



How can the teacher encourage children to speak in English during the discussion inside and outside the classroom?

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Abstract

This action research paper attempted to explore and examine the reasons why students are reluctant to converse in English inside and outside their classrooms. Further, to help students enhance their usage of English in their daily conversation through the incorporation of intervention strategies such as creating a conducive environment, talk time and speaking marathon. The samples were drawn from the students of class IX A at Drukgyel Higher Secondary school, Bhutan. Twenty-nine students took part in the study. The data was collected through questionnaires, observation and interviews. The study concluded that English, though is the medium of instruction in the school, is not much spoken by the students unless when they converse with the teachers. Though many students preferred to speak in English, yet their fear of being ridiculed refrained them from speaking in English. Given the right prospect of guidance and platform including a deliberate effort from the teacher, there was progress in the usage of English in their daily communication by the students. The students began to take pride and have fun speaking in English inside and outside the classroom.

Keywords: English, classroom management, language, communicate, cooperative learning, speaking marathon, vocabulary, English-speaking

Introduction

Officially English has a status of being the second language, but in fact, it is the most important language of the world and Bhutan is not an exception as well. After Dzongkha, it is the most commonly spoken language in Bhutan and probably the most read and written language in Bhutan. English is considered as the medium of instruction in all the school across Bhutan. Every subject except Dzongkha is taught through the medium of English. Though English is a second language for Bhutanese, yet it holds an important place in getting admission to any learning institution. As a result, in Bhutanese schools and colleges, a plethora of methods, techniques, and efforts have been put in to enhance the quality of English in the schools. However, owing to the limited platform and practice, students faced difficulty in communicating in English and many students retort to communicating in their own native language.

It was quite normal for the students to feel anxiety in speaking in English especially when it was not their first language. The situation can be aggravated if the students are not made to practice English to learn English. English has become a dominant language in Bhutan. To help them reduce anxiety and encourage students to speak in English, a *favorable environment and talk time practice* have proved to be more effective. *Conducive environment and talk time practices* are promoted by activities that involve real communication, speaking marathon and creating a comfort zone. This leads to using the language appropriately in the social context and which in turn helps in attaining communicative competence. The teacher can help in providing a platform where students can practice using English in their daily conversations. Thus, without any interference, they are motivated and felt secure to use the target language inside and outside their classroom.

Reconnaissance

Reconnaissance, which provides an overview of the situation in which action research is to be carried out needs to be considered before planning any action research. It consists of three parts namely situational analysis, analysis of the people involved, competence and literature review.

Situational analysis

Envisioned to be the center of academic excellence and with the motto of being 'ever-victorious', Drukgyel Higher Secondary School is committed to producing well informed, skilled, loyal, dedicated and productive citizens by providing an effective teaching-learning atmosphere, incorporating wholesome education. Established as an offshoot of Paro High School, Drukgyel High School was inaugurated on 7th April 1994. It was located in Jitsephu village of Tsento geog, at a distance of 12 km from Paro town. The school started off with Aum Namgyay Om as its first principal with about 399 students and 29 teachers. Today, there are more than 800 students with about 60 teaching and non-teaching staff.

Located in a semi-rural area, the school has students from uneducated background-mostly farmers. Further, it caters to the science and commerce stream of students. The school has students from all walks of life and it mostly caters to those students from the feeder school (Drukgyel LSS and Dawakha MSS). It also has the system to accept students from other places based on the genuineness of students' situations such as transfer case. The school also has the system of admitting students based on their academic merit ranking.

English, though is a medium of instructions in Bhutan, many students feel uncomfortable conversing in English. Hence, it was a common sight to see students converse in

English only with their teachers in the classroom. Moreover, in the Bhutanese context, students get to learn English from the conversation they had with the teachers. It implies that there is a minimal social environment through which students can acquire the English language. Most people around them do not speak English. They are brought up hearing their native language. Hence, conversing in English becomes awkward for the students. Mostly, in the group discussion in the class, the students are seen to be using their mother tongue as a means of communication even in English lessons. Conversation in English –either inside or outside the classroom is very rare unless they are forced to do so.

Literature Review

Studies show that it is quite normal for the students to feel the anxiety in talking in English especially when it is not their first language. The situation can be further aggravated if the students are not given the prospect to practice speaking. Latha and Rajan (2011, p.50) alleged that students at the tertiary level lack communication skills because they learn English but do not acquire it. They blamed pedagogical practices of second language teachers as they don't focus on pragmatic competence. Hence, they focused on communicative language teaching where the use of activities that involve real communication and learning processes can be supported by the language. Students can be given the opportunity to use the language appropriately in a social context. The pragmatics also explore the ability of language users to match utterances with contexts in which they are appropriate. It is centered upon the ability to find socially appropriate language for the situation they encounter.

