An Assessment of Using Classroom Interaction Techniques in the Classroom from the EFL Iraqi Teacher's Point of View

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Abstract

Successful interaction is the basis of positive human relationships among people. Similar to every day –life interaction, students have to be trained to be effective communicators in a foreign language. This can be done through different ways of encouraging classroom interaction techniques.

The aim of this study is to assess classroom interaction techniques that are used in the classroom in teaching .

The sample of the study consists of EFL teachers of the intermediate schools of Al-muqdadyia District from the directorate general of Diyala province. The total number of the teachers is 60. A questionnaire has been constructed by the researcher which consists of 20 items that represent classroom interaction techniques that are used in teaching. The items of the questionnaire are exposed to specialists to check their validity and reliability .

After administering the questionnaire on the techniques of the classroom interaction in teaching that are used by Iraqi teachers of English ,the weighted means of the items and percentages are calculated . The researcher concludes that classroom interaction techniques can be developed by applying different ways for helping students to communicate .The teachers help the students by asking questions, choosing appropriate topics and providing them with comprehensible input .

Finally ,a number of suggestions for further researches , pedagogical implications and recommendations are put forward by the reasercher.

Section One
1.1 Statement of the Problem and Its Significance

Teaching is the basic of any educational system. Teaching a language is not any easy task, for the language teachers should possess the skill and the knowledge. **(Harding,1990:1)**

Interaction among the students and between the teacher and the students in the classroom is one of the primary means by which learning is realized. Teachers are concerned with effective teaching in their classroom ,and there are times they employ some techniques to this end. **(Sahin&Cokada,2006:20)** So, in order to have effective teaching , teachers must build good relationships. The teacher-pupil relationship can determine a classroom's atmosphere. When a teacher and a group of pupils have good relationship, both parties enjoy teaching and learning more. Teachers traditionally view themselves as authority figures in the classroom ; however ,when they shift their focus from lecturing to exchanging knowledge , the relationship between teachers and their pupils tends to improve , so positive energy flows in the classroom, which maks learning fun and engaging. **(Alice ,2011:1)**

Carter and Nunan(2001:120) state that the term classroom interaction refers to the interaction between the teacher and the learners, and amongst the learners in the classroom .A strong relationship with the learners is vital for classroom success , so it is worth spending time and energy to get it right.

Most teachers would hope for a small class size in which students are more or less homogeneous in terms of proficiency .Except for a lucky few, however, most teachers find themselves working with a class of fifty students or more , and to make matters worse , these students often exhibit a wide variety of abilities . This situation often leads to the use of teaching methodology which does not promote optimal learning .In addition to that **AL-mutawa and AI-kailani,(1989:31)** state that some techniques and teaching strategies require more time in order to work in different ways with different pupils. In fact ,in some Arab educational systems ,the FL hours have been reduced to minimum five per week which leads to ineffective teaching .   Thus, cooperative learning can lead to a more dynamic classroom interaction that promotes more learning.

Richard and Renandya(2002:50) illustrate that the classroom is an opportunity for the learners to begin the journey towards success, and to grasp the reality that beyond those classroom hours are dozens of hours

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weekly that can be devoted to practice meaningful uses of the new language.

More recent studies have begun to investigate the underlying factors which shape interaction in the classroom; e.g., teachers and learners' belief and social and cultural background of the teacher and the learner and the psychological aspect of the second and foreign language learning that providing further insights in to the complexities of classroom interaction.

So this study has been tackled to investigate the efficiency of using classroom interaction techniques from Iraqi teachers' point of view. It sheds the light on a number of the techniques that represent classroom interaction .The present study is expected to fill the gap in the literature of this field.

1.2. Aim of the Study

The present study aims at assessing the use of the main classroom interaction techniques that are used in teaching from EFL Iraqi teachers point of view to see which of these techniques is considered an effective one in teaching for the students at the intermediate stage.

1.3.Value of the Study

The present study is expected to be of a great value for :-
1- Iraqi teachers who will benefit from its details in dealing with new techniques in teaching .
2- the specialists in the process of teaching EFL by depending on the recommendations of the present work concerning using classroom interaction techniques.

1.4. Limits of the Study

The present study is limited to the investigation of the classroom interaction techniques used by English teachers in the Directorate General of Diyala Education ,Almuqdadiya school for the academic year (2013-2014).

