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Examine Factors Affecting Classroom Interaction in the (EFL) Libyan Context

Liala Hamed Imbarik Bawod*[1]

*Corresponding author:
lailaahmd2006@gmail.com
University of Benghazi,
Libya

Abstract: This article examines factors affecting classroom interaction in the Libyan EFL context, emphasizing its vital role in language acquisition. Interaction is defined as the real-time correspondence between teacher and students. Establishing a positive classroom atmosphere is crucial for student progress, largely dependent on the teacher's role. The article is divided into three sections. The first defines interaction, discusses various interaction types and their advantages and disadvantages, and outlines the roles of both teachers and learners in creating opportunities for language acquisition. The second section presents key factors influencing classroom interaction and student progress, selected for the Libyan context but potentially applicable to other EFL settings. The third section discusses specific characteristics of classroom interaction that teachers can employ to foster a positive environment, enabling students to develop their interactive performance. The study argues that awareness of these elements is essential for enhancing the effectiveness of EFL classroom interaction.

Keywords: Classroom Interaction, EFL, Teacher's Role, Language Acquisition, Learning Environment

الباحث الاول¹*: ليلى حامد، جامعة بنغازي، ليبيا.

دراسة العوامل المؤثرة على التفاعل الصفي في سياق تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في ليبيا

المستخلص: يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة العوامل المؤثرة في التفاعل الصفي في سياق تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في ليبيا، مع إبراز أهميته في دعم عملية اكتساب اللغة. ويُعرَّف التفاعل الصفي بوصفه تواصلاً آنياً ومتبادلاً بين المعلم والطلبة داخل البيئة الصفية. يفترض البحث أن بناء مناخ صفي إيجابي يُعدّ عنصرًا حاسمًا في تحسين أداء الطلبة اللغوي، وأن دور المعلم يمثل محورًا أساسيًا في تحقيق ذلك. ويتناول البحث، من خلال إطار تحليلي، مفهوم التفاعل الصفي وأنواعه المختلفة، مع بيان أدوار المعلم والمتعلم في تهيئة فرص فعالة لاكتساب اللغة. كما يناقش مجموعة من العوامل المؤثرة في التفاعل الصفي وتقدم الطلبة، تم اختيارها بما يتناسب مع الخصوصية التعليمية الليبية، مع إمكانية الإفادة منها في سياقات تعليمية مشابهة. ويخلص البحث إلى أن وعي المعلمين بخصائص التفاعل الصفي واستراتيجياته يسهم بشكل مباشر في تعزيز فاعلية العملية التعليمية وتنمية الأداء التفاعلي للطلبة في صفوف تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التفاعل الصفي، اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، دور المعلم، اكتساب اللغة، بيئة التعلم.

Introduction

''Learning to talk in the foreign language is often considered to be one of the most difficult aspects of language learning for the teacher to help the student with''. Brown and Yule (1983, p.25).

''One of the basic problems in foreign language teaching is to prepare learners to be able to use the language''. Bygate (1987, p.3).

One of the significant aspects of knowing the way of speaking takes a place is through 'interaction', because it is the reason behind giving the learners an opportunity to express their views and opinions in the language they are learned. A long with that, Brown and Yule discussed that ''the student should be able to 'express himself' in the target language, to cope with basic interactive skills like exchanging greetings and thanks and apologies, and to express his 'needs' request information, services etc.'' Brown and Yule (1983, p. 27).

Research questions:

the author raises the following questions:

1- What are the factors that may affect the classroom interaction in Libyan English classrooms?
2- Do all types of classroom interaction were used equally?

Literature Review

According to Delamont ''The interaction is understood as the daily 'give-and-take' between teacher and pupils'' (1983, p.28). Therefore interaction means the way that both teachers and students interact. Understanding the roles of both teachers and students in the classroom and the relationship between them is important. Interaction in classroom might influence by some factors that played an essential part in learning process. In addition to that there are different types of interaction in which teachers and learners are used in several situations, so building a good rapport inside the classroom could have a fundamental affect on interaction in the classroom.

