

Impact of Colloquial Discourse on Students' English Speaking Skills

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Abstract

This paper explores the impact of colloquial discourse on students' speaking skill in English at the tertiary level in Bangladesh. The study was mixed in nature that means both qualitative and quantitative data was collected from sixty university level students from Bangladesh. Seven teachers from public university were considered as sample for the study. The role of the university is to create its product suitable for the international job market where the quality language skill (international language) for the international community is undoubtedly the most important requirement. In the universities, the students get enough free time to spend with their friends in informal discussion where they have the opportunity to make their conversation in English. Semi-structured interview questionnaire and FGD questionnaire were used to collect information about the nature and role of the colloquial discourse on students' speaking skill development from the students' and from the teachers. Data was analyzed thematically using MS excel and MS word software. Narrative description and statistical presentation of data were followed. This small scale study explores some positive results of colloquial discourse on students' speaking skill development and puts forward some suggestions to regularize this practice as a good habit among all the students.

Keywords: Colloquial discourse, English speaking skills, Concomitant curriculum.

Introduction

Modern world is based on internet where people from different corner of the world are interconnected and as an international language English is needed to maintain communication among the people of the world (Boonkit, 2010). Bailey (2005) and Goh (2007) stated the ways to support the learners in developing their speaking skills and they affirmed that by developing the teaching-learning materials, techniques, use of supporting materials and language practices are important. Speaking is the most significant language skill that help to make a most effective and productive communication with different stakes and English speaking skill helps the users to march ahead and to attain their targeted goal with significant outcomes from any field they join (Osborn, Osborn & Osborn 2008). Students in this modern era, who wants to get a prestigious position in the global job market, s/he must have excellent skills in English language especially in the speaking skill. For the students in the non-native English speaking countries, it should be developed through practice and practice. Through colloquial discourse students can practice English freely without any complexity and fear. He (2003) stated that discourse is the simplest way to practice oral & written communication in a language. Napier (2009) stated that discourse deals with spoken and written form of a language but it largely focuses on the various types of communication in different social contexts. It offers the scope of practice a language in its spoken and written form. But from the previous research it is found that, the scenario of practicing English outside of the classroom in the non-native

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English speaking countries is very poor where English is being used as a foreign language even they get little opportunity to communicate the native speakers as well as to visit the foreigners (Zhang, 2009). Researchers detailed that, if it is possible to involve the non-native English language learners in regular practice of English speaking then their capability over the skill should be enhanced (Tam, 1997). Another researcher found that, students shows their lethargy in using English in their informal discussion or colloquial discourse because of fear and lack of confidence over the language as well as noncooperation from their near environment. Patil (2008) pointed out that it is must to gear up students' confidence and to remove fare of the students about English speaking skills.

The learners of the non-native English speaking countries where English has been used as a foreign language didn't use English in the real situations means in their informal communication that creates confidence gap among the learners to use proper English in their communication that leads them to hide themselves from the fluent and perfect English speakers (Oradee, 2012). According to Shumin (2002), if the students do not get any contrast to the supportive environment to practice English in their oral communication then their development both in language and culture becomes poor. Therefore, Hedge (2008) stated that, students English speaking skills should be develop through open informal discussion with their near and dear peoples and by participating different programmes where there are the scopes to use the English language. Whatever the ways is the students should spend proper time in practicing English speaking. Hence, colloquial discourse should be a very good platform for the learners of non-native English speaking countries to develop their speaking through informal practicing of English. In 2017, Jalalpour and Tabrizi (cites by Nofalli, 2012), in their research described colloquialism as an informal mode of language use in communication, through words, phrases or so many other forms of language. Jalalpour and Tabrizi (2017) stated that, colloquial language is generally known as informal language which indicates a range of language generally used in everyday conversation or other informal communication. He also avowed that, colloquial discourse is a form a language use which is not formal in nature but the speakers literally use it for their day-to-day communication or conversation, specially in stress and rules free different social context which enhance their confidence and interest of speaking, this social contextual conversation is also known as discourse (Machin, 2012; Wodak, 2009). Colloquial language is more generally practiced in informal settings for speaking and writing. People's can practice speaking at their near environment, like at home, relaxation with friends and workplace or out of any formal context, where they feel free to communicate with each-others, enhance their ability of speaking, although at times they use some unexpected words as slangs (Schmidt 1990).

