

Comprehensive Context: An Ideal Context of Speaking for EFL Learners

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Abstract

English as a foreign language (EFL) learners often encounter difficulties in learning and improving speaking which is regarded as the most demanding language skill (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000). Concentrating on the decisive role of context, this study aimed at exploring the process of learning speaking by fluent and professional speakers of English in Iran. Grounded theory was employed to qualitatively analyze participants' perceptions toward the process of learning speaking skill. Results yielded that a 'comprehensive context' of speaking is necessary to accelerate and stimulate the process including the contexts of panel discussion, virtual world, and teaching/tutoring classes in addition to the context of classroom. The paper proposes a process of learning and improving speaking skill including prioritized strategies for receiving speaking input and the additional contexts of speaking for producing maximum speaking output. The issue of learning context is discussed in details and the implications are provided accordingly.

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Introduction

Speaking as one of the four macro skills is integral to second/foreign language learning (SLL, FLL), the most important skill for communication (Zaremba, 2006), and an important objective for many learners (Kawai, 2008) since the majority of learners throughout the world study English so as to gain proficiency in speaking (Richards & Renandya, 2002). Listening and speaking are also basic components of interaction which expedite and facilitate the process of language acquisition (Cohen, 2012; Ghoneim, 2013), however, the latter, in some ways, is considered the most difficult skill to attain (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000). Interaction and communication are of paramount importance and of the essence to develop speaking. Hence, EFL setting in which opportunities are limited to speak English outside of the classroom (Shadieff, Hwang, Huang, & Liu, 2015) makes the issue even thornier.

Although it is vital to increase the available classroom time and provide learners with opportunities to enhance their speaking skill (Erten & Altay, 2009) and despite the paucity of a practical *context* of speaking for learners in order to use and practice English (Yang & Chang, 2007), many studies have been undertaken to examine different challenges, techniques, and strategies regarding speaking skill improvement in a given context (Aliakbari & Jamalvandi, 2010; Gan, 2013; Liu & Jackson, 2008; Shen & Suwanthep, 2011; Sun & Yang 2015). In other words, literature shows that the significance of context of speaking has mostly been overlooked in relevant studies. In addition, speaking skill is perhaps the most difficult skill to teach especially in foreign language setting (Lee & Carrasquillo, 2006). It is a well-known fact among teachers that the amount of time that should be allocated to develop this skill is larger than that of other skills. Based on learners' background, out of class input, age, first language, and other facets, the difficulties they encounter may vary (Lee, 2005). Hence, in learning and developing speaking skill a variety of factors of which both learners and teacher should be aware directly and indirectly affect the process. Therefore, this study aimed at exploring the process of learning speaking in EFL context of Iran to particularly find the way EFL learners tackle the issue of speaking context.

EFL Setting

For the English language learners who are learning English as a foreign language, it is apparently an arduous task to accomplish by comparison with the learners who are learning English as a second language (ESL) due to the fact that in EFL settings, especially Asian countries, English is neither an official or primary language nor a means of regular communication. English classes then are the only relevant contexts in which EFL learners mostly speak English (Afshar & Asakereh, 2016) and they rarely communicate in English out of the classroom (Senel, 2012). What make the matter more complicated are the inevitable problems which both learners and teachers are contextually faced in the English classes. For one thing, all skills of language should be learned and taught in the classroom; therefore, the amount of time allocated to each skill might be insufficient. Hence, in enhancing oral skills, especially speaking which unquestionably necessitates regular interaction and communication, context plays a pivotal role.

In EFL setting of Iran, up to tertiary level, learners are either provided with English courses in the context of public schools or study English in the context of private language institutes which, by comparison, is a more communicative context (Author & Author, 2015). Generally, thus, Iranian EFL learners, similar to other countries of Asia-Pacific region where lack English-speaking contexts, ‘acquire language knowledge in a decontextualized way’ (Hwang et al., 2016, p. 2).

