

## The Role of Language Oral Proficiency Progress in Developing the Iraqi EFL learners' Interactional Competence

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**Keywords: Language oral proficiency- interactional competence-breakdown repair- interactive listening- Intersubjectivity.**

### المخلص

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى التحقق من الدور الذي قد يلعبه تحسن الكفاءة اللغوية الشفهية في تطوير الكفاءة التفاعلية لمتعلمي اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية في العراق. تفترض الدراسة عدم وجود فرق ذو دلالة إحصائية بين متوسط درجات إتقان اللغة الشفهية لمتعلمي اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية في كل من الاختبار القبلي والبعدي إضافة الى الاستبيان القبلي والبعدي. كما وتفترض الدراسة عدم وجود فرق ذو دلالة إحصائية بين متوسط درجات الاختبار القبلي والبعدي وكذلك بين متوسط درجات الاستبيان القبلي والبعدي لفئات الكفاءة التفاعلية (إدارة الأدوار، إدارة الموضوع، الاصلاح، الاستماع التفاعلي والمواضيع المشتركة). بعد إجراء بعض التعديلات، تم اعتماد نموذج (Galaczi and Taylors (2020). ولغرض الحصول على بيانات دقيقة، فقد تم إجراء مناقشة جماعية مركزة واستبيان ذاتي التنظيم مع ٥١ طالبًا جامعيًا في السنة الرابعة. وقد قدمت النتائج دليلاً على كفاءة تقدم إتقان اللغة الشفهية في تطوير الكفاءة التفاعلية للطلاب.

### Abstract

The present paper aims at investigating the role that language oral proficiency progress may have in developing the interactional competence of Iraqi EFL learners. The study hypothesizes that there is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of EFL learners' language oral proficiency both in pre-and post-test ,as well as, in the pre-and post-questionnaire. It also hypothesizes that there is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the pre-and post-test ,as well as, between the mean scores of the pre-and post-questionnaire for the interactional competence categories (turn management, topic management, breakdown repair, interactive listening and intersubjectivity).After making some modifications, Galaczi and Taylors' (2020) model is adopted. To elicit accurate data, both focus group discussion and a self-reported questionnaire are conducted with 51 fourth-year Mosul university students. The results provide evidence of the efficiency of language oral proficiency progress in developing students' interactional competence.

## 1. Introduction

Language proficiency “is a measurement of a person's mastery of a language. Proficiency is investigated in terms of receptive and expressive language skills, syntax, semantics, vocabulary and other language skills”(Gottlieb, 2016:63). Thus, as far as language learning is concerned, a proficient language learner is an extremely skilled language user to the extent that he could be recognised as a fluent native like speaker. In this sense, Language proficiency is “an expression of a student’s processing and use of language within and across four language domains or modalities: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.”(ibid:63).

In recent decades, as applied linguists' realisation of the complicated nature of speaking capacity has developed, interactional competence (henceforth IC) has gained more attention in L2 teaching. This is reflected in communicative language teaching and learning approaches (Galaczi and Taylor, 2020:338). In multiple domains of second language learning, teaching, and testing, the term IC has been used by different researchers with different shades of meaning. The notion of IC was first introduced by Kramsch (1986), stating that it is the “interlocutors' ability to communicate and construct meaning jointly” with an emphasis on what happens between the participants in the conversation and how meaning is managed by them. Thus, IC focuses on how meaning is constructed, in an interaction, together and not individually (Ahmadi and Montasseri, 2019, p.5). As McCarthy (2005, p.4) points out, learners deal with confluency in interactional competence rather than fluency; which means making the language fluent together through meaning-creation and contribution. Learners are involved in meaning-making, clarification, and negotiation during interactions, thus confluency takes priority over fluency not just in the EFL classroom but as well as in real-life situations.

## 2. Aim of the study

This study aims at investigating the role of language oral proficiency (henceforth LOP) progress in developing the IC of Iraqi EFL learners.

## 3. Hypotheses of the Study

The present study hypothesizes the following:

1. There is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of EFL learners' language oral proficiency both in pre-and post-test.
- 2- There is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of EFL learners' language oral proficiency both in the pre-and post- questionnaire.
- 3- It also hypothesizes that there is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the pre-and post-test as well as between the mean scores of the pre-and post-questionnaire for the interactional competence categories (turn management, topic management, breakdown repair, interactive listening and intersubjectivity).