Classroom arrangement and specifically classroom design and classroom practice play a crucial role in facilitating a comfortable zone for the students to talk or engage in conversation. As claimed by Xiao (2013), the desks in most schools are designed to take lecture notes and it is quite common to see all the students facing the teacher's desk. Further, an expression such as 'no talking', 'keep your eyes on the paper', 'don't help others', 'don't ask help from others' are some frequently used phrases in a typical classroom. He asserted that students are regarded as containers to be filled with knowledge by the teachers and connoted it to what he calls 'Feed the duck method'. Owing to the situation whereby the teachers take classroom time to explain and impart knowledge, students listen, and very little interaction is found between teacher and learner. Hence, in his study titled, "An action research report on applying co-operative learning techniques in an intensive English reading class in China", he incorporated cooperative learning to demonstrate whether the introduction of co-operative learning to college English intensive reading teaching has a positive effect on improving the present situation of English learning for students and whether it helps activate their interest and ease their language anxiety to participate the in-class activity. Xiao found out that the students become more confident in their English task than in a traditional class. This stemmed from a relaxed and co-operative environment with much autonomy and less pressure. Co-operative learning helps activate student's enthusiasm for and ease their language anxiety of participating in the in-class activity. The cooperative atmosphere can, as proved in his study decrease anxiety among students, increase confidence, and greatly

motivate them to work together.

Similarly, most schools in Bhutan still follow the same seating arrangement that Xiao described. Students sit in rows and lines facing the teachers and are passive listeners. The traditional notion of teachers being the most learned still persists. Not only that, but the teacher is also mostly seen as a fearing personality and most of the traditional teachers failed to tolerate the mistake of the students. Hence, students refrained from conversation to avoid being reprimanded by the teachers. However, as recommended by Tsipalakes & Keramida (2010) teachers need to help students to change their beliefs and attitudes towards mistakes and help boost their self-confidence. A strong emphasis is laid on teachers' tolerance of mistakes. Students can be rewarded for successfully conveying a message and this can help students gradually change their perception of mistake. Gradually, students feel comfortable speaking English. Building a supportive learning environment can help students to be more willing to speak in the targeted language. This can be done through peer support in the classroom, making the classroom environment a non-threatening place and introducing opportunities for students to speak in English even outside the classroom. One recommended activity is interviewing someone outside class. (Cited in Hue, 2010).

Favorable positive conditions are required to help students develop fluency in English. Risko, Iddings and Rampulla (2009) said that if given proper condition and opportunities, linguistically diverse students beginning to develop proficiency in English can and will effectively participate in and learn from text conversation. So the need to create a conducive environment and platform for them to speak is sensed here.

Students who hold positive attitudes towards language learning are less likely to suffer from language learning anxiety and more likely to participate actively in learning tasks. "Speaking in English for two minutes can be a challenging and a scary experience for some students", professed by Jones (2007, p.15). Similarly, Dr La Prairie's research also reveals that cultural dominance, anxiety towards learning a second language, incomprehensible teacher input and a teacher dominated class, as the possible reasons for the low English proficiency. Usually, it was only the English teacher who emphasizes on language learning and other subject teachers do not tend to contribute much though the medium of instruction of their subject is also English.

Hence in this regard, conducting classroom activities that are fun, engaging and successful, for only successful activity can generate confident students. Such confidence as avowed by Jones (2007) can assist students to talk in English in real life and be prepared for real conversation. Since English is not the native language for many people across the world, embarrassment and awkwardness in speaking in English are certain. How good the students may be, still it will take time for the students to reach a comfort zone to converse spontaneously in English as they converse in their native language. Further, in a place like Bhutan, Bhutanese students are mostly tuned in to listening to the English spoken by their teachers. It is only in the classroom that they get to speak or practice the language. Once they are at home, English may not be as common. Similar views are expressed by Fisher, Frey, & Rothenberg (2008) in their book 'Procedures for Classroom Talk', where they argued

that, for many students, class time is the only time they are speaking English, because they may go home to communities where there is no need to do so. Second language (English) acquisition is limited to teachers speaking English and now television is gaining popularity in Bhutan. Though Bhutan has embarked on the journey of modernization where modern facilities are fast picking up, it may still take some years for all Bhutanese students to be well equipped with the latest gadget. Besides, it was very common to see students converse in their own dialect even in English class when they are assigned to discuss in the group. Students pretend to speak in English as they see teachers nearing them but once the teacher moved to the next group, the same routine continues. This trend is not only common in schools but even in colleges. Jones (2007) cited 'lack of vocabulary or appropriate language to express their ideas as the reason for the shift in language to their native language. "Their English isn't adequate for the ideas they want to express", (2007, p.22) and the students find it frustrating to articulate it in English. To overcome such situation as mentioned above, he suggested on familiarizing students with classroom language such as 'let's ask the teacher', 'what do you mean?' 'and so on. "If students want to improve their speaking skills, there's no substitute for pair and group work." (Jones, 2007, p.50).