In spite of the above-mentioned facts, there are a host of professional English speakers in EFL settings and, on the other hand, there are a considerable number of advanced EFL learners who have difficulty in speaking skill in comparison with other language skills. Thus, how proficient EFL speakers have succeeded to master this skill and overcome the inadequacy of speaking contexts came into the principal focus of this research. In addition, the significance of EFL setting, especially for oral skills, as a primary subject of inquiry has yet declined in importance. Consequently, the study was conducted to delve deeply into this issue so as to shed more light on the learning process of speaking in EFL setting of Iran in particular. Aside from addressing the issue of context, what makes this study of added interest is its approach, i.e. grounded theory (GT) which seemed the most appropriate approach to evaluating participants’

perception rarely used in the literature. Instead of a linear process of data collection, in GT method, the researcher goes through a cyclical process of data collection and analysis. That is, ‘the study often changes directions in terms of the questions being asked and the theoretical perspectives brought to bear on the study’ (Davis, 1995, p. 444), a characteristic seemed beneficial to the purpose of study.

Literature Review

The ability to speak, listen, and interact is called communicative ability which, Cohen (2012) argued, is a crucial factor in the target language acquisition on which more emphasis should be placed. Development of this ability necessitates the existence or simulation of a real communicative context in which learners are involved in real communication and are encouraged to use language and thus employ their strategies (Celce-Murcia, 2007). For instance, it was found that a mobile game-based learning environment considerably enhance EFL learners’ speaking skill by giving them confidence and providing them with an authentic context (Hwang, Shih, Ma, Shadiev, Chen, 2016).

Despite the importance of speaking skill which unquestionably necessitates adequate speaking context where output is produced by learners, literature (e.g. Cheon, 2003; Hwang, Shadiev, & Huang, 2011b; Yang & Chen, 2007) reveals that in the Asia-Pacific region EFL is taught by concentrating on language input (listening and reading) rather than language output (speaking and writing) while Harmer (2007) stated that a balance should be struck between meaningful and comprehensible input and output which are fundamental components to foreign language acquisition.

Furthermore, as it was mentioned, much research has been conducted with respect to speaking strategies and challenges. For instance, speaking skill can be improved by involving learners in creative drama activities which result in the combined beneficial effects of nonverbal communication and verbal interactions (Brouillette, 2012). The use of storytelling strategy (Hwang et al., 2016), role-playing activities (Yen, Hou, & Chang, 2015), and Web 2.0 tools i.e. You Tube and Facebook (Sun & Yang, 2015) for improving speaking skill has also been proved to be efficacious. As it can be implied, consistent with the new concept of learner’s autonomy which takes into account digital literacies (Benson, 2013), computer-assisted language learning

(CALL) is widely implemented in language pedagogy. However, it is suggested that the integration of CALL and non-technology pedagogy might be more fruitful (Macaro, Handley & Walter, 2012). In spite of the proven effectiveness of such strategies, it is, however, apparent that the limited time and the sole context of classroom do not allow teachers to implement all of them on a regular basis.

The Significance of Context

Second language (L2) contexts are of cardinal importance in learning languages due to the fact that the speed and accuracy of L2 learning is heavily dependent on the type of the context in which learning takes place (Llanes, 2011). Both researchers (e.g. Collentine, 2009; Freed, Segalowitz, & Dewey, 2004; Freed, So, & Lazar, 2003) and participants (Allen, 2010) have stressed the significance of context in SLA which is regarded as one of the most determining factors that ‘affects the nature and the extent to which learners acquire an L2’ (Collentine, 2009, p. 218). L2 contexts are mainly as follows: the naturalistic setting in which learners study or learn L2 as immigrants in the L2 country for an indefinite period of time, the foreign language (FL) instructed setting in which L2 is taught for a few hours a week, and study abroad (SA) setting where the process of learning takes place in the L2 country lasting from two weeks to several years. Researchers have juxtaposed SA context with other contexts of learning in that, unlike other contexts, it provides L2 learners with massive and constant exposure to input, interaction, and feedback in an authentic way (Pérez-Vidal & Juan-Garau, 2011).

Results of the studies investigating the effects of context on learning procedure reveal some interesting changing winds and shifting sands. For instance, comparing the oral performance of participants in three different settings (SA, at home [AH] and immersion [IM]), Freed, Segalowitz and Dewey (2004), unexpectedly, found that participants in the IM setting made the most significant gains by comparison with that of other participants in SA and AH settings. However, Kang (2014) reported that SA experiences have profound effects on learners’ participation and speaking ability. Furthermore, the effects of SA experiences on reading, writing, and FL pronunciation are rather fuzzy and vague (Dewey, 2004; Kinginger, 2008; Mora, 2008; Muñoz, 2012; Sasaki, 2009; Stevens, 2011), while its effects on developing FL oral fluency (e.g. Klapper & Rees, 2012), vocabulary (e.g. Foster, 2009), and listening (e.g. Llanes &

Muñoz, 2009) have been proved to be efficacious. Hence, it seems reasonable to assume that SA setting is one of the most fruitful contexts of learning a foreign language (Collentine, 2009). Moreover, what is clearly implied from the literature is that SA setting, at the very least, plays a pivotal role in improving learners' *oral* skills. This also supports the claim that speaking in EFL settings is acquired in a decontextualized way (Hwang et al., 2016).