1.5. Procedures

To achieve the aim of the present study , the following procedures are adopted:
1- A thorough survey is done concerning the topic under investigation.
2- A sample consisting of the teachers of English at the intermediate schools from the general directorate of Diyala is selected as the subjects of this study.
3- A questionnaire is constructed under the supervision of a number of specialists who check the validity of its items and make comments ,suggestions, and modifications if necessary.

4- The responses of the questionnaire are analyzed and then computed using adequate statistical techniques.

1.6.Definition of Basic Terms

1-Assessment: Hornby(1974:46) defines assessment as deciding or fixing the value of property for certain purposes. According to MacMillan Essential **Dictionary (2003:36)** assessment means thinking about something carefully and making a judgment about it.

2-Classrom Interaction: Brown and Chmark (1993:188) state that interaction implies a relationship between two people involving interchanges over an extended period of time . **Brown and Yule (1993:22)** state that interaction refers to what we normally mean by conversation and describe interaction that serves a primary social function.

3-**Techniques:** a technique is a procedure used by the teacher in the classroom. In other words, it is what the teacher actually does in the classroom to implement a method which is , in turn , consistent with an approach. **Al-mutawa & Al-kailani, (1989:12)**

Section Two
Classroom Interaction

2.1.Types of Interaction
2.1.1.Social interaction

Cohen and Manion (1977:172) state that types of classroom interaction can be divided into social interaction and group dynamic as well as computer interaction. Social interaction involves student interaction and student- teacher interaction . Students learn by collaborating with peers in pair and in small groups. They tenor to form groups based on the identity and personality of their own.

2.1.2.Group Dynamic

Since the classroom is a community ,there is need to establish and maintain personal relationships. The teacher has to establish a rapport with the class , with its individuals and individual students form different sorts of relations with the group and with the teacher. Thus there are a number of forms of interaction between the teacher and the students themselves. Interaction plays an important role in effective classroom management. Firstly, close–interaction between student-student or teacher-student helps in developing positive interpersonal relationships at all times. It helps in promoting conducive classroom learning atmosphere interaction between students who are actively engaged in independent work tasks which can help in reading deviate behavior among the students. **(Ibid:176)**

2.2.Techniques of Interaction.

Interaction is mainly achieved by two means of resources: language and non-verbal means of expression .Non-verbal resources play just as important part as language does. The participants in the classroom interaction can be illustrated as follows :

1- Teacher-Learners: It is established when a teacher talks to the whole class at the same time. The teacher takes the role of a leader or controller and decides about the type and the process all the time.

2- Teacher-Learner/a group of learners: It is conducted when the teacher refers to the whole class ,but expects only one student or a group of students to answer.(internet)

3- Learner-Learner:The third type of interaction is called "pair work". The students get an assignment which they have to finish in pairs . **mcDonough and Shwan(2003:196)** state that pair work and group work are not synonymous that ,just as they obviously reflect different social patterns ,so the way in which they are adapted and applied in the classroom also has distinctive as well as similar functions.

Pair work requires rather little organization on the part of the teacher and at least in principle ,can be activated in most classrooms by simply having learners work with the person sitting next to them.

4- Learners -Learners : A group work although can have a comparable range of function, it is by its very nature a more complex structure ,which will probably require greater role differentiation between individuals as well as certain amount of physical reorganization of the classroom. **Ur(1996:232)** makes the point comprehensively ; he states that the success of group-work depends to some extent on the surrounding social climate ,and on how habituated the class is to using it and   also on the selection of an interesting and stimulating task whose performance is well within the ability of the group but it depends on effective careful organization. Thus the teacher's function here is that of a consultant and individual groups report on their work as a follow –up activity.

2.3. Classroom Management Techniques

Classroom management is a term used by teachers to describe the process of ensuring that lessons run smoothly despite disruptive behavior. Thus it is necessary to create classroom management techniques and discipline strategies that promote a positive learning environment .Instructors must have a well- managed classroom for learning to occur.

Learning effective discipline techniques may take years. No one is born knowing how to control a room filled with adolescents, for hours a day, and cover the objectives in a lesson plan. No techniques work all of the time, and what works in one class may not have the same effect in a different class . **(Metzger,2002:77)**

In a classroom of 24 pupils ,it is possible to have 24 angles one day and 24 wild things the next. **(lea,2001:20)**

Traditionally ,when a classroom is well managed ,the room has a sense of order and structure .This usually indicates that pupils are sitting quietly and staying on task **(Garrett,2003:351).** This creates the parameters for the social ,emotional ,physical, and intellectual environments of the classroom.