According to Curtain and Dahlberg (2004), proficiency of speaking in English language depends on students practice and time they spent on it. Both comfortable environmental flexibility and informal or nonacademic activities can involve the learners of practicing English speaking with confidence (Ara, 2009). According to Allan Glatthorn and Jerry Jailall (Hunkins, 2018) there are seven types of curriculum being practiced in the educational institution to develop students' ability in any

particular items or contents. Recommended, taught, assessed, hidden, phantom, concomitant, null curriculum are very important for complete learning of the students. Where, phantom curriculum offers the learners to learn from different print/electronic media and concomitant curriculum offers opportunity to learn from home environment and from friends or community groups. Therefore, effective facilitation through trained facilitator is a must for the learners. Competent English language teachers should be appointed to develop the students' English speaking skills through motivation and by using correct English (Nel and Muller, 2010; Richards, 2010).

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The main purpose of this study is to look into the impact of colloquial discourse on students' English speaking skills. It is predictable that as English is not the first or second language for the people of Bangladesh therefore if the students of the non-native English speaking countries like Bangladesh develop their habit to use English in their regular formal or informal communication then their control over English speaking should be enhanced positively. Therefore it is very urgent to investigate actually what is happening in the real ground? The following research questions were designed to satisfy the main purpose of the study. Therefore, the research questions are-

- What are the common practices of language used by the students in their communication?
- In what ways the colloquial discourse could enhance the English speaking skills of the students?

Rational and Significance of the Study

English is an international language and to survive in the 21st century it is essential to learn and use English properly. It is very important for the people of the non-native English speaking countries to endow with extra efforts in learning English. Skills in English language can be developed through multiple ways. In every language basically there are four skills those are the listening skills, speaking skills, reading skills and writing skills. Among them speaking and writing are the productive skills. In this research emphasis gives on speaking skills of the students. The skills of the students are being considered here because they are working as the change agent of the country. In this research the speaking skills of the tertiary level (university level) students were considered. It is believed that the role of the university is to produce such a generation or manpower those who will able to lead or survive in any place of the universe. Actually if they want to do so then they must have the capacity to communicate with the international community where English is must. If the students can communicate with others with good English then definitely they will make their success easily. Therefore correct speaking is must to get a prestigious position in the society and in the global village. Speaking can be developed through different ways. In this study the colloquial discourse has been considered for developing students' English speaking skills because this is the informal way to practice of speaking in English. The students of non-native English speaking countries have to spend most of their time outside of the classroom. In this situation if they can use English for their

communication with others even in their ‘Adda’ (time spent with friends and others with informal discussion) as well as in their informal discussions then definitely through practice they may enhance their skills in English speaking. In this study the situation of using language of the students in their informal communication was investigated and supporting recommendations were made for the students that may help them in developing their speaking skills in English. Through regular English speaking practice the students can take them in a standstill from where they will able to establish themselves as the right member of the global village of this 21st century.

Methodology

Mixed method research approach was used in this study. Data was collected from sixty (60) students from a public university in Bangladesh. The students were selected randomly. Semi-structured interview questionnaire and focus group discussion (FGD) were used as instruments of the study. Data was collected from the students through semi-structured interview questionnaire. Seven (07) public university teachers were selected purposively. FGD was applied over the teachers. Collected data were analyzed both thematically and statistically. Research design of the study was as follows:

Participants	Number of respondents	Sampling Technique	Tools for data collection	Data analysis technique
Student (University level)	60 students (30 from each university)	Random	Semi Structured interview questionnaire	Both narrative and statistical analysis
Teacher	7 (those who are young and at least 1 year teaching experience)	Purposive	Focus group discussion (FGD)	Qualitative (Theme based)

