

Conference Paper

Investigating the Effects of Students' Speaking Question-Generation on Self-efficacy and Anxiety in the EFL Classroom

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Abstract

Student question-generation (SQG) has been recognized as a helpful activity in promoting students' learning motivation, increasing their interests and enhancing their achievement in numerous studies. This research was to investigate students' attitudes and perspectives toward SQG and whether student-generated open-ended questions as a summative test for students' speaking test would affect their speaking and listening self-efficacy and anxiety. Two classes of intermediate-level sophomores from the College of Management participated in this quasi-experimental research and were assigned randomly to be the experimental group and the control group. Data were collected from 164 recorded questions, a questionnaire investigating students' viewpoints and attitudes toward Students' Speaking Question-Generation and three scales including Listening Skills Self-Efficacy Scale (LSS), Speaking Skills Self-Efficacy Scale (SSS), and Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). Descriptive statistics and ANCOVA was used to analyze the data. The results show students' positive attitudes toward SQG, but SQG has no significant effects on students' listening and speaking self-efficacy and anxiety. The findings and results of the study are discussed.

Keywords: student question-generation (SQG), open-ended questions, English speaking and listening self-efficacy, foreign language anxiety

1. Introduction

To cope with the challenging and changing world, school authorities or policy makers in Taiwan endeavor to equip students with communicative abilities and competitive power. In view of the goal, students who are learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) are expected to engage in skill-based English learning and to develop effective English interaction. According to the Action Plan for Policy Initiatives for the Next Four Years of Ministry of Education (2004) in Taiwan, universities and colleges were encouraged to set English thresholds for graduation. English proficiency requirements

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for graduation threshold differ in many universities and colleges, but level B1 on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) is the basic graduation threshold. Relating the General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) that developed by the Language Training and Testing Center (LTTC) (2002) in Taiwan to CEFR, intermediate level of English proficiency is the language standard that students of University of Technology need to meet.

In traditional EFL classrooms in Taiwan, students usually receive lectures from teachers and are passive and quiet learners. With few opportunities in using English in real communication, the students would have less confidence in questioning and answering teachers' questions. To encourage students to use English in the class, teachers often applied open-ended questions to help students summarize and review what they read and learned. Open-ended questions are effective questions for the teachers to develop students' narrative competence to use in the classroom (Brubacher, Powell, Skouteris & Guadagno, 2015). Furthermore, students who knew how to ask questions relating to the text showed lots of improvement in comprehending the text (Shilo, 2015). However, asking all the students to respond to teachers' verbal questioning would not be an easy task to the teachers. In many studies, student question-generation (SQG) would be an effective tool to engage all the students in learning in terms of student-centered activities (Abad, Suárez, & Gil, 2015; DeWaelshche, 2015; Hardy, et al., 2014; Lam, 2014; Poot, Kleijn, Rijen, & Tartwijk, 2017; Yu & Chen, 2014). Nevertheless, most research about SQG focused on the fields of science (Cano et al., 2014; Yu, Tsai, & Wu, 2013) or reading (Khansir, & Dashti, 2014), little research investigated its effects on listening and speaking skills in EFL field. Therefore, in this study, the researcher investigated students' perspectives and attitudes toward SQG and the effects of applying SQG to improve students' listening and speaking skills.

According to Bandura (1995), self-efficacy is "the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations." (p. 2). That is, self-efficacy is the belief in one's own competence to complete a task successfully. Since self-efficacy is one of the predictors of academic achievement (Joo, Lim, & Kim, 2013; Kim, Wang, Ahn, & Bong, 2015) and listening and writing performance in second or foreign language (Rahimpour, & Nariman-jahan, 2010; Tilfarlioğlu, & Ciftci, 2011), teachers in EFL classroom should try to promote it in language learning.

Foreign language anxiety has long been noticed by researchers (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; Chung & Leung, 2016; Marwan, 2016; Yan, 2014). Foreign language anxiety, especially speaking anxiety, is considered 'mental block' against foreign language learning (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986), and anxious language learners would have

low English learning motivation (Chung & Leung, 2016). Moreover, according to some research, foreign language anxiety has negative relations with learners' self-efficacy (Huerta, Goodson, Beigi, & Chlup, 2017; Kırılmazı, & Kırılmazı, 2015). Thus, the second purpose of this study is to examine whether using SQG can enhance students' self-efficacy and reduce anxiety.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Student question generation (SQG)