As outlined by Fisher, et. al (2008) English language learners need lots of opportunities to apply their growing knowledge in order to learn English and learn in English. Their acquisition of academic language is certainly initiated through the modeling of teachers and reinforced and extended through classroom discourse. They also argued that students must use English to learn English. The need to help children speak in English to learn to speak in English is sensed here.

As mentioned in '7 Sure-fire Tips To Get Your Students Speaking So Easily, (n.d) confidence is the key, password, log in and biometric security that students need in order to succeed at speaking with ease. It is decisive to forget the errors; just be happy that they're speaking. Giving them easy topics that they know a lot about and taking them for a walk on the wild side, outside their classroom are some recommended activities.

Action Research Question

How can the teachers encourage students to speak in English during the discussion in the class and outside the classroom?

The general aim of Action Research

Action research is carried out in the course of an activity or occupation, typically in the field of education, to improve the methods and approach of those involved. Hence, this study aims to:

1. Help children enjoy and take pride in speaking English
2. Encourage students to converse in English in and out of the class.

Methodology

Methods

This research is action research attempting to help the students in class (IX) to develop some sense of comfort in speaking in English. Further, this research will focus on exploring the reasons that can accentuate speaking anxiety in the students and will implement strategies to help develop

a comfort zone to speak in English.

In a broader category, the research has adopted a mixed approach (qualitative and quantitative methodology) using a self-administered survey questionnaire for student respondents and semi-structured interview for the subject teachers as well as some students. Students' respondents read the questions themselves and mark or write answers on the questionnaire. A survey questionnaire was found to be appropriate for this study especially for students as it helped them to express their beliefs and opinion. In particular self-administrative questionnaire also allowed the student respondents to answer independently and confidentially. Subject teacher respondents were interviewed using a semi-structured interview. Similar questions were set for every respondent; however, probing questions differed. Face to face semi-structured interviews were chosen with an aim to have the highest response rates and to include verbatim in the analysis.

Finally, the observation for the entire course was reflected.

Sampling

The study was conducted at Drukgyel Higher Secondary School located in Paro. The target population is student IX-A (29 students) and subject teachers of the class IX-A.

Data Collection

The student participants were given the questionnaire by meeting them personally. They were given a period of at least two days' time to fill up the questionnaire. The questionnaire was collected through the concerned class captain by the researcher. The informed consensus was briefed to the students verbally. Prior permission was obtained from the principal and each subject teacher through the informed consent to conduct an interview as well as to record the interview. Observation and interviews with the students were also conducted.

Analysis of Baseline Data

The data collected through students' questionnaires, students' interviews and observation were analyzed to study and help the students of class IX A at Drukgyel HSS to use English as their means of communication in school. Further, the data were also analyzed to discover how the teacher can help the students with the right interventions to facilitate a comfort zone whereby they can take pride in speaking in English in and outside the classroom.

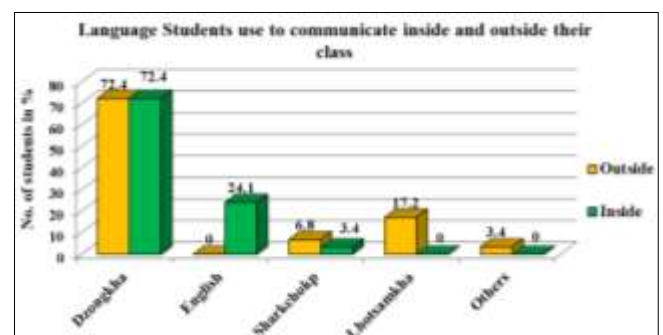


Fig 1: Language students use to communicate in school

It was evident from the data that students seldom speak in English outside their class and Dzongkha seems to dominate their communication. As reflected in Figure 1, it was as expected that the majority of the student used Dzongkha

(72.4%) to communicate with their friends either in the class or outside the class. It was also noted that about 24.1% of the students speak English inside the class while there were no students who speak English outside the class. This indicates that English is not widely spoken by the students. Almost all of them speak in Dzongkha and there are some who spoke in *Sharkchokp* or *Lhokshamkha*. Dzongkha seems to be the language of their choice in their communication in and outside the classroom.