Analysis and Findings

1. Students Perspective

1.1. Students’ involvement in colloquial discourse analysis:

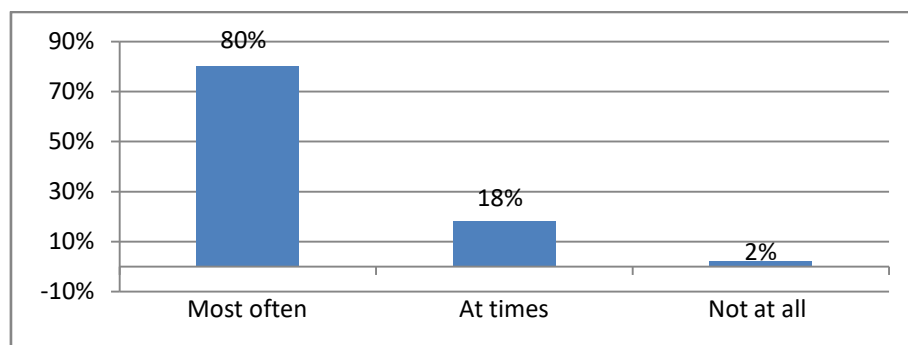


Fig 1: Percentage of time spent by the students in colloquial discourse analysis

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University level students were interviewed through semi structured interview questionnaire. Data was collected about how often the students spent their time in colloquial discourse. Total 60 students were interviewed. According to the findings 80% of the respondents spent their time most often in colloquial discourse. Whereas, 18% of the respondents spent time at times in colloquial discourse and 2% respondents never spent their time in colloquial discourse.

The students who spent most of their time (80%) in colloquial discourse analysis in their campus or outside of their campus beyond their class time because they have enough free time to enjoy with their friends and others. After class hour they spend their time by playing, gossiping, visiting nearby markets and restaurants, watching movies and at times they used to visit some historical or tourist areas as well as they enjoyed boating. They think spent time with friends and others like seniors and juniors is very helpful to develop their thoughts and mental maturity, confidence, helps to know up-to-date information, to know the culture of the people from the different corner of the universe. They also added that, colloquial discourse helps to modify their behavior and values as well as it helps in socialization. They think spent time with in a group or in peer is better than single reading of a novel or any books. 18% of the respondents spent at time in colloquial discourse because they have to carry out some other responsibilities besides their study. Some of them have to maintain their own cost by themselves as a result they did not get enough time to spend in Adda because after the university hour they get engaged with private tuition and other part time job. Semester system keeps them busy. As they did not get enough time to study at home hence after class they spent their time in the seminar or library for studying. They think it's better to spent time by studding rather than gossiping with friends. Hence, at times they spend their time with friends through colloquial discourse. Only 2% among the respondent never spent their time with anybody in colloquial discourse. They only come to the university and after the class they spent their time at the library and after university hour they go back to their home. They don't feel any interest to spent time with friends in adda. Some of them have some other issue like religious issue or family issue. According to one of the respondents, some of their friends are too much introvert and they feel shy or uneasy to talk in any session of open discussion or adda even they like to move alone. The overall scenario is positive because 80% of the students are involved in colloquial discourse.

1.2. Scenario of using language as their medium of communication (speaking) during colloquial discourse:

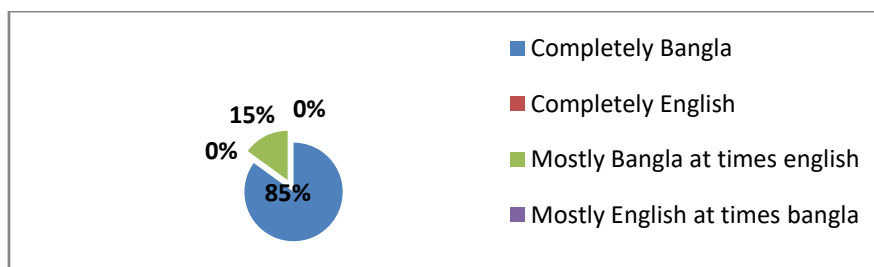


Fig 2: Percentage of the language use in the informal communication of the students.

Data was collected from the respondents to know about the medium of their communication (speaking) in their informal or colloquial discourse. According to the 85% of the respondents they use complete Bangla in their informal communication (speaking) and 15% of them use mostly Bangla but at times they use English. The result for completely English and mostly English at times Bangla was found 0%. When the students sit together and discuss informally among themselves they mostly carry out in Bangla. In Bangladesh, Bangla is the mother tongue where English is being used as a foreign language. The people are very much habituated to speak Bangla to maintain their personal communication. They are not used to practice English in their regular conversation. They know English is important for higher studies, to get a good job, to meet the foreigners, to visit in the international communities and to lead a prestigious life in the society. Despite of the huge importance of speaking in English the students' used to speak in Bangla because of the some socio-cultural phenomenon. It is not only because of their poor proficiency over the language but also the environment has an adverse issue where they live in.