2.4.Tips For Creating a Positive Classroom Environment.

The following are the main tips that should be used by the teacher in the classroom:

1- The teacher uses humor.
2- The teacher greets students at the doorway and in the hall.
3- The teacher shows enthusiasm and be animated.
4- The teacher provides opportunities for every student to succeed.
5- The teacher models good listening skills by paying attention when students speak.
6- The teacher creates classroom ritual and traditions which build a sense of community.
7- The teacher encourages parental and community involvement. (internet)

Jones and Jones(2007:223) state a number of guidelines that help the teachers to build positive relationship in the classroom which can be summarized as follows:

1- Use human relations skills :It means using certain criteria like friendliness, positive attitude, the ability to listen, and the ability to compliment genuinely.
2- Enable success :It means that pupils need to be provided with opportunities to achieve true accomplishment and to realize significant improvement.
3- Show respect and affection to the pupils :It means that the teacher must like the pupils and respect them as individuals.
4- Be fair and consistent: It means that the teacher should treat the pupils fairly, not preferentially.

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5- Create opportunities for personal discussion: Teachers often find it helpful to set time aside to get to know their pupils . Some activities include talking with pupils before and after class, arranging for interviews ,sending letters and notes to them,…etc.

Section Three
Procedures & Methodology

3.1.Population and Sample Selection

Information about the population of the present study has been drawn from the general directorate /Diyala, Al-moqdadiya, for the academic year (2013-2014) .The total number of the sample is 60 EFL teachers (males and females) who represent the sample of the present study.

3.2.The Instrument of the Study

In order to achieve the aim of the present study, which is assessing the use techniques of classroom interaction from the Iraqi teachers' point of view, a questionnaire has been constructed by the researcher .the type of the questionnaire that is used in this study is Likert-type scale using five points anchored by never=1 and always=5. **(Bachman &palmer, 1996:243)**

The questionnaire consists of (20) items . These items represent the major classroom interaction techniques that are used in teaching by the teachers.

The items of the questionnaire have been collected on the basis of the related literature, interviews, the open-ended questionnaire.

3.2.1. Face Validity of the Questionnaire

The most important quality to be considered when selecting or constructing an evaluation instrument is validity .According to Heaton(1975:153), validity " is the extent to measures what is supposed to measure and nothing else". Face validity is the best type of validity in the case of self –rating. **(Nunnally ,1972:353).**

To ensure face validity, the questionnaire was exposed to a jury of experts* in the field of English language. They are especially required to determine the suitability of the questionnaire items to the sample of the study and to propose and make any necessary suggestions for modifications, deletions, or addition that enrich and sharpen the test. The gury have agreed that the test and the procedures are suitable except for same modifications which have taken into consideration.

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The jury members are :

1- Amthel Mohammed,Ph.D.,College of Education for Human Science University of Diyala.
2- Arwa abed Al-Rasool Ph.D.,College of Education for Human Science, University of Diyala.
3- Khalil Ismail, R.Ph.D, College of Education for Human Science University of Diyala.
4- Zeinab Abbas Jwad. Ph.D.,College of Education for Human Science, University of Diyala.
5- Salam Hammed Ph.D.,College of Education-Ibn Rushed, Universtiy of Baghdad.

The researcher intends to conduct a study entitled "An assessment of using classroom interaction techniques in the classroom from the EFL Iraqi teachers' point of view " .The aim of this study is to identify and classify the main techniques that are used by EFL Iraqi teachers in the classrooms.

As a specialist in TEFL and linguistics you are kindly requested to judge the validity, and suitability of the questionnaire items and make any modification that might improve them.

Your cooperation and readiness for help are highly appreciated.

Table(1) represents Classroom Interaction Components Questionnaire.
Dear Sir, Madam

No.	Items	always	usually	sometimes	rarely	never
	The teacher:					
1-	Gives the students a chance to create a friendly and flexible classroom atmosphere.					
2-	Engages the students with concepts and process for language and culture learning .					
3-	Uses English as a first language to provide a basis for deeper cognitive engagement at items.					
4-	Employs role –plays and stimulation among the students.					
5-	Uses multiple ways or techniques to attract the attention of the students for the lesson.					

