University of Zabol

Faculty of Humanities

Department of English Language and Literature

M.A. Thesis

Submitted to the English Department of the Faculty of Literature and Humanities,
University of Zabol, in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the M.A Degree
in Teaching English as a Foreign Language

**The Effects of Symmetrical and Asymmetrical Scaffolding on EFL
Learners' Speaking Ability: Based on Pushed Output Hypothesis**

Supervisors:

Dr. Habibollah Mashhady
Dr. Faride Okati

Advisor:

Nasser Fallah

By:

Parviz Ghasedi

Spring, 2017

ABSTRACT

One of the main aims of propounding sociocultural theory and pushed output hypothesis was the development of learners' oral outputs. Accordingly, the current study was designed to shed more light on the effects of scaffolding and pushed output on EFL learners' speaking fluency, accuracy, and complexity. Meanwhile, a comparison was made between the effects of symmetrical and asymmetrical pushed output on speaking sub-skills. Besides, the effects of gender as a determining factor in speech development were studied. To this end, 65 (39 females and 26 males) upper-intermediate EFL learners were selected from among a pool of 150 based on the results of Oxford Placement Test (OPT). Then, they were assigned to five groups, control group, symmetrical scaffolding group, asymmetrical scaffolding group, symmetrically pushed group, and asymmetrically pushed group. A public version of IELTS speaking test (version 2) was held to measure learners' entrance behavior. A week later, the treatment was started. The experimental and control groups during 15 sessions, twice a week for about 45 minutes each session, covered 7 lessons of interchange 2. The control group received placebo, while two main tasks were used in the treatment of experimental groups, retelling and decision making. Symmetrical and asymmetrical groups were supposed to cooperate and complete the tasks collaboratively. Not only the members of symmetrical and asymmetrical pushed groups were asked to do the task collaboratively but also they were supposed to push each other to produce more coherent and precise speech. At the end of the treatments, an IELTS speaking test was used as post-test. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and coded for statistical analyses. The results of series of Independent Samples t-test revealed that symmetrical and asymmetrical scaffolding had significant effects on speaking complexity and fluency. However, their impacts on accuracy were not significant. On the other hand, MANOVA indicated that pushed output could boost the production of accurate, precise, and appropriate utterances. However, it did not lead to the production of more fluent ones. Besides, the results of a series of Independent Samples t-test supported the superiority of asymmetrically pushed output over symmetrically one, concerning speech accuracy and complexity. Moreover, the results of Independent Samples t-test revealed that gender is not a determining factor in speech development. The research findings and pedagogical implications are discussed in-depth at the end of the study.

Key words: speaking, scaffolding, symmetrical, asymmetrical, pushed output,