9.21	1.06	45	0.95
Cont	45	31.55	6.68	1.46		.000

## Research Article

Then in order to make a comparison between the two groups to see if there is any statistically significant difference between the two groups, the obtained raw scores were subjected to two separate independent t-tests. As table 4 indicates, the experimental group had a remarkably better performance than the control group on speaking test.

**Table 4: Independent t-test comparing the performance of the two groups on speaking test**

Variable	No	Mean	SD	S.E. mean	of DF	2-tail sig.
EXP	45	58.94	1.295	1.350	35	0.86
Cont	45	31.95	7.153	1.176		.000

Then in order to see whether the treatment given to the experimental group had caused any significant change in their performance another independent t-test was run. Table 5 well shows that the experimental group outperformed the control group significantly.

**Table 5: Independent t-test comparing the performance of the two groups after the treatment**

Variable	No	Mean	SD	S.E. mean	of DF	2-tail sig.
EXP	45	55.40	1.10	0.17	29	0.96
Cont	45	30.86	1.08	0.15		.000

## RESULTS

The results of the analysis through T-test indicated that using the socio-affective strategy in the course of speaking may lead to a better performance in EFL learner's speaking ability. In addition, the result of this study showed that socio affective strategy as compared to traditional way of teaching speaking was found to be significant and had a positive effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL learner's speaking ability improvement.

## Conclusion

For promoting English ability, receiving higher education, and developing the international perspectives, the population of Iranian students has increased steadily in abroad colleges and universities recently. It is clear that Iranian students bear much anxiety and pressure while studying abroad (Parr *et al.*, 1992). According to plenty of research studies (Parr *et al.*, 1992), international students with better language proficiency can adjust to the foreign environment more easily. Therefore, how to advance learner's language proficiency has always been a major mission in the profession of TESOL.

From this article, it is obvious that socio-affective strategies can be considered as an effective approach to accelerate Iranian learner's speaking competence as well as their learning motivation. Both language teachers and learners are supposed to evaluate whether socio-affective strategies are being overlooked or not. Moreover, socio-affective strategies should be fully integrated into classroom contexts and everyday learning. Only when Iranian students know how to make good use of socio-affective strategies in both the ESL classroom environment and everyday life can they improve the speaking competence and motivation.

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**Research Article**

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