

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

University of Mohamed Seddik BenYahia. Jijel

Faculty of Letters and Languages

Department of English



**Investigating the Relationship between Learners' Self-Selected
Topics and Classroom Interaction**

The Case of 3rd Year Students of English, University of Jijel

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillments of the requirements for the degree of Master in
didactics of foreign languages

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2020-2021

Declaration

We hereby declare that the dissertation entitle “Investigating the Relationship between EFL Learners’ Self-selected Topics and Classroom Interaction ” is our own work and all the sources we have used have been acknowledged by means of references. We also certify that we have not copied or plagiarized the work of other students or researchers partially or fully. In case any material is not documented, we shall be responsible for the consequences.

Signature 1

Date

18/07/2021

Signature 2

Dedication

I lovingly dedicate this work

*To the memory of my father **Abdullah** who taught me the meaning of life and always believed in me. He is gone but his belief in me has made this journey possible, may Allah have mercy on him.*

*To my beloved mother **Houria** who has always lightened up my path, and fed my spirit with love, energy, and support.*

*To my fabulous brothers **Nabil, Fateh, Mounir, and Walid** who have always been there for me.*

*To my lovely sisters **Souad and Yamina** who have filled my heart with overflowing joy and encouragement.*

*To my amazing partner and lovely friend **Lamia** for her collaboration and support.*

*To my best and faithful friends **Rayene, Rania, Bicha, Koukou, Kheira, and Karima** who have been with me through thick and thin, because when I was teetering on the edge of giving up they held me close and showed me what I was capable of ... thank you for always having my back.*

*To the members of La clique with whom I shared the university life with its lights and shadow **Nouha, Ilham, Manel, and Roma** ... thank you for the great memories we made together.*

To the people whose encouragement, love, and support bore me up, the ones I hold dear to my heart.

Meriem

Dedication

I owe my loving dedication to my role model in life, the source of motivation, my beloved

*father **Said**, may his soul stay in peace.*

*To the cure of my life my dear mother **Dahbia** for giving me love, support, and*

encouragement.

*To my dear partner and sweet friend **Meriem**.*

*To my lovely sisters **Wahiba, Hafida, Nissma, Fatiha, and Fadia** for their whole hearted*

support.

*To my dear brothers **Samir, Khiro, Wahab, and Nassro** for being always there for me.*

*To my friends with whom I shared the campus life, **Mouna, Fifi, and Bicha**.*

*To my lovely cousin **Dina**.*

Lamia

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, we thank Almighty Allah who gave us strength and boosted our confidence to undertake this research. Without Allah' blessings, this work would not have been possible.

We would like to express our warmest gratitude to our outstanding and empathetic supervisor **Miss. MELIT Ilham** who had been a serious guide and a source of motivation. Without her pieces of advice and insightful feedback, this work would not have been possible.

We would like also to express our heartfelt appreciation and thanks to **Mr. NAILI Redouane** and **Mrs. BOUHALI Salma** for their invaluable help, guidance, and encouragement.

Special thanks and tremendous appreciation to the board of examiners: **Mrs. ARZIM Messaouda** and **Dr. BENHABILES Bakir** for devoting their precious time to evaluate this humble work.

We would like to extend our thanks to third year OE teachers for their collaboration and guidance when conducting classroom observation.

Special thanks go to third year LMD students for their indirect help during classroom observation and their direct help in answering the questionnaire.

Abstract

Classroom interaction is highly important to develop learners' language proficiency especially in EFL settings. Providing learners with the opportunity to self-select the topics of discussion during oral expression (OE) classes can be a good way to get learners speak and interact inside the classroom. The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between learners' self-selected topics and classroom interaction at the department of English, university of Jijel. It is assumed that in OE classes, learners interact more with their self-selected topics. To verify the validity of this assumption, the correlative method has been adopted through the use of classroom observation and students questionnaire to collect data. Classroom observation was conducted with three groups of third year license students and students questionnaire was delivered to the same sample which consisted of 60 students. The collected data were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. The obtained results indicated that there exists a positive relationship between learners' self-selected topics and classroom interaction. That is, learners interacted more when they discussed topics of their choice and interest. Additionally, learners supported the use of self-selected topics as a method to increase classroom interaction. Based on the obtained results, the assumption was validated.