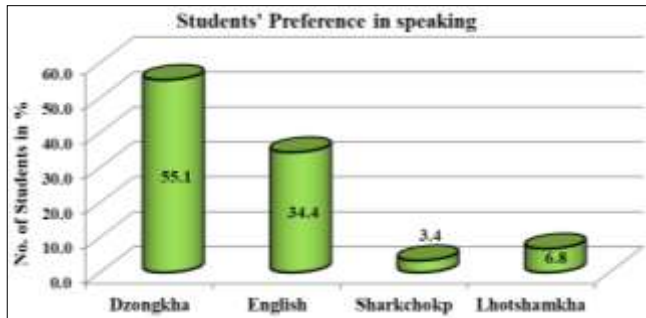


Fig 2: Students' preference in speaking (language)

Though it was quite apparent that more than 70% of the student use Dzongkha to communicate in and outside the classroom, yet it was encouraging to know that about 34.4% of them preferred to speak in English as depicted in Figure 2. However, still, 55.1% of the students prefer to speak in Dzongkha. There were about two students who preferred to converse in '*Lhotshamkha*'. This brought the gap between their usage and their preferences. If they prefer to speak in English, why don't they communicate in English? There is a mismatch between their preference and usage.

On inquiry about the hindrance to use English as their medium of communication, most students had the fear of being ridiculed especially by their friends. Hence, about 24.1% of the student felt that they were not comfortable speaking in English. About one-third of the class cited the fear of others laughing at them as the factors that contributed to their discomfort. Talking in English is viewed as skeptic and cynical. One female respondent admitted, '*Once I was outside with my friends. I talked in English with them and there was a group of girls who eyed me as if they have never seen people speaking English*'.

Another male respondent also pointed out that he was called 'proud' and 'stylish' when he tried to speak in English. It was perceptible that fear of being ridiculed by their friends was one dominant factor that obstructs them from communicating in English. '*I love to speak in English but I can't speak in English outside the classroom because I am in grade nine and my senior friends say that I am being stylish*'. One dominant factor that hinders their comfort in communicating in English stemmed from the apprehension of being labeled off as either 'stylish' or 'showing off'.

Since English is not the native language for the Bhutanese students, usually, they tease each other and try to find fault when they see their friends conversing in English. Throughout the phase of the observation, I can always sense that the students were not comfortable in communicating in English and I did see them blush or run out of words to express their thoughts. About 41.3% of the student agreed that they feel comfortable speaking English.

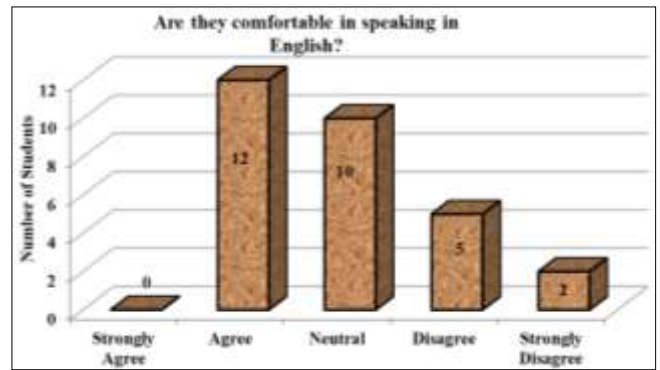


Fig 3: Students' level of comfort in speaking in English.

As surfaced out in Table 1, about 37.9% of the students felt that speaking in English is embarrassing and about 24.1% felt that it was uncomfortable to speak in English. There were about two students who mentioned that speaking in English is difficult but about five students also confessed that it was fun to converse in English.

Table 1: Speaking in and outside the classroom

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Fun	5	17.2	17.2	17.2
Easy	4	13.8	13.8	31.0
Embarrassing	11	37.9	37.9	69.0
Uncomfortable	7	24.1	24.1	93.1
Difficult	2	6.9	6.9	100.0
Total	29	100.0	100.0	

Since English is not the native language for many people across the world, embarrassment and awkwardness in speaking in English are certain. This was similar to the views expressed by Jones (2007, p.15), '*Speaking in English for two minutes can be a challenging and scary experience for some students*'. How good the students may be, still it will take time for the students to reach a comfort zone where they can converse freely in English as they converse in their native language.

