

Social Dynamics and Language Learning: Do Extroverts Excel in L2 Acquisition? An Analysis through the Lens of Interactionism Theory

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to explore the relationship between social dynamics and second language acquisition, with a specific emphasis on whether extroverts surpass in learning English as a second language more efficiently and effectively than introverts. Moreover, the research is grounded in the Interactionism theory by Lev Vygotsky (1962) which states that language development is hugely determined by social and cultural communication and interaction. So, this study examines whether the personality traits such as being extrovert affect learner's engagement to learn language more efficiently by socially interacting with other people or not. For this purpose, students of the BS English department of Army Burn Hall College for Girls, Abbottabad were selected as the participants to share their views through a mixed-method approach. A structured questionnaire was designed to gather insights from the students. Results for the close-ended questions have been shown through graphs whereas thematic analysis has been done for open-ended questions. The findings revealed that though ESL learners face many challenges during social meet-ups they still learn vocabulary, pronunciation, confidence, fluency, etc.

Keywords

Social dynamics, interactionism theory, second language acquisition, language skills, extroverts, introverts, personality traits.

Introduction

Relationship between Social Dynamics and Language Learning

Second language learning is a complex process inclined by various factors, with social interaction being one of the most significant components. Many researches conducted in applied linguistics have shown that socially engaging with others through expressive communication plays a vital role for learners to develop language skills. However, not all learners possess extroverted personalities to interact similarly. Personality traits such as introversion and extroversion significantly affect an individual's approach, and accordingly, learners acquire a new language. Learners being extroverts are characterized by their socially active and outgoing natures, as they often thrive in social interactions, whereas, learners being introverts may prefer unsocial or more structured learning experiences.

Personality Traits and Language Learning: Introverts vs. Extroverts

Personality traits comprise different characteristics, with introversion and extroversion traits the most essential ones. Some ESL learners may possess introverted personalities, while some come with extroverted ones. Introverted learners usually avoid group settings, and social meet-ups, but

still engage in meaningful communication when necessary. In contrast, learners with extroverted personality traits are known for their readiness and willingness to engage in social interactions, usually initiate conversations, and hunt for feedback; all such activities are considered important for language acquisition. Therefore, this leads to an important inquiry of whether extroverts, inclined towards socialization, perform better in learning a language. Or do introverted learners, despite engaging less in social settings, still achieve proficiency in language?

Interactionism Theory by Lev Vygotsky (1962): The Key to Understanding Social Dynamics

Interactionism theory by Vygotsky (1962) states that a child learns and develops through interactions with more knowledgeable people. The knowledgeable people can be parents, teachers, mentors, caregivers, or peers. This shows that language is more effectively acquired through social interactions and cultural contexts which are essential for cognitive development. According to this theory, learners can improve their language skills through social gatherings, as they communicate in the target language, express themselves, and receive feedback from other people. Such kinds of learners are extrovert people who love to willingly participate in conversations. On the other hand, some learners avoid speaking to people and prefer learning in isolation. These learners are introverted people, who cannot perform well in acquiring a language according to the Interactionism theory. Therefore, the theory supports that learning a language is deeply concerned with extroversion and social interaction. By applying Interactionism Theory, this study pursues to explore whether extroverts' common participation in social dynamics benefits them in learning the English language and helps them improve their skills such as vocabulary, speaking fluency, confidence, etc. Also, what are the opinions of introverted people on the impact of social interaction on language learning?

Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are:

- 1.To explore the roles of social interaction in learning a second language
- 2.To examine whether extroverts surpass in learning a second language as compared to introverts
- 3.To investigate the role of Interactionism theory in clarifying the relationship between personality traits and learning language

Research Questions

This research will answer the following questions:

- 1.What are the roles of social dynamics in learning a second language?
- 2.Do extroverts excel in learning a second language as compared to introverts?
- 3.How does Interactionism Theory clarify the relationship between introversion, extroversion, and language learning?