## 4. The Concept of Language Proficiency

From a terminological point of view, the term 'proficient' implies demonstrating a high level of skill. Proficiency is the result of hardworking and training. As far as language learning is concerned, a proficient language learner is an extremely skilled language user to the extent that he could be recognised as a fluent native like speaker.

Krashen and Brown (2007:1), when talking about language learning, they introduce academic proficiency as having two components: "academic language proficiency and knowledge of academic content". The goal of academic language use is to "acquire

new knowledge, interact with that knowledge and impart that knowledge to others” (Bailey, 2007 cited in Gottlieb, 2016:67).

Language proficiency is a measurement of a person's mastery of a language. Proficiency is investigated in terms of receptive and expressive language skills, syntax, semantics, vocabulary and other language skills. For Gottlieb (2016:63), Language proficiency is “an expression of a student’s processing and use of language within and across four language domains or modalities: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.”

In terms of competencies, proficiency encompasses many and various competencies. Thus, learners who score at the same scores at the same level may show variable levels of ability in various sub skills (Hadley,1993 cited in Hyacinth, 2020:39). Overall proficiency descriptors appear to be compatible with research regarding acquisition sequences in language development. It is widely assumed that learners pass through probably similar stages of development when acquiring a first or second language. Learners figure out the ways language is used as they acquire new rules about the language and gradually achieve proficiency (Diaz-Rico and Weed, 2010:61).

It is worth mentioning that developing English proficiency is a complicated task. That is, students must not only read and write at a level that enhances high academic achievement, but they also must use their listening and speaking skills to obtain information and deliver their knowledge. Diaz-Rico and Weed (2010:69) suggest that the ability to think critically and creatively is a fifth necessary skill. The teacher's job is to integrate these distinct but related skills into a unified curriculum that progresses students from beginner to advanced English proficiency level in the classroom.

People seek to understand the difference between proficiency and growth as well as how that difference affects learning. According to Bryan (2017), proficiency refers to a particular level of achievement at a specific period. It is about achieving a level of success that is considered "good enough" at that time. Growth, on the other hand, emphasizes how much students learn over time rather than what they can show by the end of the year.

#### **4.1. Language Oral proficiency**

Young (2013:16) states that speaking ability in a foreign or second language is "a subset of a learner's overall ability-or proficiency-in the language". Because oral production is so important in communicative language teaching, speaking skills testing and assessment have become much more important (Sayer, 2005). Thus, designing tasks to test speaking has been "at the centre of language proficiency evaluations". Various types of speaking (intensive, responsive, imitative, extensive, interactive), according to Brown (2004), necessitate different types of assessment tasks or activities. Reading aloud, imitation, dialogue completion, picture description, presentations, role plays, interviews and paired/group discussions, are some examples of learners' oral proficiency tasks (Hughes, 2003; Brown, 2004). Since group oral assessment is one of the most common types of LOP tests and as the IC assessment is based mainly on oral interaction among participants, the current study employs this kind of tests in the form of focus group discussion (henceforth FGD). The following section will go over this topic in more detail.

##### **4.1.1 Group Oral Assessment**

Group oral test/assessment can elicit valuable information about learners' oral proficiency and interactional skills. Aside from being practical, group oral assessment allows the participants to engage in a

symmetrical conversation and reduces their anxiety (Fulcher, 1996, May, 2010). In the same line, many researchers have attempted to reveal the characteristics of “group oral assessment” like the effect of the number of participants on their performance, the influence of their characteristics, the mutual distribution of speaking rights and topic negotiation (Gan, Davison, 2008, Nakatsuhara, 2011, Ockey, 2014). As mentioned earlier FGD is one of the effective techniques for group oral assessment and that is why it is adopted in the current study.

#### **4.1.2 Focus Group Discussion**

Focus group discussion is a qualitative research method and data collection technique that is most commonly used in the social sciences. The general characteristics of the FGD are the homogeneity of participants in terms of the research interest, individuals' involvement and discussion focused on a topic that is determined based on the purpose of the study (Freitas et al. , 1998:2). FGD is a useful technique to gather people from similar experiences or backgrounds to discuss a certain topic of interest. A moderator (facilitator) leads the group of participants by introducing topics for discussion and helping them to participate in a lively and natural discussion (Mishra, 2016:2). FGD is usually recorded and the results obtained are useful in providing information about how individuals feel, think, act or interact about certain topic.