As the researcher walked around, it was quite a common sight to see some teachers communicate in Dzongkha in their subjects such as science or Mathematics. One of the teachers who taught English for almost seven years alleged, '*I explain some concepts and difficult words in Dzongkha. This will make them understand better*'. Most teachers seemed least bothered about what language their students use when they are assigned to discuss in the group. During the course of the study, it was noticeable that students speak Dzongkha to hold the most group discussion. Almost all the teachers that the researcher has talked to confessed it was very challenging to make them discuss in English. The teachers were well aware that students use Dzongkha to communicate when they were assigned group work.

We wanted to confirm what the other teachers have confessed. So, we deliberately assigned them a group work. They were made to discuss the character 'Bud', who was the protagonist of the short story, 'I've Got Gloria'. They were supposed to present it after their discussion. We walked around and it was confirmed that all of them discussed using Dzongkha as a medium of communication. Though it was an English lesson, they don't even hesitate to discuss in Dzongkha. Similarly, the result from the questionnaire as showcased in Figure 4 also revealed that about 68.9% of the

students speak in Dzongkha while they were made to discuss in small groups and only 31.1% of them communicated in English.

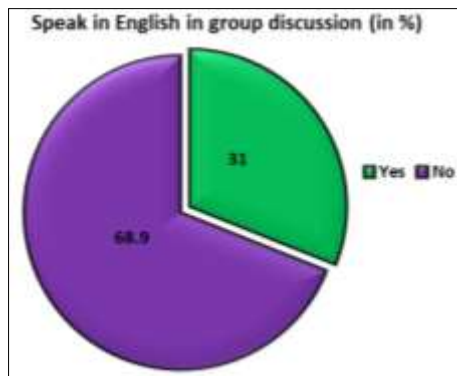


Fig 4: Do they speak in English when they do group discussions?

In the school, the task of teaching language rest upon the English teachers. We did observe that many other teachers (non-language teachers) did not focus much on helping students to learn to speak in English. This was in line with what Dr. La Prairie’s research revealed, 'usually it was only the English teacher who emphasizes on language learning and other subject teachers do not tend to contribute much though the medium of instruction of their subject is also English. This was further authenticated as one male respondent stated, 'I don't speak in English in the class especially when we do group discussion because my teachers do not scold me when I speak in Dzongkha and we can communicate well in Dzongkha'.

Fisher, Frey, & Rothenberg (2008) in their book 'Procedures for Classroom Talk', argued that, for many students, class time is the only time they are speaking English, because they may go home to communities where there is no need to do so. Further, it was confirmed that students get to practice speaking English only with their teachers. This was substantiated in Figure 5 where the majority of the students get to practice English with their teachers. Quite a handful of them practices with their friends. And it must be noted that there weren't many avenues whereby the students can learn to practice English. They rarely practice it with their friends. It was only in the classroom that they get to speak or practice the language. Once they were at home, English may not be as common.



Fig 5: Practicing English

On inquiring them about the measures that a teacher can take to help them speak in English, about 90% of the student

insisted on collecting fines if they failed to communicate in English. They all wanted to make it compulsory for them to speak in English. About three students emphasized on making them read books and about 15 students insisted on giving them the opportunity to speak in English. This was in line with what Fisher, et. al (2008) emphasized when he pointed out that English language learners need lots of opportunities to apply their growing knowledge in order to learn English and learn in English. One student insisted on the need for the teacher to ensure they are not mocked at when they speak in English.

From the analysis of the baseline data, it was confirmed that the students prefer to communicate in English, yet they have the strongest fear of discomfort and being ridiculed by their friends. It seemed that students wanted the best possible help from the teacher and they wanted the teacher to give them a platform where they can converse in English. With all these in mind, the following interventions are designed and put into practice.

Intervention

Speaking is one of the poorest skills for the students learning English claimed Zhao (n.d). Speaking needs practice and unlike other strands such as reading and writing, speaking cannot be taught or learned. It just needs practice and the first step that I can take is focus on a language learning environment that is free and light-hearted. This includes changing the classroom seating arrangement from rows and lines to semi-circle or groups. The students were seated in the traditional setting where they were facing the teachers in lines. I changed the seating arrangement and made the students sit in a semi-circle where they can see each other. This could help them feel more comfortable.

The students were asked to sign on the promises (below) that we have prepared. They were made to copy the promises on the first page of their English notebook and one copy is displayed in the classroom. With a common understanding, the teacher and the students went through the promises and signed on it, thus confirming that they would take the initiative to speak in English.

My Promises

- I promise to try to speak in English as much as possible.
- I promise not to be afraid of making mistakes.
- I promise not to speak any Dzongkha.
- I promise to use English to communicate.
- I promise to ask questions when I do not understand.
- I promise to try to have fun!