Statement of the Problem

The development of second language acquisition is deeply influenced by social dynamics, yet distinct differences in individual personality characteristics specifically introversion and extroversion can significantly affect learners' engagement in learning through these interactions. Learners possess different natures, one may love to engage himself in social meet-ups, willingly participate in conversations, and learn through other people. However, some learners are not inclined to interact much with people and prefer learning solitarily. Hence, there is a dire need to study the impacts of social interactions on learning language and also if extrovert learners excel in learning L2. Moreover, the theory of Interactionism given by Lev Vygotsky also suggests that there is a vast effect of social interaction on learning a language. The theory states that extrovert learners learn a language more effectively. Hence, this research aims to address this gap by

investigating the impacts of personality traits on L2 learning and also whether extrovert learners excel in learning. The study will be conducted through the lens of Interactionism Theory.

Significance of the Study

The importance of this research lies in its potential to extend our understanding of personality traits, specifically introversion and extroversion influence on second language learning through social dynamics. By applying the theory of Interactionism, this study has highlighted the role of social interaction in language acquisition and provides intuitions into whether extroverts really have an advantage in L2 learning and also about the views of introverts for social interaction and language learning. The findings will be helpful for language instructors, and educators to design more effective and inclusive teaching strategies that may assist learners to engage them in social interactions. Moreover, the study will also benefit the students to know if extroverts can learn language more effectively, they can also change their behavior to be more inclined towards social meet-ups for better results and performance in L2 learning.

Literature Review

There have been many scholarly studies conducted to explore the effect of social interactions on ESL learners in getting proficiency in their skills. Therefore, a keen study of the existing literature has been done to figure out the insights of students for social meet-ups and also the effect of interactionism theory. Alharbi (2023) in his research conducted on the topic 'Insight into the Role of Interaction in Language Acquisition: Vygotsky's Interactionist Theory of Language' examined the articles of Vygotsky (1962, 1987a; 1987b; 1997; 2012) and assessed the interactionism theory. He concluded that to maximize the effectiveness of social interaction in learning L2, the integration of scaffolding and zone of proximal development should be emphasized. Rajik (2022) found in his research 'Second Language Lexical Acquisition: The Case of Extrovert and Introvert Children' that an extrovert child of seven years was able to produce good and vast vocabulary words in his language as compared to an introverted child of age eight years. The extroverted child, without thinking, used words in inappropriate contexts. In contrast, introverted children used words in correct contexts after thinking a lot. This has shown that extroversion personality traits enhance fluency, whereas, introversion personality traits enhance accuracy. Li and Jeong (2020) in the study, 'The Social Brain of Language: Grounding Second Language Learning in Social Interaction' revealed that through social interactions, there are positive brain changes along with improved behavioral outcomes. Another research was conducted by Loewen and Sato (2018) on 'Interaction and Instructed Second Language Acquisition' in which the results concluded social interactions to be effective in promoting the development of L2, though, there are some factors that affect its efficacy. Gass (2012) examined in his research 'Interactionist Perspectives on Second Language Acquisition' how L2 learners use their linguistic environment in building their knowledge of a second language. The study found, according to the interactionists' perspectives; that social interactions help improve L2 skills. Hence, these past studies also showed that a child with vast exposure to L2 learns better at a fast speed. As a child interacts with many speakers of the target language, hence his skills are polished and he becomes a fluent speaker. Therefore, L2 learners should be exposed to social meet-ups for better results (Hassan & Anjum, 2024). However, the studies are in favor of Interactionism theory but still; there is a gap in exploring the insights of the learners about their personalities, impacts of social interactions, benefits, and challenges they face during social meet-ups. This all was required to conduct a separate study in which students could enlist their perspectives for social interactions and language learning. Hence, this study is taken into consideration to explore and jot down the insights and understandings of ESL learners to fill the gap. The study will address the following points:

- What are the students' perspectives regarding social gatherings and language learning?
- Which skills of language are improved through social meet-ups?
- What are the challenges they face in social interactions?
- Do extroverts excel in learning?
- Is the theory of Interactionism helpful for L2 learning?

Keeping in mind the above queries, the gap will be filled and the answers will reveal if the extroverts excel in learning L2 or not.