In essence, it is appreciated that greater significance should be attached to the context of learning, especially for oral skills in EFL settings. Due to the educational, curricular, or political inabilities of countries in EFL settings to afford learners with SA programs and the like, regarding oral skills, it behooves policy makers, pedagogists, and language learners themselves to augment the amount of input exposure and provide more contexts for interaction and thus production of output. This is what to which the current study tries to propose and suggest solutions.

As it was indicated above, in relevant studies investigating the process of learning and improving speaking skill, the decisive effect of the context has mostly been disregarded. Hence, with respect to the significance of the context of learning, in this study GT approach was taken to investigate Iranian EFL learners' perception of the process of learning and improving speaking skill. In GT approach, the researcher enters the field without any presumptions and its process helps him/her to create or develop a theory in order to describe and define social processes (Glaser, 1978).

Method

Participants and Setting

Seventeen Iranian EFL speakers (9 males and 8 females) in Kashmar were interviewed so as to analyze their responses to the first question:

1. How have you learned your speaking skill?

It is of note that the limited number of participants is due to the nature of GT approach in that it uses non-probability sampling. That is, the researcher selects interviewees and collects data to reach at a point where no more new indicators can be added to the categorized concepts, i.e. the concepts are theoretically saturated. Hence, the emerging hypothesis/hypotheses

determine(s) the sample size of the study under investigation (Baker, Wuest, & Stern, 1992; Cutcliffe, 2000; LaRossa, 2005).

Furthermore, it should be mentioned that all the participants had a good command of English. They were qualified EFL learners who held a standard official certificate such as IELTS or TOEFL selected with special regard to the score of their speaking skill. They had all learned English as a foreign language without spending any time in a country in which English is spoken as a second language. In qualitative studies, ‘researchers tend to approach the research context with the purpose of observing whatever may be present there, and letting further questions emerge from the context’ (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 163). In GT approach, based on the initial responses and insights, further questions are added and amended. As a result, the following question regarding the context of speaking was emerged:

2. Where have you practiced speaking?

Consequently, all participants were interviewed and asked the second question. Fortunately, they were available to be interviewed face-to-face or by telephone. Similar to the above-mentioned procedure, the new data was analyzed.

Procedure

Unstructured face-to-face interview using participants’ mother tongue was used to probe deeply into their responses and facilitate the extraction of information. This type of interview helps the interviewees ‘to open up and express themselves in their own terms and at their own speed’ (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 173). The average interview length was 25 minutes. As it is the defining characteristic of GT approach, the interview was opened by one of the participants and continued until theoretical saturation was reached, i.e. no more new data was found. The participants were assured that in lieu of their real names, pseudonyms will be used in reporting the data. The tape-recorded interviews, then, were transcribed to facilitate the process of coding consisting of open, axial and selective (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In doing so, every attempt was made to analyze the data rigorously and keep away from personal biases to the extent possible. Similar and different concepts and units of meaning were recognized by methodically taking into consideration the words and phrases used by participants and using constant comparative

technique, i.e. open coding. As Strauss and Corbin described, in open coding procedure ‘the data are broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, compared for similarities and differences, and questions are asked about the phenomena reflected in the data’ (1990a, p. 62; 1998, p. 102). Then, the relationship between variables and linkages between concepts were established in the next stage, i.e. axial coding. Finally, in the selective coding phase, the core categories were identified and other relevant categories were defined as well. It is worth mentioning that the process of collecting data, analyzing, and defining categories in GT approach is rather complicated and comprehensive to which a great deal of time should be allocated. Thus, readers are referred to the literature (Corbin, 1998; Cutcliffe, 2000; Davis, 1995; Glaser, 1978, 1992, 1995; Glaser, & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, & Corbin, 1990a, 1998; Johnson, 2015) so as to appropriately understand the procedure.

It should also be mentioned that three interviewers conducted the interviews for the sake of investigator triangulation which ‘reduces observer or interviewer bias and enhances the validity and reliability (accuracy) of the information’ (Johnson, 1992, p. 146).