1- Types of Interaction

There are several types of interaction that are used depending on the activity that is planned in the classroom by the teacher. The first type is:

1.1 Student to Student Interaction ''pair work''. One of the advantages of this type of interaction is that students work and interact closely and use English inside the classroom appropriately. The second type of interaction is:

1.2 Teacher to Student as an individual. For example, the teacher asks one student a question and the student responds. The third type is:

1.3 Teacher and the whole class. In other words, as Byrne defined it among the other types as ''the ones we use when we want the learners to use language freely-to express their own ideas and to say what they want'' (1987, p.53). That is when the teacher inter-

acts with all students. In contrast of what Byrne said, Chiew and Tobin (1998) argue that there is a problem in whole class interaction if only one group of students would be contributing while others are not. The forth type of interaction could be :

1.4 Students to Tools, such as the use of computers and internet. For example there are many programmes on the internet for language learning. ''the internet was used to create a reflective, interactive, and collaborative learning environment'' Chiew and Tobin (1998, p. 172).

There is no doubt that teachers have roles and responsibilities in the classroom Harmer (2001, p.56) states that ''we are always on the stage''. In the process of learning a teacher has some responsibilities and roles to do. In addition to that these roles are used in different ways in different situations inside and outside the classroom. Both Hedge (2000) and Harmer (2001) agreed that the roles of the teacher might play as a controller, assessor, corrector, organizer, monitoring and prompter which creates interaction during the lessons. However neither Hedge nor Harmer mentioned the role of the teacher as a human being in the classroom. In other words, all of the roles related only to the lesson. On the other hand, the pivotal role of the teacher might be solving problems in the class. For example, understanding students and supporting them even outside the classroom.

One of the most basic roles of the teacher is creating a positive teaching style by using body language, for example, smiling, good manner and using an appropriate tone of voice which lead to a positive environment for a long term in learning process in the classroom in order to interact. According to Mathieson and Price (2002, p.17) ''we need to make sure that our tone of voice, body stance, facial expression and language are all working congruently''. To sum up a teacher could perform different roles in several situations in the classroom.

The question may arises here, in contrast to teachers roles:

What are the roles of the learner in the classroom?

It is clearly that learners are the cores in the process of learning along with humans are born learners. There are several responsibilities that belong to the learners; according to Watkins creating interaction among students whether pair work or group work is one of the roles of the learner. In contrast Rivers & Temperley argue that ''Students need situations where they are on their own (that is, not supported by teacher or structured exercise) trying to use the foreign language to exchange with others messages of real interest to them'' (1978, p. 47). This suggests that we could not ask learners to set in groups and interact. What is more, a learner might take charge as a recorder of information, questioner and a discoverer. These roles could take a place while interaction either by the teacher or among students. For example one student may have the ability to discover a grammatical rule before the teacher presents it. Others may think and inform some questions to ask and interact as whole class to solve doubts; in this case students' role is performed as a questioner. There is no doubt

that learners are different and that no two individuals have the similar thoughts or ideas. The reason is because of several factors such as, age, personality, attitudes, and culture environment. These individual differences might affect on the learners' interaction in the classroom. For example, one or two students could find it difficult to interact with the teacher or other students because they are shy. This may not mean they are not involved in the classroom as some teachers perhaps thought negatively about those students. As Lewis and Hill (1985, p.20) argue that ''learn to respect the fact that students may be involved in learning, without necessarily making a contribution''. Another example, one of my students has a negative attitude towards learning English, it is difficult to force him to speak and interact and his goal is just to pass an exam. In contrast the characteristic of students who interact mostly in the classroom are those who have confidence and have a positive attitudes towards the L2.

The roles of both teachers and students need to have a good relationship to be achieved. The most fundamental thing in the learning process inside the classroom is establishing a good relationship among teachers and students. It might be more important than the materials and methods which are used. According to Delamont (1983) one of the essential element in teaching is that teachers must use a lot of time talking with their students. What is more, creating a nice atmosphere in the classroom helps in establishing a good relationship with the teacher. As the roles of the teachers and students take a place. For example if the roles that have mentioned above are performed correctly by both teachers and students then without doubting a positive classroom environment would be created along with classroom interaction. To sum up, good relationship between the teacher and the student leads to interaction among members in the classroom.