Key Words: Self-selected Topics, Classroom Interaction, OE Classes, English as a Foreign Language.

List of Abbreviations

- 1- **CI:** Classroom Interaction
- 2- **EFL:** English as a Foreign Language
- 3- **EM:** Extrinsic Motivation
- 4- **IM:** Intrinsic Motivation
- 5- **L2:** Second Language
- 6- **L S-ST:** Learners' Self-selected Topics
- 7- **SAT:** Students' Amount of Talk
- 8- **SCA:** Student-Centered Approach
- 9- **T-AT:** Teacher-assigned Topics
- 10- **TAT:** Teacher's Amount of Talk
- 11- **TEFL:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language
- 12- **Vs:** Versus

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General Introduction

1. Background of the Study

As a result of globalization, speaking English has become a priority of many people. Relatively, learning a specific language requires involving listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills. Therefore, learning to speak English recently receives more attention; because it is considered to be the demanded skill by far due to the role of English as a global means of communication. Consequently, the aim of enhancing EFL learners' speaking skill occupied a specific position in the process of teaching English language. Therefore, classroom interaction is necessary as an educational strategy to enhance learners' speaking skill. Foreign language teachers have been advised to implement a variety of teaching methods and techniques, which may help their students to interact more inside the classroom. Thus, learners' self-selected topics maybe an effective method to increase EFL learners' CI.

Threadkell (2010) in his study; which was related to the concept of self-selection in reading skill, has investigated the differences between students' perceptions of teacher-assigned and self-selected literature. He came up with the result that students are more motivated to read when the text is self-selected (as cited in Bonyadi, 2014, p. 2).

Many scholars have thrown light on the relationship between self-selection and writing skill. For instance, Bonyadi, Zeinalpur, and Reimany (2013) in their study which aimed to explore EFL learners' perception toward self-selected and teacher-assigned topics in their writing classes. They concluded that learners perceived to be motivated to write when they are allowed to self-select their writing topic (ibid).

Despite the fact that speaking skill plays a significant role in the language development, there have been insufficient studies concerning the relationship between the two variables; self-selected topics and speaking skill. Wolf (2013) examined learners' perceptions

of textbook-assigned and self-selected topics of discussion. His study revealed that learners reported more confidence in discussing their own topics (Wolf, 2013, pp. 50-61). Additionally, Ellis (1990) provided some evidence concerning the importance of topic-selection in enhancing learners' second language acquisition. (as cited in Bonyadi, 2014, p. 2)

According to the above-mentioned studies and the ones that the researchers checked out, there has not been, to the researchers' current knowledge, any research conducted to investigate the relationship between learners' self-selected topics and their CI. As a consequence, the present research is conducted as an attempt to fill this gap.

2. Statement of the Problem

Classroom interaction is considered as an opportunity for EFL learners to be engaged in communicative situations; to express their opinions and perspectives freely. Depending on the researchers' experience as EFL learners at the Department of English, Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia University, it is noticed that most of OE teachers still impose the topic of discussion on their learners, rather than giving them the chance to self-select it. Therefore, many students fail to interact and remain silent during OE classes due the difficulties they face in discussing topics they are not interested in or do not have enough knowledge about.

3. Research Questions and Assumption

The focus of this study is to answer the following research questions:

- ✓ Is there a positive relationship between EFL learners' self-selected topics and their classroom interaction?
- ✓ Do students support the use of self-selected topics?

In order to answer the research questions, the following assumption is put forward:

- ✓ In OE classes, learners interact more with their self-selected topics.

4. Significance of the Study

The study in hand could be significant for both EFL teachers and future researchers. Firstly, this research might be significant for OE teachers since it shed light on the importance of learners' self-selected topics to increase their CI. That is, OE teachers should create an adequate atmosphere for learners where they have the chance to make decisions inside the classroom, especially about the topics of discussion in accordance with their needs and interests. Secondly, as long as there have not been sufficient researches conducted to investigate the aforementioned variables at the Department of English, Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University, Jijel, the present study might be significant for future researchers to rely on as a resource, by selecting different population and implementing a different research method.