Research Method

This study used a mixed-method approach to gather insights from the students to share their views about social dynamics and whether they get help in improving their English language skills by socially interacting with people or not. Moreover, questions were also designed to collect data on the opinions of the students about the impact of social interaction on language learning. The research was conducted by collecting data from the students of Army Burn Hall College for Girls, Abbottabad. Students of the BS English Department were taken into consideration to share their views about social dynamics and developing language skills. To serve this purpose, both open-ended and close-ended questions were asked of the learners through a structured questionnaire. For close-ended questions, bar graphs have been drawn to show the responses of the students. However, for open-ended questions, thematic analysis has been done on the basic themes. So, this helped us in knowing where the learners learn and improve their language skills through social interactions.

Population

The population of this research was the students of Army Burn Hall College for Girls, Abbottabad. It is a renowned institution in Abbottabad, Pakistan, offering academics from Montessori to Masters in different subjects. The students are enrolled in different departments and are given education according to BS degree. So, the students from this college participated in the best way to share their views on social dynamics and language learning.

Sampling

From the different departments being offered in Army Burn Hall College for Girls, Abbottabad, the participants of this study were selected to be the students of BS-English semester II. These students can better share their experiences with social interaction and language learning. There were 30 students in the class and all of them were given questionnaires to fill in. Finally, 25 responses were received from the students who shared their opinions.

Research Instruments

As the research is designed to gather perceptions and knowledge of the students for the impact of social dynamics on language learning, the best possible way was to distribute questionnaires among the students of BS English, Semester II. The questionnaire comprised both open-ended and close-ended questions related to the influence of social interaction on improving English language skills, enhancing vocabulary, boosting confidence, receiving feedback, etc. There were a total of nine questions asked in the questionnaire. Five of them were close-ended and the students were given different options to select according to their experience. However, the last four questions were open-ended so that the students could write and share their views about the relationship between social dynamics and language learning. Therefore, the students performed well in attempting the questionnaire and shared their views. Hence, the questionnaire was enough to get the results.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this research is grounded in **Interactionism Theory**, which highlights the significant role of social interaction in learning a second language. This theory, embedded in Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, emphasizes that language is learned through meaningful communication, where learners exchange meaning and receive feedback. The study also integrates personality theories, and focus on introversion and extroversion as factors influencing learners' engagement in social interactions.

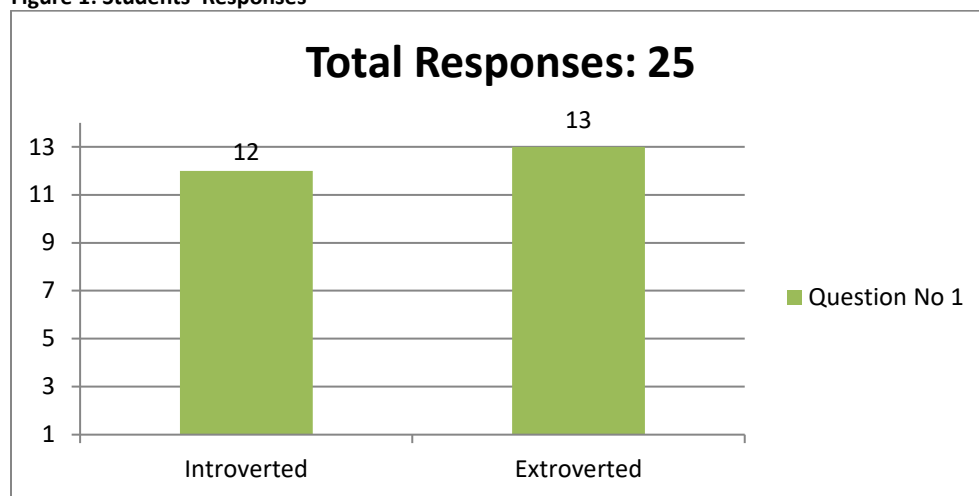
Results

After distributing a questionnaire to the students of BS English, semester II, a total of 25 responses were received back from the students. For the first five questions, the analysis of the results has been shown through graphs. However, for the last four questions, codes were extracted according to different themes and thematic analysis has been done for them. The results of the responses are given below question-wise.