The following section will present factors which affect classroom interaction. The influence of teacher behavior, motivation, individual differences, gender of the teacher, the students and class subject, in other words the topics which been discussed in the classroom. Finally, the use of the mother tongue in the classroom where English is learnt.

2. Factors affecting EFL classroom interaction
2.1 Teacher's behaviour

First as argued above that teachers have an essential influence on students' behaviour, what they expect and how they behave towards their students change the ways in which the students respond. For example, if the teacher behaves inappropriately in the classroom by shouting at the students or becoming unhelpful, he/she would create a negative effect on the classroom interaction, which may lead to students to behave the same by copying the teacher. As Mathieson & Price (2002) point out that, what we do and say has an effect on our behaviour. For example, if you smile at someone, he/she might without doubt respond a smile in return. In other words, modelling good behaviour will in turn bring good behaviour. Therefore ''we can use this knowledge to positively affect classroom behaviour'' (2002,

p.17, 18). However, the teacher could solve this problem by bring the positives and ignoring negatives. On the one hand concentrating only on positive behaviour of students by praising and creating positive atmosphere, Teachers' role is ignoring negative behaviour which leads to creating a gap between both teacher and students' relationships. In the other words if the teacher shout or react badly in the classroom, students could notice it easily and start to misbehave the teacher. Secondly, it is important to reward students' work and progress. If we take the weaker students as an example, he/she might fail the second time but his/her mark is higher than the first exam, in this situation the teacher's duty is to encourage and reward the student which improves motivation and creates positive behaviour instead of negative behaviour. Finally, by using 'Premark principles'. Students in this situation do whatever the teacher asked to do as a result they could choose what they want to do next. For example, if students are given a hard task to do the teacher in this case is used a game or an interesting activity which help students to do better and keeping interaction continued.

2.2 Motivation

The second factor affects classroom interaction is motivation. Martos defines motivation as ''Motivation is emotion or desire that causes one to act in a certain way'' (2004, p.48). Motivation has an essential role in nowadays research education and it considered to be the key to learning. Motivation could have a great influence on students' learning in classroom interaction. It has been founded that variety of students' needs and interests leads to a desire to learn and create a positive learning environment. According to Gardener (1985) there are two types of motivation, the first type is ''instrumental motivation'' which refers to the desire of learning a particular thing in a language in order to achieve a goal, for example to find a job or pass an exam. The second type is'' Integrative motivation'' which refers to the desire of becoming a part in the second language culture group. The question might arise here, how teachers could motivate learners in order to interact in the classroom. Without doubting it is difficult to motivate learners to learn a new language as English in their own environment. However, there are different ways in which students could be motivated inside the classroom. One of the ways according to Cole and Chan (1994) firstly students are learnt to be motivated when they are supported to develop their attitudes towards the context of learning, understand academic activates values. Another way is to build self-confidence of students, in other words to give them the feeling that they can do it by encouraging them. In order to motivate students teachers are considered to be able to teach in an enthusiastic way, as ''teachers who are enthusiastic about teaching and learning usually provide a very good model of motivation for their students'' Cole and Chan (1994, p. 362). However some teachers are not enthusiastic, the reason why is because of the environment they teach in is not related to their environment. For example some Libyan teachers are not motivated to teach English. Therefore it leads to create unmotivated students. A student motivation is depend on the teacher. ''motivation depends on the social interaction between

the teacher and the learner'' Gomleksiz (2001, p.220).Therefore the teacher should be enthusiastic towards teaching and learning as well.