SQG has been recognized as a helpful activity in promoting students' learning motivation (Lam, 2014; Poot, Kleijn, Rijen, & Tartwijk, 2017; Yu, & Chen, 2014), increasing their self-efficacy (Moseley, Bonner, & Ibey, 2016) and enhancing their achievement (Abad, Suárez, & Gil, 2015; Hardy, et al., 2014; Khansir & Dashti, 2014; Sanchez-Elez, et al., 2014) in numerous studies. Being a student-centered activity, student-generated questions applied as part of the exams would engage students in learning and encourage their interests (Dziuk, 2016). In EFL learning, SQG has been proved as a good way to train students' four language skills (Sabri, Khalid, & Li, 2016; Yu, 2015). However, most studies examined the effects of yes/no questions, multiple choice or matching, little research explored the effects of online student-generated open-ended questions on language learning. Online student-generated open-ended questions provide the students with the training of reasoning and summarizing abilities for what they have learned. To record their questions, students need to rehearse asking the questions before they upload the recording, and to listen to their recordings to make sure that the quality of the recordings is clear and acceptable. Furthermore, before generating the questions, students need to look through the textbook for inspiration and better understanding. To elaborate, online student-generated open-ended questions are ideal for motivating students' language learning.

2.2. Self-efficacy theory

Self-efficacy is the belief in one's own competence to complete a task successfully and it plays a critical role in learning. Bandura (1995) mentioned that self-efficacy beliefs are formed through mastery experience, modeling, social persuasions, and physiological factors. In other words, successful previous learning will influence self-efficacy (Chen & Usher, 2013) and learning or observing through others' good models

will help increase self-efficacy as well (Zimmerman, 2013). Encouragement or positive feedback from others (van de Ridder, Peters, Stokking, de Ru, & ten Cate, 2015) and positive physiological and emotional states are also the sources of self-efficacy (Moafian F., & Ghanizadeh, A., 2009; Putwain, Sander & Larkin, 2013). Self-efficacy was found having positive relationship with reading strategies (Shang, 2010; Wang & Li, 2010;) and listening proficiency (Abedine & Rahimi, 2009; Mills, N., Pajares, F., & Herron, C., 2006) in language learning context. In this study, the researcher tried to use online SQG to create an environment with four sources of self-efficacy.

2.3. Foreign language anxiety

'Foreign language anxiety is related to "threats to self-efficacy and appraisals of situations as threatening" (Papamihel, 2002, p.331). According to Horwitz et al. (1986), there are three components of foreign language anxiety: communication apprehension (when a person fails to express himself or to comprehend others), fear of negative social evaluation (when a person fails to make proper social impression) and test anxiety (when a person faces tests). Based on the studies of Scovel (1978) and Horwitz, et al. (1986), "foreign language anxiety is a predictor of success in language class."

In sum, this study is to investigate students' viewpoints and attitudes toward student-generated open-ended questions and whether SQG will affect students' speaking and listening self-efficacy and reduce students' anxiety. Methods will be introduced in the following section.

3. Research Questions

1. What are students' viewpoints and attitudes toward SQG?
2. Will SQG affect students' speaking, listening self-efficacy and anxiety?

4. Methods

To answer the above research questions, an 18-week quasi-experimental design was conducted. The research methods are described in the following sections.

4.1. Participants

2 classes of intermediate-level sophomores from College of Management, including Department of International Business, Tourism Management, and Finance and Information, participated in this study. These two classes were assigned to the experimental group Class A and the control group Class B. Class A consisted of 41 students with 31 females and 10 males and Class B, 36 students with 31 females and 5 males.

4.2. Independent variable

The independent variable in this study was students' speaking question-generation. For Class A, the experimental group, students were asked to generate speaking questions for the speaking tests of mid-term exam and final exam. In Class B, the control group, teacher-generated speaking questions were used as summative tests in mid-term exam and final exam.

4.2.1. Attitude and perspective toward SQG questionnaire (APS)

To explore students' perspectives and attitudes toward SQG, the researcher designed a questionnaire including 22 items with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). It elicited students' perspectives and attitudes toward SQG in three dimensions, namely, anxiety (3 items) and language training (4 items) and viewpoints and attitudes (15 items), with internal reliability of overall alpha coefficient of 0.89

4.3. Dependent variables

The dependent variables in this study were listening self-efficacy, speaking self-efficacy and anxiety.