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6-	Considers the nature, timing and frequency of the target language use in the classroom.					
7-	Asks the students to correct their colleagues during interaction.					
8-	Uses first and additional languages depending on the context, learners, teacher's capability and judgment.					
9-	Uses a variety of ways to assess students in the lesson as quiz, oral question ,written tests…etc.					
10-	Provide the students with explicit feedback through telling them about their mistakes.					
11-	Asks the students for prior preparation of the material.					
12-	Chooses interesting topics that motivate classroom .					
13-	Encourages the students to interact with the classmates outside the classroom.					
14-	Gives the students enough time to answer the questions.					
15-	Gives the students enough time to express and explain their thoughts and ideas.					
16-	Respects students ' opinions.					
17-	Uses examples in the lesson to explain difficult or a abstract topics					
18-	Changes the ways of seating the students in the lesson to break classroom monotony and to motivate pair work.					
19-	Meets the students during working hours individually and chorally.					
20-	Gives corrective feedback through interaction.					

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3.2.2 Reliability of the Questionnaire

Gay(2001:144) defines reliability as means of dependability or trustworthiness. According to **cooper & schidlen (2001:215)** reliability is a necessary contributor to validity but is not a sufficient condition for validity.

Test – retest reliability method is applied to compute the reliability of the Questionnaire.

Thus test-retest reliability coefficient of the first and the second administration of the Questionnaire indicates (0.83) which considered high.

3.3.Final Administration of the Questionnaire

The final version of the questionnaire was distributed to the subjects at the beginning of March, 2013-2014. The teachers were asked to give their views regarding items according to the scale. The teachers' responses have been utilized by the researcher.

3.4.Statistical Methods

The following statistical methods are used in this study:

1- the percentage is used to find out the agreement of the gury members on the face validity of the instrument and to calculate the final version.

2- Weighted mean : is typically used to find out the weighted mean of the items to count the highest or lowest weight for each item. **(Madansky,2003:23)**

3- Weighted Percentile: it is used to count the weighted percentile for each item in the questionnaire. **(Ibid:23)**

Section four
Conclusions , Recommendations and Suggestions

4.1. Conclusions

After presenting the main techniques of the classroom interaction in teaching that are used by the EFL Iraqi teachers throughout the procedures of this study ,the researcher considered the weighted mean of the items that ranges from (3.85 ...to 2.99) as those techniques .

table -2- Weighted Means of the Questionnaire Items

Items NO.	Rank	Weighted Means	Percentile weights
6	1	3.85	79%
2	2	3.82	77%
16 ,17	3.5,3.5	3.79	74%
19	5	3.68	70.8 %
11, 15	6.5,6.5	3.63	68%
5	8	3.59	65%
9	9	3.49	64%

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1,18	10.5,10.5	3.44	63%
3, 7	12.5,12.5	3.40	59.9%
8	14	3.38	58.7%
14	15	3.36	57%
12	16	3.35	55%
4	17	3.33	54.8%
10	18	3.32	53%
20	19	3.31	52.6%
13	20	2.99	51 %

Conclusions remark can be clearly pointed as follows :

1- Item number (6) which reads the teacher (considers the nature ,timing and frequency of target language use in the classroom) constituted the most common technique of the classroom interaction from the teachers' point of view. It gets a weighted mean of (3.85) with (79%) percent.

2- Item number(2) which reads the teacher (engages learners with concepts and process for language and culture learning.) gets the second rank in this study with a weighted mean of (3.81) and (77%) percent.

3- Items number(16) and(17) which read the teacher (respects students' opinions),(Uses examples in the lesson to explain difficult or a abstract topics)respectively get the third and fourth ranks with a weighted mean of (3.79) and (75%) percent.

4- Item number (19) which reads the teacher (meets students during working hours individually and chorally) gets the fifth rank with a weighted mean of (3.68) and (74%) percent.

5- Items number (11) and (15) which read respectively the teacher (ask the students for the prior presentation of the material) and (give the students enough time to express and explain their thoughts and ideas) get the sixth and seventh ranks with a weighted mean of (3.63) and (70%) percent.

6- Item number (5)which reads the teacher (uses multiple ways or techniques to attract the attention of the students for the lesson.) gets the eigth rank with a weighted mean of (3.60) and (68%) percent.

7- Item number (9)which reads the teacher (uses a variety of ways to assess students in the lesson, such as quiz ,oral question ,written tests …etc.) gets the ninth rank with a weighted mean of (3.56) and(65%) percent .

8- Items number(1) and (18)which read respectively the teacher (give the students a chance to create a friendly and flexible classroom

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atmosphere) and(changes the way of seating students in the lesson to break classroom monotony and to motivate pair work) get tenth and eleventh ranks with a weighted mean of (3.49) and (64%) percent.