2.3 Individual differences

The third factor is individual differences. It can be argued that most language learning researches focus on teachers more than learners' individual differences. All humans are different in the way they act towards the world and in the education system, there are differences between students. For example, one student is more intelligent than the other. What is more, individual differences could have a great influence on how the teacher treats the students. ''Certain kinds of students will be liked by most teachers, and others will be disliked by most teachers. To the extent that teacher experiences a strong emotional response to a student and forms clear-cut attitudes towards him' Brophy and Good (1974, p.17). Therefore the relationship between both students and teacher might be influenced whether in a positive or negative way. Learning a new language is without doubting is a challenge. But is using L1 beneficial in English classroom interaction.

2.4 Using the L1 in classroom interaction

The forth factor that could affect interaction in the classroom is the use of the L1. There are different views from several researchers that on the one hand, some are with using the L1 in English classroom interaction on the other hand some are completely against that, which is using the mother tongue during English lessons in classroom is usefulness and the reason why is that learners are expected to use merely English in order to learn the language.. In addition to that some of the students have some ideas to express while interacting but they fail to express them in English. On the other hand others might know how to express English but not ideas. ''Permitting both languages preferably in clearly defined areas usually ensures that much of the work is more interesting, and that ultimately higher standard of English is achieved'' Lewis & Hill (1985, p.35). In contrast Olivares (2009) states that during the past time between 1970s and 1980s, using L1 in the classroom where L2 is taught is a '' bad thing''. Therefore the teacher should interact with the students in English. Along with that Kavaliauskiene (2009) agreed with Olivares and added the using of L1 in a context that learners learn L2 is described as a waste of time.''To develop a second language properly means learning to use it independently of the first language and eventually to think in it'' (Cook, 2008, p.181). Harmer (2007) points out that using a lot of listening exercises enable students to realize how English sounds are. The teacher is the recourse in which learners are learnt the language in schools. Therefore the teacher should create an English atmosphere which encourages learners to interact in English positively. AS ''the more they work in English the better their English will get and the better their English is, the less need we have of the L1'' Harmer (2007, p. 135).

2.5 Gender of the teacher

The fifth factor is gender of the teacher, students and the class subject. Gender is considered to be a factor of classroom interaction. 'the sex of the teacher does have an impact on classroom interaction'' Howe (1997, p. 13).The differences of gender could be an effect the influence whether by teachers or students. . Students also have a great affect on classroom interaction. Some researchers such as Howe (1997), Duffy, Warren and Walsh (2002) found out that males interact more than girls due to their respondent to the teacher.. What is more the class subject might have an effect as well. For example if the teacher chooses a topic that interest boys only, then integration among some girls might not take place. Therefore the teacher role is to mix subjects and be able to find out what students' needs are and what interest them. Knowing students' names, respecting, responding and listening to them are considered to be several characteristic of classroom interaction. Knowing the names of students: according to Gautreaux (2010) the first step of achieving objects in the classroom, such as establishing relationship and creating a nice atmosphere in which interaction is played a role knows students names. If the teacher knows students' names, students will feel confident to learn and interact positively. Although sometimes, it is hard for the teacher to remember some names. But he/she could use several methods to remember the names. For example, one teacher might ask students to write their names in a piece of paper and put it in front of them; others might ask students to not change their settings. Therefore it is essential for interaction to know students' names. Secondly, respecting students. One of the most important issues during interaction is respecting students. If the teacher is not respecting what students say then it would be difficult for students to interact. According to Harmer (2007) the risk is taken a place when teachers criticize students, therefore students became demotivated to interact. In the other hand praising them with create a good and positive learning atmosphere.'' What learners need is not necessarily simplification of the linguistic forms but rather an opportunity to interact with other speakers, working together to reach mutual comprehension'' Lightbown and Spada (2006, p.43). Finally, Listening and responding to students show interest while listing to students might motivate them to express their feelings in the language that they learn. Accepting their opinions make them feel more confident. In contrast if the teacher does not pay attention of what students say or comment, then the interaction would be lost. Therefore ''listening is not just done with ears, we need to show that we are listening and paying attention to our students, and this is mean approaching them, making eye contact and generally looking interested'' Harmer (2007,p.114, 115).