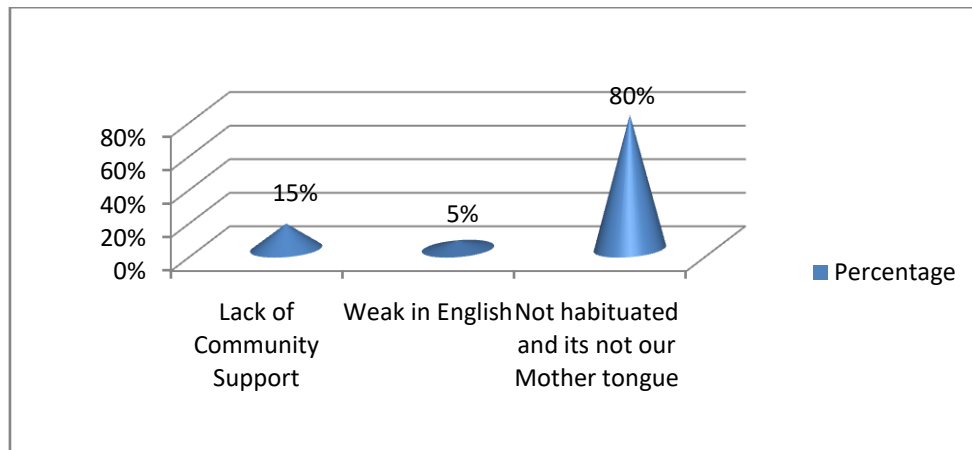


Fig 3: Reasons behinds using Bangla by the students in their informal conversation

It is true that, English is not their mother tongue and they are not as good in English as equal to the native English speakers. From the study it was found that 80% of the students think that they are weak in English speaking because of insufficient practice. As Bangla is their mother tongue and they are not habituated to speak in English therefore they did not use English in their regular informal communication. Beyond this, there are some other reasons like 15% of the respondents think they did not get proper environmental support to use English in their informal communication. Whenever they use to speak in English then the people of their surrounding did not take them positively. Peoples' thoughts about the English speakers whom mother tongue are Bangla are very strange. They think they are just performing their dexterity and insulting others. In that case, they gets discourage and continue in Bangla instead of English. The same scenario found when they discuss or spent their time in 'Adda' with their friends. If someone want to start in English then others discourage them and leads to be stopped. Even, all but a few students get little scope to practice speaking English at their home. In the classroom although the syllabus is

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in English but the mode of delivering lecture of the teachers are not completely in English and there is no obligation for the learners to speak in English in their informal classroom talk. The only obligation is to speak in English during any formal presentation or structured discussion. But this scenario is not same for all the departments. According to the students, they are lacking behind due to proper environmental support to use English in their informal communication. That keeps them apart from the fluent or expert English speakers and they feel fear to work with foreigners. They shared that when they get contact to the fluent English speakers it motivate or encourage them to use English in their regular conversation.

Beyond this 5% among the respondent they think that our students did not use English in their communication because of their weakness in English. They think if they do not use proper English then s/he might be insulted or mocked by anybody. Considering these situations our students avoid speaking in English. But they feel to practice English speaking and they know due to inappropriate practice keeps themselves backward. When they try to speak with their friends, they mocked by them if s/he pronounce anything wrong.

1.3: Students interest towards English speaking in their informal discussion or colloquial discourse

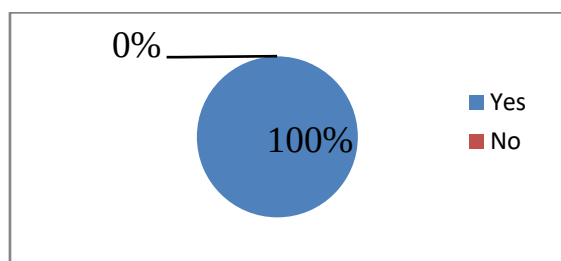


Fig 4: Students interest towards English speaking in their colloquial discourse

Students are highly interested to use English in their informal speaking or colloquial discourse analysis. 100% of the respondents were in favor of using English in their informal or colloquial discourse analysis. The respondents are very much concern about their practice in English speaking. They believed that, 'No Practice, No Development'. According to the respondents, we eat food to survive and if we want to survive in the 21st century then we must know perfect English. They discuss about many things in their informal discussion like: the contemporary issue, classroom activities, campus politics and culture, local and international culture, family issues, health issues, games & sports, national politics, dress up and fashion, future plan etc. They believed that, If they can practice their regular informal communication with simple English then definitely they will do better in English speaking that will help them to get a good job or to get higher education or to lead a prestigious life. Therefore they expect: Supportive environment to practice English speaking, positive motivation from the teachers, friend and family members, cooperation and understanding among the fellow groups, the availability of the supportive materials like ICT mediated materials. In the classroom they expect supporting teaching-learning materials and practical works to develop their speaking and removing their shyness. Teachers inspired them to learn from different sources but consistent

monitoring and feedback is a problem over there. Tertiary level students have positive attitude towards English speaking, for that reason creating positive environment can help them to form their habit of English speaking in their informal discussion or colloquial discourse analysis.