(These promises were revisited time and again)

Next, the teacher taught them some common useful classroom English. The students should thoroughly practice using these expressions. It is essential that you explain that these expressions are not just for use with the teacher, but for use with each other as well. Some examples of useful classroom English are:

Expressing a lack of understanding or clarification

- What do you mean by...?
- Could you say that again?
- Could you be more specific?
- I am not quite sure...
- Sorry, I didn't get your point.
- Let me explain...

Expressing agreement/disagreement

- I think....
- As far as I am concerned...
- In my opinion...
- I agree with this point...
- This is absolutely right...
- I have my own thoughts on this.
- I am afraid, I can't agree on this
- I am of the same view
- That's exactly what I thought.
- I agree with you but...

Talk Time

The teacher also started every class with a free conversation. They absolutely must not speak any other dialect during this time. Possible topics could be narrating what they did yesterday, their favorite TV show or book they have read, or any topics that students love to talk about. Free conversation warms the students up, and it gives them the sense that English can be used for real communication. The students are made to sit with their group friends and for about five minutes, they would be engaged in sharing their thoughts with their friends. They can share anything but in English.

Speaking Marathon

Instruction for Speaking marathon: Work with a partner. You can talk about anything you like with your partner, but you can't stop talking! If you stop for more than 3 seconds, your team is out! Also, if you speak any Dzongkha, your team is out! Which team can keep talking the longest?!

The teacher told the students that they could say anything when they can't think of what to say, but they must fill in the silence. They can say "umm...", "Let's see...", "chicken", "kitchen", and so on. During this activity, the teacher acted as a "policeman" and went from group to group counting off three seconds and noting when a group has spoken Dzongkha or has stopped for more than three seconds. However, it's best if you don't tell a group when they are out so that everyone continues speaking for as long as possible

Be enthusiastic about your students speaking only English.

At times we must be more of a coach than a teacher to motivate our students. Until we have begun to modify their behavior, we will have to constantly remind them not to lapse into the local dialect. We must be continually aware of what is going on in all areas of the classroom monitoring all student output. We must not give up and we need to remember that change will not come overnight, but slowly the students will respond to our enthusiasm.

Post Data Analysis

With about three weeks of intervention, the following data was collected from the students. With a special focus on the needs of the students, all the strategies mentioned under the intervention were carried out. The result seemed positive. With strong emphasis laid on communicating in English by the teacher, the classes began with their promises wherein they were to speak in English. The students seemed to be enthusiastic about their effort and it was quite encouraging to see students speak in English both inside and outside the class. Even in the class, I could see the students develop

Confidence in speaking in English with the teachers and among their friends. This was reflected in figure 6. About 34.4% of the students said they conversed in English outside the classroom and about 65.5% reported to be communicating in English inside the classroom. The number of students who communicated in Dzongkha inside the classroom is 34.4% and outside the classroom is 55.5%.

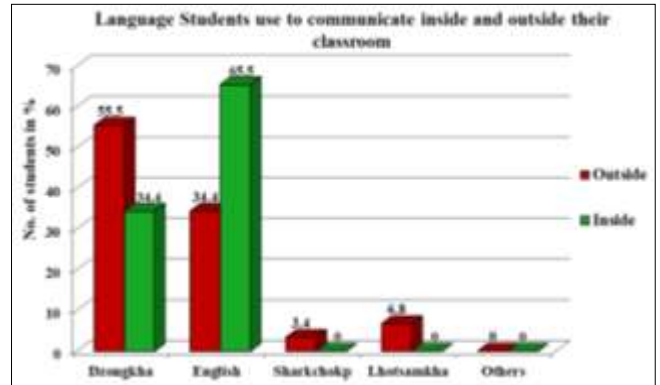


Fig 6: Communication inside and outside the classroom

With some emphasis and practices given in speaking in English, the students seemed to be motivated to converse in English. About 13.7% (Figure 7) of the students strongly agrees they are comfortable speaking in English while 62% agreed they were comfortable too. Only about 3.4% still disagree and felt they were not comfortable to speak in English.