For research purposes, it is sometimes better to work with a pre-existing or familiar group as the participants share common experiences (intersubjectivity), and enjoy a sense of comfort and familiarity that facilitates discussion or the capacity to comfortably question one another (ibid). That is why the present study allows the participants to construct their own groups.

For definitive criteria, the current study employs Marek and Wu (2011) rubric in order to assess LOP. Rubrics are a powerful tool for

assessing performance as they offer criteria for interpreting learners work. Holistic and analytic rubrics/scales are developmental in nature. They are characterised by a set of criteria that is built on each other, from ‘one performance level’ to the other to make a logical progression (Gottlieb, 2016:211). With such kind of rubrics, many criteria are introduced along a continuum from “least” to “most proficient”. Holistic scales of academic achievement or even language proficiency offer an overall description of learners competencies at various levels of performance. Accordingly, they provide a summary and generally assign a numerical value which is easily communicated to stakeholders (ibid).

#### **4.2. The Concept of Interactional Competence**

The concept of IC is coined for the first time by Kramersch (1986). She claims that IC refers to the “learners’ ability to communicate and construct meaning jointly with focus on what goes on between or among the interlocutors and how meaning is organised by them”(Kramersch, 1986:367). Thus, IC is different from CC since it “attempts to account for how interactants manage communication together” (Dings, 2007:8). Young (2008:100) also presents IC as "a relationship between participants' employment of linguistic an interactional resources and the contexts in which they are employed". While Kasper and Ross (2013:9) define IC simply as the “competence to participate in interaction”.

#### **4.3 Galaczi and Taylor’s (2020) Model of Interactional Competence**

As stated earlier, the components of IC according to Galaczi and Taylor (2020:339) are: Turn Management, Topic Management, Breakdown Repair, Interactive Listening and Intersubjectivity. Since the current study adopts this model, its main components/categories are going to be discussed in the following pages.

### 4.3.1 Turn Management

Turn-taking management is “a way of organising conversation, where participants alternate and one speaker speaks at a time” Galaczi and Taylor (2020, p.340). It is a way of conversational organisation in which participants alternate speaking turns and only one speaker speaks at a time. Speakers use linguistic and non-linguistic cues to create turns that are related to preceding turns and distribute turns to other speakers. Silence between turns and overlapping conversation are normally avoided.

In any conversation, the turn-taking system accommodates the following facts:

- “One party speaks at a time.
- Changing the speaker is frequent, or at least occurs once.
- Transitions ,from one turn to another, without (or with slight) gaps or overlaps are common.
- Turn order as well as turn size are not fixed, but they vary .
- Obviously, turn-allocation mechanisms are employed. Either the current speaker may choose a next speaker or the parties can self-select to talk.
- Distribution of turns, length of conversation and what speakers say are not specified in advance.
- There are repair mechanisms for dealing with turn-taking problems and violations .When turn taking errors or violation occur, repair mechanisms are used to deal with them. For example, if two participants find themselves speaking at the same moment, one of them will cease speaking prematurely” (Sacks et al.,1974:700-1).

### 4.3.2 Topic Management

Knowing how to properly participate in conversations entails being able to smoothly initiate, shift, and terminate a topic. Even for proficient speakers, these skills do not always happen easily. Participants can use a variety of methods to inform one another when topics are being initiated, shifted, or closed. Atkinson and Heritage (1984:165) stated that “ topic may well prove to be among the most complex conversational phenomena to be investigated and, correspondingly, the most recalcitrant to systematic analysis”.

### 4.3.3 Breakdown Repair

Repair, in CA, is defined by (Nordquist, 2019:1) as “the process by which a speaker recognises a speech error and repeats what has been said with some sort of correction”. A linguistic repair is sometimes viewed as a type of dysfluency because it is characterised by hesitation and an editing term (e.g. "I mean"). In a conversation, repair addresses recurrent errors in hearing, understanding and speaking (Schegloff et al.,1977:361). As a result, repair is a linguistic phenomenon that is necessary for maintaining smooth and accurate communication.

#### 4.3.3.1 Self-Repair and Other-Repair

When the speaker and/or the recipient notice an error, they repair it. So, one of them takes the initiative in this regard (Emrani and Hooshmand, 2019, p. 58). As a result, repair can be classified as either self-repair or other-repair. That is to say, the speaker corrects or repairs himself versus having someone else do it (Schegloff et al., 1977:361).