Question No 1) Would you describe your personality as more introverted or extroverted?

- a) Introverted
- b) Extroverted

Figure 1: Students' Responses



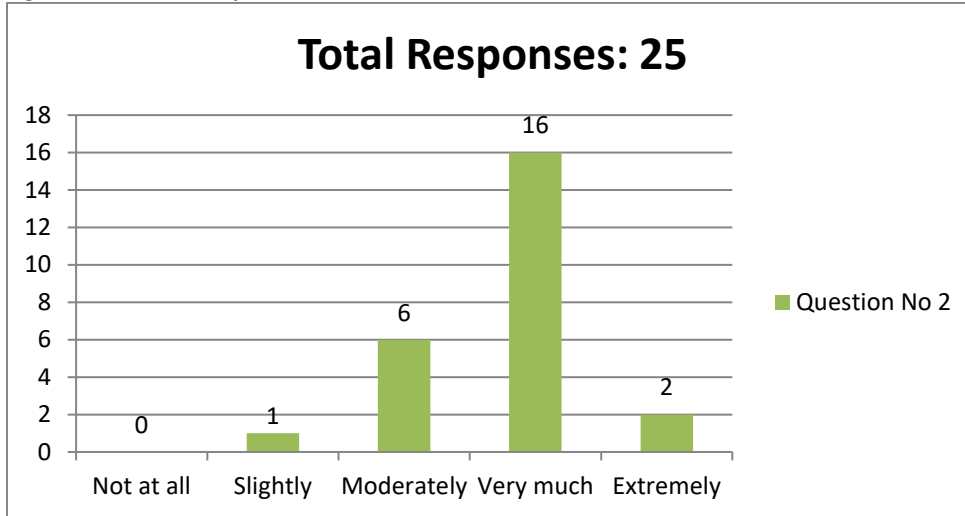
For the first question in the questionnaire, out of the 25 students of BS English, semester II,

- 12 students marked the option 'Introverted'
- 13 students marked the option 'Extroverted'

Question No 2) Do you think social interactions help you learn and improve your English Language Skills (Reading, writing, speaking, and listening)?

- a) Not at all
- b) Slightly
- c) Moderately
- d) Very much
- e) Extremely

Figure 2: Students' Responses



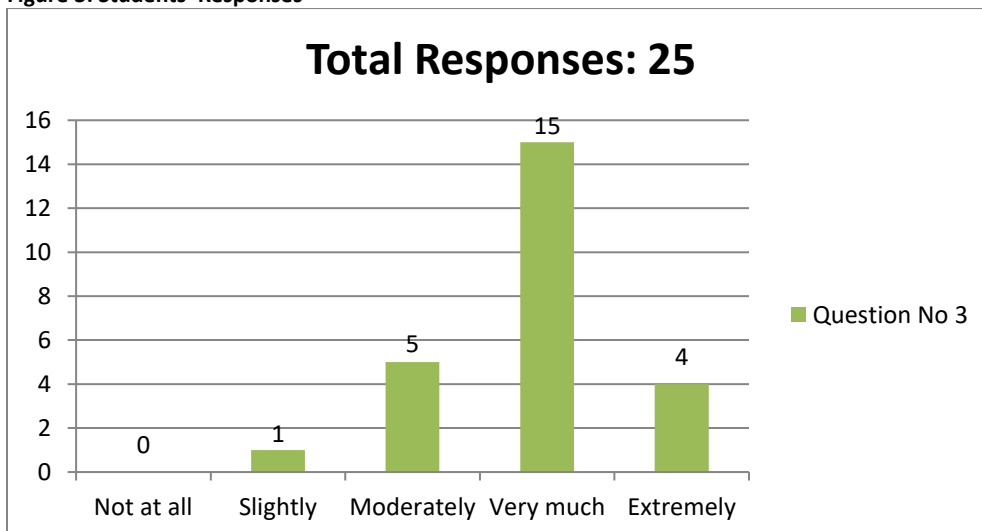
For this question, out of 25 students,

- No student selected the 'Not at all' option
- Only 1 student selected the 'Slightly' option
- 6 students selected the 'Moderately' option
- 16 students selected the 'Very much' option
- 2 students selected the 'Extremely' option

Question No 3) To what extent do social interactions (e.g., discussions, conversations) help you learn new vocabulary in English?