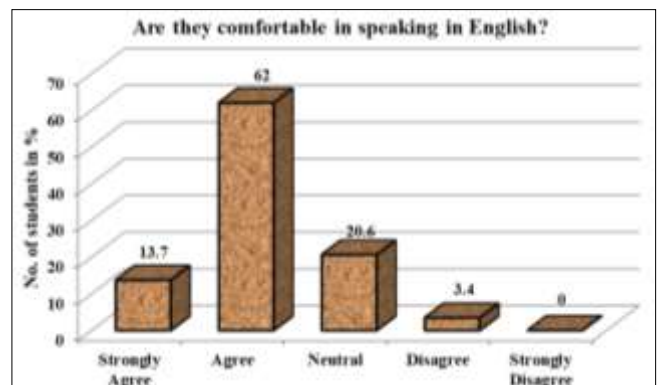


Fig 7: Students level of comfort in communicating in English

With ample opportunities provided to them, the students took a positive turn in using English to communicate not only with the teachers but also with their friends. The students admitted that their level of discomfort has reduced, and they no longer felt embarrassed to communicate in English. As I dealt and taught them, I could sense that the students tried their best to communicate in English with much ease. A female respondent in her interview mentioned, 'the morning talk time exercise really helped me to speak in English without feeling shy. I feel comfortable now and it is fun'. Similarly, as outlined in Figure 8, 51.7% of the students take it as fun to communicate in English while 24.1% felt it was even easy to do so. Still, there were about 13.7% who felt it was embarrassing to communicate in English. About 6.6% of the students were still not comfortable speaking in English and one student took communicating in English as a difficult task.

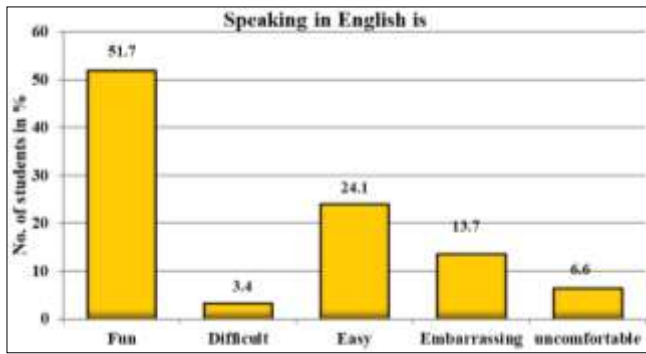


Fig 8: What the students think of speaking in English

With the development of ease and comfort, it was encouraging to see that students then communicated in English when they are assigned to do group work. As the teacher walks around, I could see that most of them communicated in English and they even asked questions to the teacher not in their local language but in English. Similarly, 72.4% of the students reported that they use English to converse with their friends when they do group work. This was a huge leap from what they have reported in baseline data where only 31% of the student reported they converse in English when they are involved in group discussion.

Result and Discussion

As unearthed in the multiple kinds of literature, the students did feel the anxiety to speak in English especially when they were not given the right prospect to practice speaking in the desired language. A strong and supportive learning environment plays a vital role in helping students to be more willing to speak in the targeted language. Starting from the change of classroom setting to intended activities and display of vocabulary chart, there was a positive difference. There was a visible increase in the percentage of students who speak in English.

25.8%. The morning talk time and promises that they took too aided in helping students to speak in the desired language. The teacher conducting research personally did create awareness in the morning assembly on the importance of speaking in English to learn English and even pleaded all the students not to make fun of each other as they learn to speak in English. This could reduce the skepticism and cynicism tagged with the use of English. The teacher (researcher) tried to speak in English whenever I meet my students and as and when the students shift to speaking Dzongkha, the teacher pointed to the promises that are displayed on the classroom walls. The students were also made to wear ‘Speak English’ tag when they don’t converse in English. All these activities enhanced the use of English and it was well depicted in figure 10 that there was an increase in students who said they converse in English from 31% in the baseline data to about 72.4% in the post data.

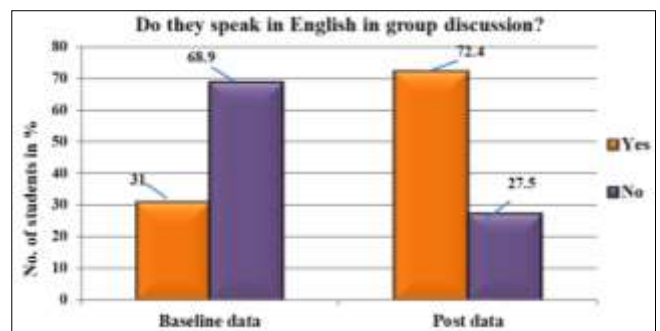


Fig 10: Do they communicate in English in group discussions?