### 4.3.4 Interactive listening

Listeners use verbal and non-verbal means to indicate that they are following the interaction. Verbal means include comprehension checks (e.g., “Exactly!”) and backchannels ( e.g., “yeah”); non-verbal cues include gaze and nodding (Galaczi and Taylor,2020:340).

McCarthy (2002:49) came up with the term Listenership to describe the feedback provided by listeners. Though there are various terms that are currently used to describe this process, 'backchannel' is the one that is most commonly used in the literature and particularly in CA.

Backchannelling, in pragmatics and sociolinguistics, refers to the study of listener behaviour in interactions. It occurs when the speaker receives assurance from the listener that they are paying attention to the conversation and the speech has been understood. In other words, backchannelling primarily refers to the feedback that listeners provide to speakers. It could be either verbal or nonverbal. Monosyllabic responses such as “uhum” ,“mhm”, short phrases like I guess so, utterance repetitions, and sentence completions are among the verbal cues. Nodding, laughter and gaze variation are examples of nonverbal ones (McPherron and Smoke, 2019:220; Crystal, 2008:48).

#### **4.3.5 Intersubjectivity**

Interactional competence, according to Kramsch (1986:367), “presupposes a shared internal context or sphere inter-subjectivity,” which indicates that a participant in a conversation may guess what is on his partner's mind. Inter-subjectivity is crucial for the effective communication, and to achieve intersubjectivity three conditions must be met: (a)“the receiver should come to attend to the situation as intended by the sender, (b) the sender should know that the receiver is doing so, and (c) the receiver should know that the sender knows that this is the case” (Young 2011:430-1). Thus, intersubjectivity should be investigated through focusing on how the participants establish a shared understanding (Alterman, 2007).

## 5. Model of Analysis

As mentioned earlier, the aim of the current study is to investigate Iraqi EFL learners' IC. The model adopted in the current study is Galaczi and Taylor's (2020) model of IC. Some modifications have been made to suit the settings and requirements of the current study. First, non-verbal behaviour is excluded due to the pandemic situation as the assessment is conducted online which makes it very difficult to account for. Second, intersubjectivity has been accounted for as it is recognised by many scholars such as (Gonzalez Lioret 2011, Kramsch 1986, Markee 2016 and Stevanovic & Koski 2018 ) as a crucial factor that distinguishes IC from the broad concept of CC. Thus, the 'modified' model of IC consists of the following:

- (1) turn management;
- (2) topic management;
- (3) breakdown repair;
- (4) interactive listening;
- (5) Intersubjectivity.

Harvey Sacks' (1960s) model of the CA approach which is developed later by Schegloff and Jefferson is meant to be used as the essence of the adopted procedure in the current study for collecting and transcribing data. The collected data are analysed according to the principles of the CA approach as it is "a powerful tool for revealing the various interactional practices that constitutes IC" (Wong and Waring, 2010:12).

## 6. Data Collection

In terms of data collection, the present study employs both quantitative and qualitative methods. That is two instruments of data collection are applied in the study: (a) a self-reported questionnaire, and (b) a focus group discussion. The questionnaire consists of close-ended questions that are used in quantitative researches.

## 7.Data Analysis and Findings

After the data collection process, the final step is to transform the data into a form that could be used for analysis. As a result, the students' questionnaire responses were organised and categorised. The recorded discussions, on the other hand, are transformed into written form. That is, they are transcribed using Jefferson transcription system. The employment of the categories of IC is then evaluated using a five-point Likert scale. The interactional categories are rated by the researcher and her supervisor separately.

Finally, the data obtained from the questionnaire and focus group discussion are sent to an educational statistician . So, the data are ready to be analysed and discussed to provide the findings of the study. The data are analysed using SPSS V26 (statistical package for the social sciences).

### 7.1 Language Oral Proficiency

Both of FGD and the self-reported questionnaire in pre- and post-tests are implemented to assess LOP improvement.

#### A. Focus Group Discussion

Data collected from the recorded and transcribed conversations of the pre-and post-test are analysed and statistically treated using the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks formula to assess learners' LOP according to CA findings. That is, if the p-value is less than 0.05 “level of significance” then there is a significant difference between the pre and post-test and vice versa. Following the rubric of Marek and Wu (2011) of oral proficiency, the categories being tested are fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar.