4.3.1. Listening self-efficacy scale (LSS)

Listening self-efficacy was assessed by designing a questionnaire based on a model of Listening Self-efficacy Scale (LSS) developed by Demir (2017). This scale includes 19 items with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'never' (1), 'seldom' (2), 'sometimes' (3), 'frequently' (4), to 'always' (5). It measured students' listening self-efficacy in two

dimensions, namely, understanding (11 items) and listening strategies (8 items) with internal reliability of overall alpha coefficient of 0.935.

4.3.2. Speaking self-efficacy scale (SSS)

Speaking self-efficacy was assessed by designing a questionnaire based on a model of Speaking Self-efficacy Scale (SSS) developed by Demir (2017). This scale includes 24 items with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'never' (1), 'seldom' (2), 'sometimes' (3), 'frequently' (4), to 'always' (5). It measured students' speaking self-efficacy in three dimensions, namely, expression (20 items) and interaction (3 items), speaking strategies (1 item) with internal reliability of overall alpha coefficient of 0.951.

4.3.3. Foreign language classroom anxiety scale (FLCAS)

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety was assessed by applying a questionnaire based on a model of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986). This scale includes 33 items with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly agree' (5) to 'strongly disagree' (1). It assessed students' foreign language anxiety in three dimensions, namely, communication apprehension (11 items) and fear of feedback by peers and teachers (7 items), fear of language tests (15 items) with internal reliability of overall alpha coefficient of 0.93.

4.4. Research procedures

To collect data, in the first week of the semester (W1), the researcher introduced the course overview in Class A and Class B. Then, listening and speaking self-efficacy were assessed by two questionnaires, LSS and SSS. From W2 to W4 and W5 to W7, U1 and U2 were lectured and discussed in the class respectively. From W7 to W8, students in Class A had to construct one open-ended question based on the content of each unit, U1 and U2, for speaking test in W9. They needed to record their questions and uploaded the recordings to MOODLE, an online learning platform. Then, they had to listen to the recordings of their classmates. After the first Speaking Test in W9, U4 and U5 were also instructed and discussed in 3 weeks, from W10 to W12 and W13 to W15 respectively. In W16 and W17, two questions for Unit 4 and U 5 were recorded and uploaded to MOODLE learning platform as what students did before the first speaking test. In W18, Speaking Test 2, LSS, SSS, FLCAS and APS were implemented (see Table

1). For Class B, the control group, the same procedures were conducted except for the questions for the speaking tests were from the teacher. (see Table 1)

TABLE 1: Research procedures.

	Class A (experimental group)	Class B (control group)
W1	Course introduction &LSS & SSS	Course introduction &LSS & SSS
W2-4	Instruction: U1 Small Talk	Instruction: U1 Small Talk
W5-7	Instruction: U2 Health Matter	Instruction: U2 Health Matter
W 7-8	Student-generated Speaking Questions	Teacher-generated Speaking Questions
W9	Speaking Test 1	Speaking Test 1
W10-12	Instruction: U4 Reading for Pleasure	Instruction: U4 Reading for Pleasure
W13-15	Instruction: U5 Nature Disasters	Instruction: U5 Nature Disasters
W16-17	Student-generated Speaking Questions	Teacher-generated Speaking Questions
W18	Speaking Test 2 &LSS, SSS, FLCAS&APS	Speaking Test 2 &LSS & SSS

4.5. Data analysis

The data were collected from APS, LSS, SSS, and FLCAS. Descriptive statistics and one-way ANCOVA (Tests of analysis of covariance) were computed by SPSS 22 to analyze the data. To explore students' attitudes and perspectives toward SQG, mean scores and standard deviation of students' perspectives and attitudes toward SQG were computed and shown. ANCOVA was used to analyze if SQG had effects on students' listening and speaking self-efficacy and anxiety when the covariate was considered.

5. Results

The findings to research question 1 showed that mean scores for 22 items of students' perspectives and attitudes toward SQG ranging from 2.93 to 3.68 (see Table 2). It means that students had positive attitudes toward SQG.

As for listening and speaking self-efficacy and anxiety, the results of ANCOVA indicated that there were no significant differences between Class A (experimental group) and Class B (control group) in listening self-efficacy ($df=1, F=1.733, P= 0.192$) (see Table 3), speaking self-efficacy ($df=1, F=0.192, P= 0.663$) (see Table 4) and anxiety ($df=1, F=0.456, P= 0.506$) (see Table 5). That is, SQG has no effects on listening self-efficacy, listen self-efficacy, and anxiety.

TABLE 2: Means and Standard Deviation of Students' perspectives and attitudes toward SQG.