- Not at all
- Slightly
- Moderately
- Very much
- Extremely

Figure 3: Students' Responses



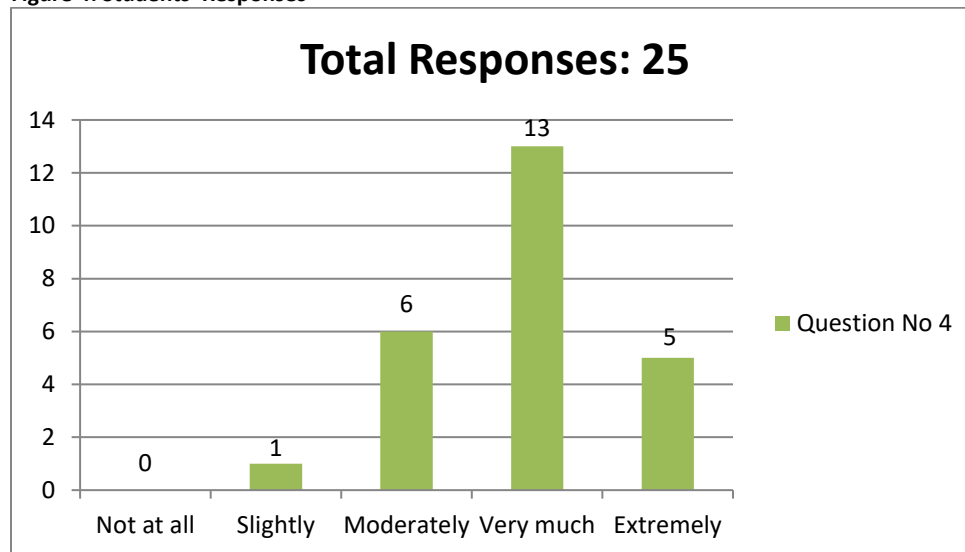
For the third question, out of 25 students,

- No student voted for the 'Not at all' option
- Only 1 student voted for the 'Slightly' option
- 5 students voted for the 'Moderately' option
- 15 students voted for the 'Very much' option
- 4 students voted for the 'Extremely' option

Question No 4) How much do social interactions improve your confidence in speaking English?

- Not at all
- Slightly
- Moderately
- Very much
- Extremely

Figure 4: Students' Responses



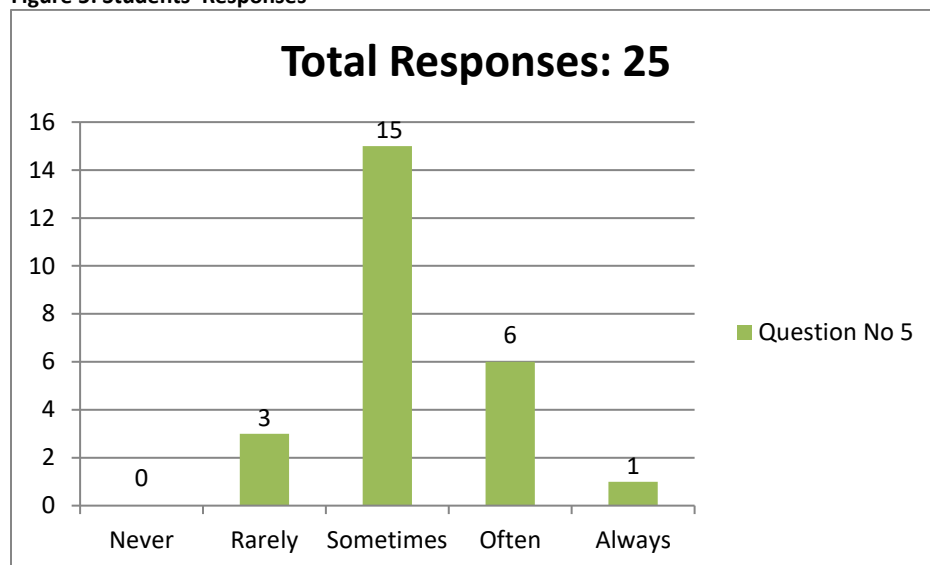
For this question, out of 25 students,

- No student marked the 'Not at all' option
- Only 1 student has marked the 'Slightly' option
- 6 students have marked the 'Moderately' option
- 13 students have marked the 'Very much' option
- 5 students have marked the 'Extremely' option