9- Items number(3) and(7)which read respectively the teacher (uses English as a first language to provide a basis for deeper cognitive engagement at items) and (asks students to correct their colleagues during interaction) get twelfth and thirteenth ranks with a weighted mean of (3.44) and (63%) percent.

10- Item number(8) which reads the teacher (uses first and additional languages depending on the context ,learners ,teachers 'capability and judgment) gets the fourteenth rank with a weighted mean of (3.40) and (59.9%) percent.

11- Item number(14)which reads the teacher (give the students enough time to answer the questions)gets the fifteenth rank with a weighted mean of (3.38) and (58.7%)percent.

12- Item number(12)which reads the teacher (chooses interesting topics to motivate classroom interaction within classroom material) gets the sixteenth rank with a weighted mean of (3.36) and (57%)percent.

13- Item number (4) which reads the teacher (employs role-plays and stimulation to create active interaction) gets the seventeenth rank with a weighted mean of (3.34) and(55%)percent.

14- Item number (10)which reads the teacher (provide the students with explicit feedback through telling them about their mistakes) gets the eighteenth rank with a weighted mean of (3.32) and (53%)percent.

15- Item number (20) which reads the teacher (gives corrective feedback through interaction) gets the nineteenth rank with a weighted mean of (3.31) and (52.6%) percent.

16- Item number (13) which reads the teacher (encourages the students to interact with classmates outside the classroom) gets the twentieth rank with a weighted mean of (2.99)and (51%) percent.

4.2 Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations:

Successful interaction is the basis of positive human relationships among people. Similarly to every day –life interaction ,students have to be trained to be effective communicators in a foreign language. We can do this through different ways of encouraging classroom interaction techniques .Firstly ,teachers can take on a variety of roles ,not always performing the role of an instructor, but also that of a consultant or a co-communicator. Classroom organization can also be adapted more often for one-to-one or group-work arrangement to encourage peer interaction.

Secondly, teachers can observe classroom interaction more consciously (e.g.by action research) and analyzed the gathered data in an interpretive way. They may put some of the results of the research in action and see how different strategies can improve students' interaction . Thirdly, classroom interaction can be more effective if a variety of teacher and student talk is applied in the classroom. Teachers may accept feeling, praise and accept students' ideas instead of only responding to the teachers.

Fourthly, classroom interaction can be improved through a variety of activities for developing accuracy or fluency and controlled alternately by a teacher and students.

Finally, classroom interaction can be developed by applying different strategies . these are some of the ways of encouraging successful classroom interaction. They can help students to become better communicators of a foreign language in and out of the classroom.

4.3 Suggestions for Further Research :

1. An experimental study can be conducted to investigate the effect of classroom interaction techniques on improving the students' over all performance.
2. A study is needed to Investigate difficulties faced by instructors in using these techniques at the university level.
3. An empirical study can be conducted to investigate students and teachers' attitude to wards using another techniques of classroom interaction in teaching .

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الخلاصة

تهدف الدراسة الحالية الى تقييم استخدام التقنيات التفاعل الصفي داخل الصف من وجهة نظر المدرسين العراقيين.

ولتحقيق هذه الدراسة اخذت عينة مكونة من (60) مدرس ومدرسة من المراحل المتوسطة من مديرية التربية في محافظة ديالى. تم اعداد استبيان مكون من (20) فقرة والتي مثلت تقنيات التفاعل الصفي التي من الممكن استخدامها اثناء التدريس داخل الصف من قبل الباحث. لقد تم التحقق من صدق الاختبار من خلال عرضه على عدد من المختصين في مجال تدريس اللغة الانكليزية من اساتذة الجامعات العراقية للوقوف على وجهات نظرهم من حيث ملائمة فقرات الاختبار وفي ضوء آرائهم ومقترحاتهم تم تصميم النسخة النهائية من الاختبار ،وطبق على عينة البحث خلال السنة (2013– 2014).

وبعد استخدام الوسائل الاحصائية والتي منها استخراج النسب المئوية والوسط الحسابي ..الخ لعرض التقنيات المستخدمة للتفاعل الصفي من وجهة نظر المدرسين العراقيين ،تم التوصل الى عدة تقنيات لمساعدة الطلبة للتواصل والتفاعل داخل الصف.

وانتهت الدراسة بمجموعة من الاستنتاجات والمقترحات والتوصيات من قبل الباحث.

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