Item		Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
1.	I think that using student-generated questions as a speaking test would be better than the questions from the teacher.	2	5	3.41	.670
2.	I think that uploading recorded questions can reduce my tension.	1	5	3.00	.806
3	I think that I can clearly know the spoken mistakes of classmates and myself through recorded student-generated questions.	2	5	3.02	.724
4	I think it is easier to prepare speaking test by using recorded student-generated questions compared to the questions from the teacher.	1	5	3.07	.818
5	I think that listening to student-generated questions on MOODLE can reduce my tension.	2	4	3.05	.740
6	I think that I can train my listening and speaking skills simultaneously through SQG	2	5	3.51	.711
7	I like to use student-generated questions as a speaking test.	1	4	3.20	.679
8	SQG are more diverse and can inspire me.	2	5	3.20	.601
9	Teacher-generated questions are less and easier for me to prepare for the speaking test.	2	5	3.41	.706
10	I think that it is better for the teacher to record her questions and upload to MOODLE than to give us the written questions.	1	4	2.98	.724
11	I think that I can improve my listening and speaking skills through SQG.	2	5	3.44	.634
12	I think that SQG is an interesting activity.	2	5	3.34	.656
13	I will practice many times before I upload the recorded questions.	2	5	3.46	.897
14	I will read the textbook many times, think about the questions and record the questions I like to ask before I upload the questions.	2	5	3.68	.820
15	I will discuss with my classmates, think about the questions and record the questions I like to ask before I upload the questions.	1	5	3.27	.837
16	I will listen to my classmates' questions to avoid generating the same questions before I upload the questions.	1	5	2.93	.905
17	I hope to be anonymous when uploading the recording and I won't feel embarrassed	2	5	3.10	.735
18	I think that uploading recorded questions is helpful for learning, so I don't care about sharing.	2	4	3.22	.475
19	I think that uploading recorded questions is helpful for learning, so I don't care if the grammar is correct or not.	2	5	3.37	.623
20	I think SQG can make me concentrate on preparing for the speaking test.	2	5	3.34	.693
21	When I listen to my classmates' recordings and find that their questions are better than mine, then I will feel nervous.	1	5	3.12	.640

Item		Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
22	When I listen to my classmates' recordings and find that their questions are better than mine, then I feel like working harder.	1	5	3.12	.678
N=41					

TABLE 3: Descriptive statistics for LSS.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	10.229 ^a	2	5.114	30.854	.000
Intercept	1.751	1	1.751	10.562	.002
Pre-test of LSS	10.160	1	10.160	61.295	.000
Group	.287	1	.287	1.733	.192
Error	12.266	74	.166		
Total	757.155	77			
Corrected Total	22.495	76			
a. R Squared = .455 (Adjusted R Squared = .440)					
N=77					

TABLE 4: Descriptive statistics for SSS.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	13.504 ^a	2	6.752	42.438	.000
Intercept	1.323	1	1.323	8.315	.005
Pre-test of SSS	13.421	1	13.421	84.356	.000
Group	.031	1	.031	.192	.663
Error	11.774	74	.159		
Total	795.043	77			
Corrected Total	25.278	76			
a. R Squared = .534 (Adjusted R Squared = .522)					
N=77					

6. Discussion

The findings indicate that students had positive attitudes and perspectives toward SQG as shown in Table 2. Most students thought it was easier for them to prepare the questions that were generated by themselves. However, since there were only two times of SQG in a semester and the questions for speaking tests were selected by the teacher, most of the students focused on the recordings of teacher's questions before speaking tests. Therefore, students couldn't really learn or observe through others' good models to increase their self-efficacy as described in Zimmerman's study

TABLE 5: Descriptive statistics for FLCAS.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	15.835 ^a	2	7.918	55.819	.000
Intercept	1.239	1	1.239	8.735	.004
Pre-test of FLCAS	15.756	1	15.756	111.080	.000
Group	.065	1	.065	.456	.502
Error	10.496	74	.142		
Total	751.329	77			
Corrected Total	26.331	76			

a. R Squared = .601 (Adjusted R Squared = .591)
N=77

(2013). Maybe that can explain why SQG didn't have effects on listening and speaking self-efficacy. For the students, they could get the questions for speaking tests one or two weeks before speaking tests, so they might consider SQG as a novel activity they could accept and wouldn't arouse their anxiety.

7. Conclusion

In some research, SQG is a helpful activity used in EFL classroom, but maybe self-efficacy is not easy to be enhanced in short time. For future study, a longer period of research time and higher frequency of using SQG in the class should be considered. Moreover, more aspects of SQG could be examined and a large-scale survey could be implemented.

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