Question No 5) How often do you receive helpful feedback during social interactions (e.g., group work, discussions) that improves your language skills?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

Figure 5: Students' Responses



For this question, out of 25 students,

- No student selected the ‘Never’ option
- 3 students selected ‘Rarely’ option
- 15 students selected ‘Sometimes’ option
- 6 students selected ‘Often’ option
- Only 1 student selected ‘Always’ option

Question No 6) In what ways do you think interacting with others has helped you improve your English language skills? Please provide specific examples.

Thematic Analysis is done for this question.

Table 1: Students' Responses

Themes	Codes
The Theme of Vocabulary	Learn a lot of new words, trendy words, and new terms.
The Theme of Communication	Articulate thoughts in better words, gestures, speaking skills, correct pronunciation, aspects of speaking
The Theme of Learning Through Others' Experiences	How they talk, listen to others, opinions, and points of view of others
The Theme of Group Discussion	Helpful to improve skills, formal gatherings
The Theme of Gaining Knowledge and Information	Interaction helps in gaining knowledge and information
The Theme of Building Confidence	Builds confidence, and avoids confusion

Question No 7) What challenges do you face when learning English through social interactions?

Thematic analysis is done for this question.

Table 2: Students' Responses

Themes	Codes
The Theme of Adjustment	Take time to adjust, hesitation, non-native speakers
The Theme of Confidence	Lack of confidence, others will make fun of me, get nervous, forget things, feel shy, feel low because of imperfect language, afraid of getting trolled, embarrassed, and lack of self-confidence
The Theme of Pronunciation	Can't focus on spellings and pronunciation, wrong pronunciation, challenge of pronunciation
The Theme of Vocabulary	Wrong words are used, can't understand new words, 0% vocabulary, difficult to interpret the meaning of words used
The Theme of Fluency	Not fluent, hindrance, can't express ourselves
The Theme of Knowledge and Comprehension	Lack of knowledge, inability to comprehend, can't grasp what others say, comprehension unachievable

Question No 8) How do social interactions (e.g., group discussions, and debates) impact your fluency in English?

Thematic Analysis is done for this question.

Table 3: Students' Responses

Themes	Codes
The Theme of Gaining Knowledge	High knowledge, grasp on connected speech, thinking critically, grammar knowledge
The Theme of Vocabulary	New words are learned, improved vocabulary, and new terms
The Theme of Confidence	Builds confidence, diminishes hesitation, gains self-confidence
The Theme of Practice	Frequent practice of speaking, feeling comfortable in speaking, practicing again and again to become fluent
The Theme of Pronunciation	Correct accent, good pronunciation
The Theme of Motivation	Motivated by other speakers, impressed, and express ourselves

Question No 9) How does engaging with others in social settings motivate you to improve your English skills?

Table 4: Students' Responses

Themes	Codes
The Theme of Inspiration	Attractive words, inspired to be like others, desire, inspiration, feel a surge of change to further improve
The Theme of Confidence	Improves confidence level, boosts confidence, and builds self-confidence
The Theme of Learning	Learn new things and ideas, get information and knowledge, think critically, and unravel thinking patterns
The Theme of Motivation	Get motivated by seeing a fluent person, a positive response, and motivation
The Theme of Highlighting Areas to Improve	Enables us to know our weak areas and clarifies our concepts, and pronunciation gets better