**Table(1)**  
**The Pre and post-Focus Group Discussion Test of Language Oral Proficiency**

<b>Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test</b>			
<b>Categories</b>	<b>Mean rank</b>	<b>Z</b>	<b>P-value</b>
Pre-fluency	6.50	1.309	.421
Post-fluency	6.50		
Pre-vocabulary	8.00	3.120	.002
Post-vocabulary	9.13		
Pre-pronunciation	4.50	1.414	.157
Post-pronunciation	4.50		
Pre-Grammar	.00	2.646	.008
Post-Grammar	4.00		
<b>Total Pre LOP</b>	11.80	3.047	.002
<b>Total Post LOP</b>	13.33		

As the table above shows that the mean rank obtained from the learners' fluency in both pre-and post-test is 6.50. The p-value is found to be 0.421 at a 0.05 level of significance. Thus, no statistically significant difference between the two tests is detected. Concerning vocabulary, the mean rank in the pre-test is found to be 8.00 whereas in the post-test it is 9.13. While the p-value of learners' use of vocabulary in both pre-and post-test is 0.002 at 0.05 level of significance which indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the two tests. The learners' pronunciation seems not to be affected by the courses of the academic year. This can be noticed through the mean rank of the pre-and post-test which is 4.50 and the p-value of learners scores which is 0.157 at 0.05 level of significance. Concerning

grammar, there is a statistically significant difference between the mean rank of learners' use of grammar in pre and post-test and the p-value is less than 0.05 as is noticed in Table 1. The results show that there is a statistically significant difference between the total mean scores of EFL learners' LOP both in pre-and post-test in favour of post-test. *Thus, the statistical treatment rejects the first hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance, under 50 “the degree of freedom”.*

### B. The Self-reported Questionnaire

As stated earlier, both FGD and self-reported questionnaire are conducted to assess the learners' LOP. In this section, the data collected from the self-reported questionnaire are going to be discussed.

**Table (2)**

**The Mean Rank of Students’ Language Oral Proficiency in Pre and Post- Questionnaire**

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test			
Categories	Mean rank	Z	P-value
Pre-fluency	3.00	-6.036	.000
Post-fluency	26.43		
Pre-vocabulary	10.17	-5.531	.000
Post-vocabulary	23.92		
Pre-pronunciation	16.33	-5.325	.000
Post-pronunciation	23.48		
Pre-Grammar	12.70	-5.408	.000
Post-Grammar	25.87		
<b>Total Pre LOP</b>	13.52	6.093	.000
<b>Total Post LOP</b>	25.50		

Because the collected data are not normally distributed, the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test is applied. Concerning Fluency, the mean

rank obtained from learners in the pre-questionnaire is 3.00, while that in post-questionnaire is 26.43. The p-value is 0.00 at 0.05 level of significance, which indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the pre-and post- questionnaire scores. By looking at the results in Table2, it is quite clear that all the four categories of learners' LOP are developed through the academic year, as there are statistically significant differences between the pre-and post-questionnaire scores. The total mean rank of the pre-questionnaire is found to be 13.52, whereas that of the post-questionnaire is 25.50. The total P-value is found to be 0.00 which is less than 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the total pre- and post-questionnaire scores. Accordingly, *the second hypothesis is rejected.*

## **7.2 Interactional Competence**

To assess learners' IC development, both FGD and the self-reported questionnaire in pre- and post-test are employed.

### **A. Focus Group Discussion**

Now, the results of the IC categories are compared in both pre- and post-test in order to check if there is a statistically significant difference between the two tests. Check the results in the table below:

Table (3)

**The Pre- and Post-Test of the Interactional Competence in Focus  
Group Discussion**

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test			
IC main categories	Mean Rank	Z	P-value
Pre Turn Management	14.50	4.336	.000
Post Turn Management	16.10		
Pre Topic Management	10.68	3.458	.001
Post Topic Management	17.50		
Pre Breakdown Repair	.00	3.446	.001
Post Breakdown Repair	8.00		
Pre Interactive Listening	4.00	3.346	.001
Post Interactive Listening	8.80		
Pre Intersubjectivity	4.50	2.810	.005
post Intersubjectivity	6.68		

Table 3 illustrates the following:

1. **Turn Management:** the mean rank obtained from the pre-test is 14.50; while that in the post-test is 16.10. The P-value is 0.000 at 0.05 “level of significance”, which means that there is a statistically significant difference in favour of the post-test.
2. **Topic Management:** the mean rank obtained from the pre-test is 10.68; whereas that in the post-test is 17.50. The P-value is found to be 0.001 at 0.05 “level of significance”, which means that there is a statistically significant difference in favour of the post-test.
3. **Breakdown Repair:** the mean rank obtained from the pre-test is 0.000; while that in the post-test is 8.000. The P-value is 0.001 “at 0.05 level of significance”, which means that there is a statistically significant difference in favour of the post-test.

- 4. Interactive Listening:** the mean rank obtained from the pre-test is 4.00; whereas in the post-test is 8.80. The P-value is 0.001 at 0.05 “level of significance”, which means that there is a statistically significant difference in favour of the post-test.
- 5. Intersubjectivity:** the mean rank obtained from the pre-test is 4.50; while that in the post-test is 6.68. The P-value is 0.005 “at 0.05 level of significance”, which means that there is a statistically significant difference in favour of the post-test.

To conclude, the results lead us to the fact that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the pre-and post-test in FGD. Thus, *the third hypothesis is rejected.*

#### **B. The Self-reported Questionnaire**

The same procedure adopted in analysing the data of FGD, is applied in analysing the data from the self-reported questionnaire. That is, the results of the main categories of IC are compared in both pre-and post-test to check if there is a statistically significant difference between the two tests (see the table below).

**Table (4)**

#### **The Pre- and Post-Test of the Interactional Competence in the Questionnaire**

<b>Test Statistics</b>			
<b>IC main categories</b>	<b>Mean Rank</b>	<b>Z</b>	<b>P-value</b>
Pre Turn Management	24.30	.433	.665
Post Turn Management	25.86		
Pre Topic Management	23.64	1.668	.095
Post Topic Management	25.02		
Pre Breakdown Repair	22.08	2.892	.038
Post Breakdown Repair	27.78		

Test Statistics			
IC main categories	Mean Rank	Z	P-value
Pre Interactive Listening	22.50	2.744	.041
post-InteractiveListening	24.97		
Pre Intersubjectivity	18.33	1.443	.035
Post Intersubjectivity	22.41		

The results of both the pre-and post-questionnaire which proved that the third hypothesis is rejected because the mean scores obtained by the learners in the pre and post-questionnaire indicate that there is a statistically significant difference between them. More details are provided below:

- 1. Turn Management:** the mean rank obtained from the pre-test is 24.30; whereas that in the post-test is 25.86. The P-value is found to be 0.665 at 0.05 “level of significance”, which indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between the pre and post-test scores.
- 2. Topic Management:** the mean rank obtained from the pre-test is 23.64; while that of the post-test is 25.02. The P-value is 0.095 “at 0.05 level of significance”, which shows that there is no statistically significant difference between “the two tests”.
- 3. Breakdown Repair:** the mean rank obtained from the pre-test is 22.08; whereas in the post-test is 27.78. The P-value is 0.038 “at 0.05 level of significance”, which means that there is a statistically significant difference in favour of the post-test.
- 4. Interactive Listening:** the mean rank obtained from the pre-test is 22.50. In the post-test it is 24.97. The P-value is 0.041 “at 0.05 level of significance”, which means that there is a statistically significant difference in favour of the post-test.

**5. Intersubjectivity:** the mean rank obtained from the pre-test is 18.33 and that in the post-test is 22.41. The P-value is 0.035 “at 0.05 level of significance”, which indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in favour of the post-test.

In sum, the results lead us to the fact that there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the pre-and post-test in the questionnaire. Thus, *the third hypothesis is rejected.*

## **8. Conclusions**

Based on the findings, the study has come up with the following conclusions:

1. Learners’ LOP has been improved through their study of the academic courses.
2. Learners’ level of IC has been improved significantly through studying academic courses that use authentic materials and focus on oral communication. Thus, it is the teachers’ responsibility to select and construct language activities that are interactionally based to encourage learners to develop their IC. That is, the more they practice, the better their interactional skills would become.
3. As the current study aims at investigating the role of LOP progress in developing the IC of learners, it is concluded that AP plays a significant role in developing learners’ IC.

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