Methodology

Observational data were collected from 4 Libyan English teachers in their classrooms while they are teaching English for 45 minutes. Notes were taken. Additionally interviews with 10 students were conducted to figure out more about the factors and types of classroom in-

teraction and reasons behind not using one of the types of classroom interaction in the same way.

Participants

Four Libyan primary school English teachers, two females and two males who are well experienced were observed while they are teaching their classes, along with 10 primary students, five females and 5 males with age between 7-10. All participants are from two different public schools in Sirte city, gender of both female and male were presented equally.

Results and Discussions

As seen in the table below the result of both observation with teachers and interviews with the students. The author gave a focus on some important factors that might affect classroom interaction and has found out that in Libya English is taught in schools as a foreign language due its fundamental role in the world nowadays. Most of the teachers of primary public schools are behaving well and according to the class atmosphere depends on its size. For motivation most of students are likely to be not motivated to speak English and they focus more on passing exams. Individual differences between students were noted and only intelligent students were treated well by the teacher. A large use of L1 (mother tongue) while both teaching and learning English, thus the interaction of the L2 in English classroom is not taking a place and no doubt this leads to affect on the learners' process of learning the language. What is more, according to gender, female teachers are likely to be more positive, for an example, I had noticed that females have the ability to understand their students and to be more patient than the males' teachers. However, in Libya girls are likely to be more active during the lesson than the boys and the interaction takes the place among the students separately. The reason why is because boys and girls feel shy to interact with each other. To sum up focusing on teacher talk time was noted as a central part of teaching English.

For answering the second question and based on both observation and interviews and according to the using of types of classroom interaction, it has been noted that pair interaction is rarely taking a place in all classes. Unfortunately students are not giving opportunities to negotiate topics together. the reason why some Libyan learners find it difficult to interact with the teacher in English is because the teacher do not encourage using it, another reason is, the problem faced learners are not listening and practising in English in English classroom, which is wrong and affected in negative way in their process.

Table 1

Factors of classroom interaction	According to the observation of teachers	According to the Interviewing with the student
1- Teacher's behaviour	Most of the teachers' behaviour were appropriate. Except one of the teachers whose behaviour was negative towards his class and the reason behind that was the large number of students he has in his class. Losing control can be a vital reason behind not behaving well with the whole class.	When asking students about their teacher's behaviour. Most answered that teachers are respecting students and vice versa
2- Motivation	Motivation takes a place when only teachers ask questions. The focus of most of them were for the strong students who answer first. Unfortunately, weak students have been completely neglected	Motivation for learning English for communication is not a real desire for most. Their achievement s is only to pass the exam
3- Individual differences	Students who are intelligent are treated better from the teacher	Students with weak ability to understand the teacher are demotivated to learn English
4- Using L1in classroom	Teachers are using L1 most of time in translating vocabulary and explaining grammar.	Students find it easy to interact and share ideas in Arabic
5- Gender of both teachers and students	Female teachers are likely to be more positive and patient with students than males' teachers	Female students feel shy to interact with males so they prefer to interact with each other.

Conclusion

To conclude, Classroom interaction is considered to be an important issue along with understanding of factors that affecting on interaction. Such factors that make classroom interaction extremely complex. The teacher should be aware of these factors and encourage to overcome the influence of these factors whether by him/her or by the students. The preceding parts of this essay illustrated the definition of the word ''interaction'' in the classroom by introducing different types of interaction between both teacher and students which due to creating a good relationship inside the classroom. What is more, creating a good relationship depends on the roles that are played firstly by the teacher and secondly by the students. Classroom interaction has a great role in achieving the target language. Some factors were reviewed. Individual differences between learners have an impact on classroom interaction. The role of the L1

language in English classroom, a question was asked whether Using L1 in L2 classroom interaction is benefit or not. Interaction in the classroom might depend on motivation of both teachers and students that there should be a relaxed context where both of them have a desire to learn, this is leads to a classroom   interaction. Along with that the influence of the teacher behaviour was included as a factor that effects on the learning process where interaction is considered to be an essential part of students' learning process of L2. Finally, some characteristic of classroom interaction are discussed by the support of the teacher.

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