Jones (2007) cited ‘lack of vocabulary or appropriate language to express their ideas as the reason for the shift in language to their native language. “Their English isn’t adequate for the ideas they want to express”, (2007, p.22) and the students find it frustrating to articulate it in English. To overcome such a situation as mentioned above, some common classroom vocabularies were displayed on the classroom walls and the students were made to refer to it as and when they run short of words. The speaking marathon that was conducted twice and indicated that students can talk longer and with ease if they are provided with the right word choice to communicate. The speaking marathon that was conducted in the second week of the research period left the winning team to speak for only 4 minutes. However, the speaking marathon conducted in the last week of the research period left the winning team to prolong their conversation for about 9 minutes. This brought an increase of about 5 minute’s prolonged conversation. Further as illustrated in Figure 11, about 13.7% of the students strongly affirmed that they were strongly comfortable in speaking in English while 62% proclaimed they are comfortable too. There were no students who strongly agree that they were comfortable in speaking English in the baseline data. Instead, about 24% of the students mentioned they were uncomfortable to converse in English in the beginning. On the other hand, only 41% of the student was comfortable to speak in English in the baseline data and the percentage had increased to about 75% in the post data. This was a significant change.

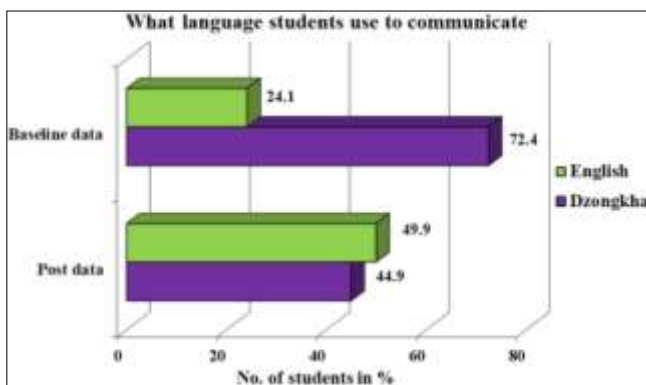


Fig 9: Do students speak in English?

The data in Figure 9 showed that there was an increase in the number of students who communicated in English. Consequently, there was a reduction in the number of students who spoke in Dzongkha. There were only about 24.1% of students who communicated in English before the intervention and the number had increased to about 49.9 % after the interventions. This brought about an increase of

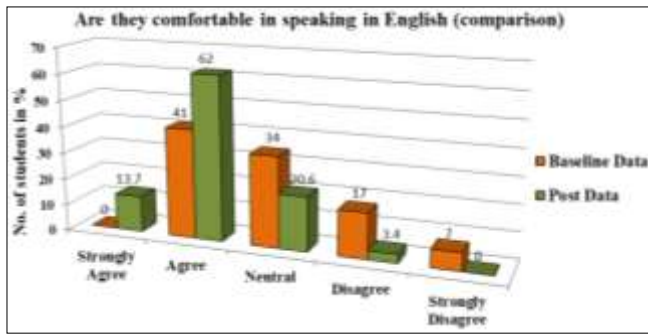


Fig 11: Level of comfort in speaking in English

While in an informal conversation with other colleagues in the school, it was an encouraging sight to know that the students tried to speak in English. Though the intervention time was very minimal, yet there was some visible progress. The difference in the usage of English before the interventions and after the interventions clearly indicated the success and effectiveness of the activities. The students needed someone to push them and help them to converse in English. Once their fear of making a mistake and being ridiculed is removed, they just embarked on the journey and learned.

Conclusion

This action research paper attempted to explore and examine the reasons why students are reluctant to converse in English inside and outside their classrooms. Further, to help students enhance their usage of English in their daily conversation through the incorporation of intervention strategies such as creating a conducive environment, talk time and speaking marathon. English, though widely used in the schools, students still feel the anxiety to speak in it. As the second language, it takes great effort and time for the learners to develop comfort in speaking that language. Lack of pronunciation and confidence, lack of appropriate vocabulary, lack of avenue to practice speaking in English and above all their fear of being ridiculed or being labeled off as proud or stylish by their friends hindered their interest in communicating in English. It was quite normal for the Bhutanese students especially those who are from the rural side to feel atypical or unusual when they see their friends speak in English.

The data was collected through questionnaires, observation and interviews. The study concluded that English, though is the medium of instruction in the school, is not much spoken by the students unless when they converse with the teachers. Though many students preferred to speak in English, yet their fear of being ridiculed refrain from speaking in English. Given the right prospect of guidance and platform, there was progress in the usage of English in their daily communication by the students. The students began to take pride and have fun speaking in English inside and outside the classroom.

The study is not without limitations. Owing to six weeks allocated for the research and only three weeks for the intervention, the time was inadequate for the implementation of the interventions. Nothing much can be done in a short duration of about two weeks.

Therefore, it recommends conducting action research on helping students speak in English over a longer period of time can help get a better result.

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