5. Research Methodology

Based on the nature of the research and to achieve its aim, the present study follows the correlative method. Data have been collected through a questionnaire for students and classroom observation. The research investigation is carried out at the department of English, Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University. The classroom observation has been conducted for three sessions with three different OE teachers with three groups of third year. 60 questionnaires have been administered to the same sample with whom we have conducted the classroom observation

6. Organization of the Dissertation

The research in hand is divided into two chapters. The first chapter represents the literature review of the research. It is divided into two sections, which provide the main concepts related to topic-selection and classroom interaction.

The second chapter represents the fieldwork which is mainly devoted to the

interpretation and explanation of the data collected through classroom observation and the questionnaire. Additionally, it discusses the main findings and provides answers to the research questions as well as to validate or refute the assumption.

Chapter One

Literature Review

Section One: Topic Selection

Introduction

1. The Concept of Self-selection
2. Self-selection and Speaking Skill
3. Self-selection and Motivation
 - 3.1. Intrinsic Motivation Vs Extrinsic Motivation
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Section One: Topic Selection

Introduction

Along with the development in the field of language teaching and learning, the focus has shifted from teachers' centeredness to learners' centeredness. Thus, learners gained the opportunity to make decisions in order to express their interests and preferences inside the classroom. For instance, teachers should allow their learners to self-select the topics of discussion to promote learners' engagement during classes.

Relatively, this section seeks to clarify the concept of self-selection and to shed light on its relation to speaking skill and motivation, as well as it contrasts assigned-topics and self-selected topics. Last but not least, this section deals with the main concepts and theories that are related to the concept of self-selection mainly: student-centered approach, learner autonomy, and choice theory.

1. The Concept of Self-selection

In language teaching and learning, self-selection of teaching materials has been a central issue of discussion by the researchers of second language pedagogy. According to Kragler (2000) "Self-selection allows students more latitude to be deeply involved with the learning process" (p. 133). In other words, giving learners the choice and freedom to self-select their learning materials allows them to express their interests and learning preferences. As well as, it serves as an effective method to increase learners' engagement in the learning process.

Additionally, the issue of self-selected learning materials has been linked with the concept of decision-making. Therefore, allowing students to be involved in the process of decision-making may have a positive impact on their learning process (Moss & Hendershot, 2002, pp. 6-16).

One way to engage students in the process of decision-making inside the classroom is to allow them to self-select their own topics for speaking, reading or writing. Sujannah and Cahyono (2017) mentioned that “self-selected topic is a topic selected freely by the students” (p. 2). That is to say, a self-selected topic is a topic suggested or provided by the learner himself/herself.

2. Self-selection and Speaking Skill

Nunan (2003) stated that “Speaking is the productive aural/oral skill, it consists of producing systematic verbal utterances to convey meaning” (p. 48). To clarify, speaking skill allows expressing and exchanging ideas and thoughts through the use of language. Although speaking skill is extremely significant for EFL learners, only few scholars have discussed the concept of self-selection in relation to speaking skill. Green, Christopher, and Lam (1997) claimed that the use of a learner-centered and cognitive approach; where learners are given the opportunity to choose their own topics for discussion. It contributes to a large extent in producing positive results for both teacher and learner (pp 135-142). In addition, Wolf (2013) investigated EFL learners’ perception of textbook-assigned and self-selected discussion topics in a university in Tokyo, Japan. He came with the result that students show more interest in discussing their own selected topics compared to the textbook-assigned topics (pp. 50-60).

3. Self-selection and Motivation

Motivation has been recognized as a significant factor that contributes to academic success. Hence, when learners are motivated to learn, their academic success would increase. According to Jordan, Carlile, and Stack (2008) “The word motivation comes from the Latin *movere* – ‘to move’. It refers to the set of factors that ‘move’ people so that they respond” (p, 154). More than that, someone who is motivated is the one who has an impetus or inspiration to do something; however, an unmotivated person is the one who lacks the energy and

inspiration to act or to do something (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 54).

3.1. Intrinsic Motivation Vs Extrinsic Motivation

Theorists have distinguished between different types of motivation. Specifically, Ryan and Deci (1985) in their theory of Self-determination have differentiated between two main types of motivation which are: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Their distinction was based on the reasons that drive an individual to do an action. Ryan and Deci (1985) stated that “The most basic distinction is between intrinsic motivation, which refers to doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable, and extrinsic motivation, which refers to doing something because it leads to a separable outcome” (p.55).