In addition, the focus group interview was conducted. The merit of the focus group is that participants reflect on each other’s responses and this interaction discloses more information about the participants’ vantage point. Moreover, by virtue of this method the researcher is made aware of the disagreements and their solutions, if exist (Ary, Jacob, Sorensen & Walker, 2013).

Results

Input

Participants were asked to give detailed explanations of how they had developed and mastered their speaking skill. After analyzing data, two core categories were emerged. First, participants all explained how they had received input which is the first priority to be provided in order for language learners to develop their speaking skill. According to initial responses, they were also asked to list the strategies in order of priority. The responses from participants resulted in following categories.

Reading

The majority of respondents stated that ‘reading’ had been the most fruitful strategy to develop their speaking skill and beneficial to obtain comprehensive data from English text books of any

topics, widely and freely available texts in the internet, newspapers, etc. In addition, participants explained that with the aid of this strategy, they had learned applicable phrases to speaking skill and essential vocabulary in the texts. Mostafa, for example, stated ‘by reading different books and texts, I could improve my speaking. For example, I used every useful phrase that I came across in texts’.

Listening

The second priority was given to ‘listening’ so as to receive input. According to respondents, the data could be acquired through listening to a host of English sound tracks provided by textbooks or those accessible on the internet, the news and the like. In addition, listening to music and teachers speaking during the English classes were other ways indicated by some other respondents. As evidence, Elahe explained ‘I listened to English sound tracks and songs as much as I could. It really helped me to speak English. Also listening to my teacher during the class was effective. I learned a lot of useful English phrases’.

Watching Movies

One more technique employed by participants was ‘watching movies’ which could be explained in the previous category, but it was separately categorized since its importance was stressed by most of the participants. They believed that in order to receive considerable input, the original movies with English subtitle serve the needs best by comparison with the movies with mother tongue subtitle or without subtitle. Sjjad, for instance, commented that ‘watching movies motivated me to speak English. The more I watched movies, the more structures I learned’.

Comprehensive Context

Second, according to the initial responses two other questions were developed and carefully framed:

- Where have you practiced speaking?
- Which context(s) has been the most fruitful one?

According to the participants, in EFL setting of Iran interaction is mostly limited to the time when they are in the English classes—the only formal contexts available for them. Therefore, learners are left with no options but providing themselves with more contexts so as to

avail themselves of abundant opportunities to speak English otherwise they will remain *ready-to-speak* learners.

As a result and according to participants' direct responses, context-supplement as an effective strategy was born of the necessity to ameliorate the situation. As evidence, Mohammad plainly stated that 'we, in these circumstances, have to provide ourselves with speaking contexts'.

Context-supplement

According to the findings of this study, in EFL setting, speaking as output is not desirably produced until the learner is provided with or provides additional contexts of speaking. These contexts are a significant addition to the context of English classes as an educational necessity. Learners either make these additional contexts available or seek them in order to compensate for the apparent scarcity of speaking context in that holding a panel discussion, for example, is mostly considered as an additional program. In order for EFL learners to be fluent speakers, then, it seems causally necessary to supply them with additional speaking contexts. Based on the results, comprehensive context as a highly productive setting in which the process of learning speaking skill is accelerated and appropriately taken place is an amalgamation of classroom context with the additional contexts of speaking which are as follows:

Panel Discussion

The majority of participants indicated that panel discussion had been the most fruitful context of speaking. Mostafa, for example, plainly explained that 'after reading English textbooks, I learned a lot of vocabulary and panel discussions helped me to use them for speaking'.

He further stated that panel discussions assisted me in 'finding my tongue'. In such a panel discussion, the way it is held in EFL setting of Iran, learners of different proficiency levels are gathered to freely discuss a predetermined topic. The discussion is ranged over various topics selected based on learners' interests and needs. A learner then is volunteered to be the moderator whose responsibility is to pose controversial questions and guide the panel in order for participants not to digress from the given topic. All the participants prepare themselves for the panel by exploring the given topic in advance. The significant advantages of panel discussions are as follows:

Interaction; This context provides learners with a favorable situation in which they are able to freely interact with their peers with different proficiency levels. The great merit of panel is its reciprocity. As evidence, Hamid commented that ‘I could communicate with other learners who had different levels of proficiency. Sometimes a learner learned something from me or if he/she was more proficient I would learn something and it happened naturally’.