2. Teacher's perception about English speaking skills of the students

2.1. Speaking ability of the students:

According to the teachers the quality of speaking of most of the learners in English is very poor. Most of them have no clear idea about the basic grammatical rules. Whenever they asked for the presentation they feel shy and nervous. They make mistakes in sentence formation and at times they pronounce the word with wrong accent. Many of them did not know how to form a right sentence or how a phenomenon can be explained to others etc. One of the teachers said,

“When students are asked for presentation in English then found most of them very weak in speaking. Many of them are unable to speak following the right grammatical form. They try to speak in English but due to their weakness in English they could not communicate properly even at times the audiences couldn't understand them”

The teachers also mentioned that, as they are weak in speaking they are weak in writing also. All of respondents have the same opinion that due to proper practice our students are getting behind on English specially in speaking. Teachers believe that, if they learn from different sources, like TV, You tube, online news, seniors, parents etc. then they will do better.

2.2. Environmental Suitability:

In Bangladesh English is not an official language. English is being treated as a foreign language in Bangladesh. As English is not the mother tongue of the student hence they don't get used to English. Even the students do not get any supportive environment to use English in their conversation. This is true with the friends, family members and others. That means our circumstances never support English. Even we don't like to acknowledge them. One of the respondents said,

“when I was a 3rd year student, one of my friends used to speak in English and we used to insult him in spite of inspiring”

Our behavior and outlook creates unfavorable environment for our learners to speak in English. They emphasizes on the opportunity of suitable environment for the learners to develop their speaking.

2.3. Classroom speaking

According to the respondents, Classroom is considered as a nursery. Students should get necessary support and motivation from the classroom. In the classroom the teachers generally deliver their lecture using both Bangla and English. They simply deliver their lecture and ended up the class. But the level of motivation from the teachers for the students is very poor. One of the respondents said,

“Students may weak in English speaking but the teachers should conduct the class completely in English and must have to use correct English with right pronunciation. They should give proper motivation to the learners. He added, students may make mistakes but they should not be discouraged. Students

should be motivated by, don't think negative, think positive, talk positive and work positive"

The function of the classroom should not be confined within the four walls rather it will spread its seeds throughout the world to fulfill their quest. So the role of the teachers in the classroom is very vital to form the habit of the students in English speaking.

3. Summary of the findings

The students are highly interested to practice English speaking in their informal or colloquial discourse and they rightly feels the importance of it, but due to proper support and habit they can't do it. They are habituated in speaking in their mother tongue from their childhood; therefore they do not feel comfortable to speak in English in their informal communication. They feel shy to speak in English with others. The environments fails to create confidence among the students by providing motivation rather it discourages many of our students by mocking or other funny behavioral expression in using English. The families are not habituated to speak in English with their children at home. On the other hands, in this level, without any emergencies, teachers do not communicate with the parents. Teachers' role is important to raise English speaking habit among the learners. But the scenario is not as good as expected. They advised their students to use English but no monitoring or having only little supervision on it. From classroom, the students get little motivational speech to use English in their informal communication. Classroom talk is mostly in Bangla in many departments where only a few departments maintain to use complete English in their classroom communication and the students also have to follow the instruction therefore they do better in the real job field whereas others have to struggle a lot to develop their English skill to manage a good job and to lead a prestigious life.

Discussions and Recommendations

The findings of the study are very much similar with the result of some previous research. The findings revealed that, the more the learners will practice English speaking the more they will develop their skill over the language. The students who gets proper facilities in using English in their conversation they are doing better in their communication. Their development takes them to their expected destination and gives them a good platform to communicate swiftly with others. Zaremba (2006); and Osborn, Osborn & Osborn (2008) found almost the similar result in their study.

Students spent a lot of time in informal discussion or communication with their friends and others during their free time but the habit of using English in their communication is very rear as they are the non-native English speakers. They know practice takes them in a better position to use correct English but they can't do that as they are not habituated. They spent their time with their native non-English speakers therefore they don't badly feel the importance of English speaking in their informal or colloquial discussion. The similar findings has also found in the research conducted by He (2003) and Napier and Zhang (2009). Shumen (2002) and Oradee (2012) also found the similar findings.