Discussion of Results

When the students of BS English semester II were asked to share their personality in terms of being introverted or extroverted, 13 out of 25 students selected an extroverted personality. However, the rest of the 12 students marked the option of being introverted. However, the difference is not too much, and almost half of the strength was for one view and the other half for the other view. Moreover, for the analysis of the results, we can state that the majority of the students possess an extroverted nature and love to interact with people. Now, the rest of the study will be conducted on the opinions of the extroverted and introverted students to share what they think about social interaction and language learning. Moreover, the students were asked to share if they think social interactions help them improve their English language skills, 16 out of 25 students marked the 'Very much' option. 6 students marked the 'Moderately' option, 2 students marked the 'Extremely' option, and 1 student marked the 'Slightly' option. No student marked the 'Not at all' option. This shows that the majority of the students think that social interaction helps them in learning and improving their English language skills. Even, some of the students who shared that they possess an introverted personality also marked that social gatherings greatly improve their language skills. Furthermore, the analysis has also shown that even not a single student thinks that social interaction does not affect improving language skills. Hence, Lev Vygotsky's theory of Interactionism can also be witnessed here that learners learn and improve their language skills through interactions. When asked learners to share the rate to what extent social interactions help them learn new words in English, the results were again in favor of Interactionism theory because 15 out of 25 students marked the option 'Very much', 4 students marked 'Extremely' option, 5 students selected 'Moderately' option, only 1 student voted for 'Slightly' option and no student selected 'Not at all' option. This indicates that the majority of the students are in prefer of the view that by interacting with people, vocabulary enhances. However, the results also show two points:

- Not a single student thinks that social interaction does not affect learning new words.
- Those students who are introverted also think that socially interacting with people enhances the vocabulary of the learners.

Hence, another feature can be related to the interactionism theory by Lev Vygotsky that new words can be learned more easily and frequently through social meet-ups. Hence, ESL learners should try to expose themselves to social interactions to improve their vocabulary. They will be

able to grasp new words and also will understand the contextual use of the words. These ESL learners were also asked to share if they think that social meet-ups help them boost their confidence level. Five different options were given to the students. When the analysis was done for the results collected, another vote was collected to support the interactionism theory. The results showed that out of 25 students, 13 students think that social interactions greatly build up the confidence level of the students because they selected the 'Very much' option. However, 5 students marked the option 'Extremely', 6 students went for the option 'Moderately', only 1 student selected the option 'Slightly' and no student selected the 'Not at all' option. Hence, the majority of the students were in view that social gatherings boost confidence and enable them to speak effectively and fluently.

Also, in the questionnaire, a question regarding feedback during social interactions was also asked to know if learners get helpful feedback while socially meeting with other people. The responses showed that sometimes they receive feedback that improves their language skills. Moreover, students receive helpful feedback during social gatherings not always rather sometimes. Moreover, it is not the case that students never receive feedback in social meet-ups, because not a single student selected the 'Never' option. Therefore, the results also revealed that to get helpful feedback for the improvement of language skills, social meet-ups can be taken into consideration. In an open-ended question, students were asked to share the ways through which social interactions help them improve their English language skills. The students shared many different ways. Even those students, who marked their personalities as introverted, also gave positive responses regarding this. Students wrote very valuable remarks regarding these themes. Like, respondent no 3 wrote that interacting with people helps me pick up new words and also helps me improve my pronunciation. Respondent no 4 shared that it helps us to build confidence and enhance our vocabulary. Similarly, respondent no 9 wrote that socially interacting with other people helps me in gaining knowledge and information. Respondent no 12 wrote that during presentations and group discussions, most of our language skills are improved. Participant no 23 wrote that social meet-ups help her refine her thinking and ideas and make them valid. Hence, all the other learners have shared the key benefits of socially interacting with people. No one wrote any comment against the social interactions. Therefore, the theory of interactionism is again supported by the views of the ESL learners for this question.