Self-awareness and self-confidence; By constant participation in panel discussions, learners become aware of their strengths and weaknesses. In addition, taking the role of moderator functions as a confidence-building exercise. These advantages can be clearly implied from Amir’s comment,

After taking English classes and completing intermediate level, I thought I was able to speak English fluently. But when I participated in panel discussions I realized that I was not. I then decided to take part in panels in that I saw learners with lower levels of proficiency who could speak fluently though inaccurately. After a while, in addition to speak fluently, I got the courage to be the moderator which helped me to gain sublime confidence and improve my speaking skill attaining an acceptable level.

Sajjed also explained that ‘I learned a lot of phrases by watching movies, but when I participated in panel discussions I realized that they would not serve the purpose completely and I need to learn more structures from other resources as well’.

Accuracy and fluency; Respondents also specified the advantages of enhancing accuracy and fluency in their speaking by participating in panel discussions. Accordingly, they either corrected other peers or were corrected by them. Furthermore, they had also the advantage of learning the ropes to speak fluently. Mina, for instance, stated that ‘panel discussions also gave me the opportunities to speak accurately by listening to those who spoke without errors. I could also learn some vocabulary and phrases which helped me to speak fluently’.

Knowledge; According to participants, panels expanded their knowledge about various issues such as social, ethical, political, educational, etc. Mobina, for example, commented ‘we always prepared ourselves for the panel by extracting information from different sources like the internet and relevant books. It helped me to improve my knowledge about different topics’.

Virtual World

The World Wide Web as an informative global space was another context utilized by participants to enhance their speaking skill. The most useful websites indicated by the majority were those on

which learners could practice speaking superficially similar to real-world contexts. Hassan explained,

I found a website on which I got the opportunity to speak English. There were various English texts on different topics which I could freely download their transcriptions and sound tracks. I first listened to the sound tracks and read the transcript simultaneously. Then, I provided the answers to the questions. Next, I could also check if my answers were correct. To me, it was really helpful to improve my speaking skill.

Furthermore, respondents stated that this context helped them to communicate with other learners in different countries or native speakers through voice messages.

Teaching/Tutoring Classes

Those participants who had the opportunity to tutor their peers, formally or informally, strongly emphasized the importance of teaching classes in developing their speaking skill in that they were supposed to teach the lessons in English. Tutoring has its root in whatever instruction that promotes student-student or peer interaction (Goldschmid & Goldschmid, 1976) by which learners take the role of teacher for a particular time in classroom (Hanke, 2012). Mostafa's comment illustrates the point,

When I was learning English I also got the opportunity to tutor other learners with lower proficiency levels. In order to teach the materials I had to prepare myself to explain them in English clearly. For this reason, it really helped me to enhance my speaking skill. I always encourage my classmates to do the same even if they can teach children.

It is also worth mentioning that the respondents referred to talking to peers and oneself out of the classroom context as two other strategies used for practicing and developing their speaking. They also remarked on their *constant* utilization of all above-mentioned contexts of speaking to test and refresh this skill regularly.

Thus, comprehensive context was emerged as the second core category of the findings of this study. The context of classroom cannot solely address learners' need to produce output and boost their speaking skill. A comprehensive context of speaking, then, creates ample opportunities for interaction and communication and helps learners to fully exploit their potential for speaking. Overall, a comprehensive context of speaking in EFL setting is causally necessary for learners to learn speaking skill.

Discussion and Implications

In order to develop speaking skill, as the results of this study also shows, learners should essentially be provided with the opportunities to use the target language (Norton & Toohey, 2001) even obligatory in and out of the classroom by developing their positive attitude towards speaking (Abu-Ghararah, 2013) and it is suggested that learning context should be fruitful for the use of language by which learners should be surrounded on a daily basis (Hwang, Chen, Shadiey, Huang, & Chen, 2012).

Furthermore, Kumaravadivelu (2006) considers availability as the first essential state for input procedure. Availability is equally, if not more, important to be regarded as a decisive factor and requisite condition specifically for output procedure and generally for learning process. That is, the context of classroom cannot solely be sufficient to learn speaking skill.