Regular practice of speaking English may develop the proficiency of the learners in English speaking and it develops their confidence as well as helps them to remove their fear/hesitation towards English language. Supportive environment is highly expected for the non-native English speakers to practice English in their informal discussion or colloquial discourse. A good physical environmental support is enough for the students to practice English speaking in their daily talk even to develop their mental strength. Tam (1887), Dahlberg (2004) and Patil (2008) stated almost the similar findings in their respective research.

Students feel uneasy to use English in their informal communication because of their poor command over English language. They are poor in grammatical rules and also poor in English vocabulary. They have little scope to use English in their daily life and they hardly get contact to the fluent English speakers. If they get company with the sound English speakers they definitely develop their skill over the language and specially in speaking. Regular practice helps them to overcome their mistakes and will develop their grammatical strength. Sumin (2002), Hudge (2008) and Oradee (2012) stated the similar findings for the non-native English speakers in developing their English speaking skill.

During teaching language to the students, teachers must encourage the learners to practice speaking outside of classroom and should learn from different print or electric media. This type of practices will enhance their learning. Hunkins and Ornstein (2018) recommended the similar issue for learning-teaching of the learners. English teachers can play a very important role in developing students' skills on English speaking. Classroom is considered as like as a nursery so proper care and guideline can develop the proficiency and confidence of the learners over the language. Classroom is not only for the academic development of the students rather it creates a supportive platform to discover the ways to conquer the world. Nel and Muller, 2010; Richards, 2010 conducted their research where they also emphasized on the quality of the teachers and their role in the classroom to motivate the learners to develop their English speaking skills.

Recommendations

The study found that lack of proper practice is the main reason of learners weakness in English speaking. We are not habituated in English language and our environment is not suitable to use English in our daily communication especially in our informal communication or Adda. However, some recommendations were made by the students and the teachers to develop students' English speaking through colloquial discourse based on the findings of the research those are of significant meaning:

- Students should be encouraged to use English in their informal or colloquial discourse that means 'English in Adda' to develop their speaking skills and to raise their confidence over the language with correct pronunciation and accent. Within a group the slow/weak learners will be benefitted and others will be developed. Beyond this, teachers should motivate the students by clearing the real fact of the job markets and the international community.
- Students should avoid their inertia in English speaking. One of the teachers said,

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“Inertia is a very important issue. If it is possible to breakdown their inertia then everything will be fine. This is only possible through regular practice. Bring them in a platform of practicing English speaking definitely they will be benefited”

To breakdown the inertia teachers suggested to involve the students in open discussion with contemporary issues in the class. It helps to abolish the shyness and inertia and will develop their confidence over English speaking.

- To be good speaker students must be a good listener and a good reader also. To increase the capacity, the respondents are suggested to read English novel, books, English dailies and other English documents in a regular basis. Some of them emphasized more on reading.

Some other respondents gave emphasis on listening for good speaking. But both of the respondents were in a similar opinion that through reading and listening the students' will develop their confidence in speaking.

- ICT based advance technologies like Smart phone, Smart watch, Tab, Hello English or other device during informal discussion or colloquial discourse should be used to check pronunciation and vocabulary.
- Parents should encourage their child's to use English at home and outside of home with their friends and others. Religious limitations should make flexible for them.
- Seminar and workshop regarding 'Importance of English speaking' and 'Ways of developing English speaking skill' should be arranged for the learners.
- Students should encourage speaking in English while walking with friends and by themselves whatever comes in their mind. At times they may speak standing in front of the mirror and can record their voice to assess the quality of speaking.
- Teachers should be trained about the use of concomitant or phantom curriculum to encourage our foreign language.

Conclusion

The development of English speaking of the non-native English speakers where English is being used as a foreign language is largely depends on practice. It is important to motivate the students to use English in their regular informal discussion to develop their skills over the language. Use of English in the colloquial discourse will definitely takes the students in the nexus of success. The major elements consists of classroom environment, learners interest and involvement, teachers cooperation, parents involvements and support, use of ICT mediated materials, community support and other stakes, all together will enhance the process of colloquial discourse. The generalization of the findings of this research is subject to certain limitations that the sample was very small and the respondents were selected from the two public universities. As since not much research has been done regarding this issue before, therefore it will help the educationist and the researchers to conduct further research based on the findings of this study. Although the issue is very simple but it will definitely be considered as very important for the learners of the non-native English speaking countries to develop their English speaking skills through informal practice.

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