The students were also asked to share the challenges they faced when learning English through social interactions. All the students jotted down different difficulties they encountered during social meet-ups. Besides the many advantages of social meet-ups for language learning, still, there are still some challenges posed by the students in their questionnaires. The students shared that they feel hesitant will interacting with people because English is not their native language due to which they are not accurate in pronunciation, grammar, fluency, etc. This leads them to low confidence levels and a lack of understanding. As respondent no 1 wrote sometimes we pronounce the words wrong and we are trolled by other people then. Participant no 11 wrote, "I often feel hesitation and shyness." Respondent no 15 stated, "We might not be fully aware of the vocabulary being used or maybe there is a possibility of lack of knowledge." Similarly, participant no 20 wrote, "I got scared if I forget something and then everyone will make fun of me." All the responses received by the students show that there is a lack of confidence among ESL learners to express themselves in the English language. So, the students should be motivated enough to gain self-confidence and speak in social interactions. In addition, the ESL learners were also asked to write down the impacts of social interactions on fluency in the English language. The students wrote very interesting points for this question. According to the students of BS English, social interactions greatly affect their fluency of the language thus benefitting them in various ways like helping them gain knowledge to speak out in gatherings, boosting their confidence level, improving their vocabulary and pronunciation, and also motivating them. As

respondent no 16 wrote social interactions give us a platform to express ourselves, active listening is also involved and thus it leads us to become more fluent in the language. Participant no 10 wrote that social meet-ups, have had a greater impact on our fluency in English and it helps us improve our vocabulary. Respondent no 6 said that when we interact with each other more often and speak to them it helps us in our fluency as we will be doing more frequent practice of speaking. Similarly, participant no 23 jotted that social interactions end our hesitation to speak English and make us good at speaking openly. Hence, this study has received many valuable insights from ESL learners for improving their fluency in speaking through social gatherings. Moreover, the results also show that the theory of Interactionism helps engage students in social gatherings for improved results.

The last question in the structured questionnaire was to gather the opinions of ESL learners about how social meet-ups motivate them to improve their English skills. The students shared very mindful tips for this question. For motivation seeking through social interactions, students also responded by getting inspiration from others and a desire to speak like them, building up confidence, learning, and improving their skills. As respondent no 18 wrote while interacting with a person with good English, we get a desire to have the same kind of skills, so they motivate us to improve our skills. Similarly, participant no 12 shared that it motivates us to improve our English skills so that we can also better express our thoughts and ideas. Student no 8 wrote that if a person has better English skills than me in terms of punctuation, pronunciation, accent, and using fancy words, it motivates me to improve and add those skills in my language and interaction as well. Likewise, Respondent no 8 shared that engaging with other people broadens my horizons. Different people have different approaches and it makes me unravel those thinking patterns. Also, when someone speaks I feel a surge of change to further improve myself. Therefore, we get to know that social gatherings are a source of improving learners' language skills making them inspired by other speakers, motivating them, and adding fluency to the speaking. This shows that the interactionism theory by Lev Vygotsky is correct in terms of its statement that social interaction not only helps learners improve their skills but also motivates them and speeds up their pace of learning.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, the study was conducted to reveal the impacts of social interaction on learning the English language. Besides, the purpose was also to explore whether extroverts excel in learning or not. According to the theory of Interactionism by Lev Vygotsky, learners learn language greatly when they are more exposed to social interaction. Therefore, the questionnaire was also designed to know the actual feelings and the challenges they face during social meet-ups. Out of 25 total responses received, 12 students shared their personalities to be introverted and 13 students marked their personalities to be extroverted. Still, all the students wrote social interactions to be a beneficial source for them to learn and improve their skills in English language. The majority of the students wrote that social interactions help them in enhancing their language learning in various ways they learn new words hence their vocabulary is improved, their confidence level is boosted, they get inspired by good speakers and try to become like them, and pronunciation is improved, and gain knowledge and information to refine their ideas and thoughts. Moreover, the learners also face many challenges in socially interacting with others like shyness, hesitation, fear of being laughed at and trolled, etc. This is all because of a lack of confidence. Hence, ESL learners should be given vast exposure, motivation, and confidence to speak out in gatherings. The study has revealed that extroverts excel in learning a language and improving their skills only when they intend and desire to learn from others. The theory of Interactionism is taken into consideration because it states that the learners learn well from knowledgeable persons. The advice to the ESL learners through this keen study is to expose

themselves to social meet-ups with knowledgeable people to furnish and improve their English language skills.

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