Describing a model of SLA, Brown (1991) depicted the ecology of language acquisition. He metaphorically explained the necessary conditions and factors involving in this ecological cycle so as to reap the 'fruit of performance' (Brown, 2007, p. 308). But availability of context is also of paramount importance in this cycle in that reaping the fruit of performance (or output), the way it is intended, is not solely conditioned by contextual variables. To illustrate, if a vase is available, you can grow a bunch of flowers, if a small piece of land is available, you can grow a small number of trees, and if a vast tract of land is available, you can plant a large garden with various fruit trees. Whether the land is fertile or poor, the climate is ideal or severe, it always looks like rain or the rain pours down etc., then, could be considered as contextual variables. Hence, an important insight to be applied to our understanding of the effects of the learning context lies in the degree to which it is available to learners especially for the learning and improvement of speaking skill.

Consequently, concentrating on the context of learning, this study illuminates our understanding of the process of learning and improving speaking skill in EFL setting of Iran. The study proposes a process taken by fluent and professional speakers of English. Participants first specified how they had received input which is considered as the first priority in the process. Reading, listening, and watching movies were relevant strategies employed and prioritized by participants. Iranian EFL teachers also stressed the importance of these strategies, particularly

listening and watching movies, so as to gain speaking competence (Baleghizadeh & Nasrollahi Shahri, 2014).

After analyzing initial responses, two more questions were emerged focusing on the output process and particularly on the context of speaking. Context-supplement as a workable strategy for supplying additional speaking contexts to overcome its inadequacy and to accelerate the process of learning and improving speaking skill was emerged from the data. This strategy helps learners to avail themselves of missed opportunities to practice speaking due to the fact that classroom contexts cannot sufficiently address their needs. The results show that contexts of panel discussion, virtual world, and teaching/tutoring classes are useful additions to the context of classroom. Hence, the degree to which speaking context is available to learners plays a pivotal role in learning and enhancing speaking skill. It is, then, preferable to provide learners with a comprehensive context of speaking in which they are likely to produce maximum speaking output.

Similar to the works of Harmer (2007), Murphy (2010), and Yen, Hou, and Chang (2015), this study too underscores the importance of peer-to-peer correction and feedback as a necessary part of language learning in general and learning speaking in particular. Yen, Hou, and Chang (2015) aptly stated that ‘allowing mistakes to be made during an activity and with a counterpart addressing those errors provides the participants with the motivation and focus to correct their own mistakes’ (p. 20). Moreover, as Chen (2011) also emphasized learners’ interaction with a computer as a less intimidating context of speaking, this paper also suggests that virtual world as a fruitful and additional context of speaking can be supplied to EFL learners so as to practice speaking out of the classroom context. Although informal, virtual world as an online interactive learning context allows learners, especially EFL learners, to freely communicate in English. It also increases their motivation and gives them more opportunity to interact with each other (Cheon, 2003). Similar to this study, Mali (2015) underscores the importance of the context of virtual world demonstrating the positive effects of interaction with foreigners on the internet through Skype for learners’ speaking skill enhancement.

Furthermore, the results show that the context of panel discussion as the most fruitful context of speaking helps learners to build their confidence which is an essential component before progressing in speaking (Cotterall, 2008).

In essence, this study suggests that additional contexts of speaking such as panel discussion, virtual world, and tutoring classes could expose learners to meaningful language use for learning and improving their speaking skill. The context of panel discussion helps learners to build their confidence, interact with their peers, and produce maximum meaningful language output. As a less threatening context, virtual world aids learners to freely communicate with other learners and practice their speaking out of the classroom context. It also behooves teachers to encourage learners to teach their peers. Since tutors are to explain the contents in English, the context of tutoring classes helps them to practice their speaking efficaciously. It is worth mentioning that different types of tutoring (informal or formal) promote self-regulated learning (e.g De Backer, Van Keer, Moerkerke, & Valcke, 2015; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011) which might be of great help for EFL learners to autonomously take the learning process.

The peculiarity of speaking context in different EFL settings suggests that teachers should take into account the scarcity of speaking context. For this reason, they should be aware that classroom context would not alone suffice to learn and improve speaking skill. Although, as for learners, context-supplement strategy is a remedy to the problem, it nevertheless incumbent upon language program developers to provide learners with a comprehensive context of speaking.

Some limitations need to be considered. EFL setting of Iran cannot obviously be the sole criterion to generalize the findings. For this reason, however, GT approach was implemented to overcome the limitations to the extent possible. Nonetheless, further research should be conducted to better understand the issue. For instance, from a distinctly different angle, advanced EFL learners who have difficulty in their speaking can be investigated.

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