Therefore, IM refers to the doing of an activity that is profusely performed out of interest and enjoyment. For example, learners will be intrinsically motivated to engage in classroom interactions, if the teacher allows them to self-select their topics of discussion. In contrast, EM is that type of motivation in which a person performs a specific activity for some external reasons; to be rewarded or to avoid punishment. For instance, when the teacher assigns the topic of discussion for his/her learners which may not be interesting to them, they would not engage in discussions, unless they will be rewarded with grades. Therefore, there is a clear relationship between learners’ self-selected topics and their motivation to engage in CI.

4. Teachers-assigned Topics Vs Students’ Self-selected Topics

Concerning the issue of whether teachers should assign the topics for their learners, or allow them to self-select their own topics, a debate was raised by Jones (1997) and Silva (1998). On the one hand, Jones (1997) claimed that giving much freedom to learners in order to choose their own topics “can become confusing, annoying, and even debilitating” (p. 340). To clarify, learners may not succeed in selecting adequate topics. As a result, they will find themselves in a situation of annoyance and anxiety. Additionally, when learners gain the

opportunity to self-select their own topics, they would select simple topics rather than challenging ones. That is to say; learners focus more on easiness while making choices in the classroom, and neglect complexity which may sometimes contribute to the development of the learning process (Watkins, Carnell & Lodge, 2007, p. 110).

On the other hand, Silva (1998) argued that “it seems to me more reasonable and motivating to have students (individually or as a group) choose their own topics, those in which they have a sincere interest and some intellectual and emotional investment” (as cited in Jones, 1997, pp. 338-339). In other words, Silva stood for the concept of learners’ self-selection where learners can select topics of their interest. Moreover, when learners are obliged to converse about topics in which they do not have enough knowledge, they may feel insecure, as well as their limited knowledge could hinder the conversation (Kang, 2005, p. 283).

5. Topic Selection Related Concepts

In the field of language teaching and learning, many researchers and scholars have developed several theories and concepts. Therefore, the issue of learners' self-selection has found its underpinnings namely within: student-centered approach, learner autonomy, and choice theory.

5.1. Student-Centered Approach

Student-centered approach is an approach based on constructivism as a theory of learning. It came as a reaction to the traditional language methods; in which the teacher was the center of teaching/learning process. However, SCA places learners in the center of the learning process; where they must take an active role to construct and reconstruct knowledge. Collins and Brein (2003) defined SCA as:

An instructional approach in which students influence the content, the activities, the materials, and the pace of learning. This leaning model places the student (learner) in the center of the learning process. The instructor provides students with opportunities to learn independently and from one another and coaches them in the skills they need to do so effectively. (pp. 338-339)

To put it in another way, SCA considers learners to be at the center of the learning process, where their needs, interests, and preferences are taken into account. Additionally, learners within this approach can learn either individually or collaboratively.

5.1.1. Principles of Student-Centered Approach

According to Lea, Stephenson, and Troy (2003, p. 322) SCA is build on the principles mentioned below:

- a. Reliance upon active rather than passive learning.
- b. An emphasis on deep learning and understanding.
- c. An increased responsibility and accountability on the part of the learner.
- d. An increased sense of autonomy in the learner.
- e. An interdependence between teacher and learner.
- f. Mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship.

Therefore, these principles provide a clear vision about SCA. It encourages learners to take an active role and engage them in the learning process where they can deepen their understanding. On top of that, SCA shifts the responsibility of learning from teacher to learner, i.e., it motivates learners to be autonomous.

5.1.2. The Role and Responsibilities of the Teacher and Learners:

In a student-centered learning environment, the teacher plays the role of a facilitator rather than a transmitter of knowledge to learners. He/she is responsible for determining

whether the activities are meaningful for learners in accordance with their needs and interests. In addition, the teacher within this approach encourages learners to participate all the time. On the other side, learners are considered to be the center of learning process, thus, they are responsible for their own learning. Additionally, learners within SCA can make decisions and choices in the classroom.

To conclude, this approach puts its focus on learners' needs, interests, and involves them in making choices inside the classroom. As a result, learners' self-selected topics reflect one of the essential focuses of SCA. In other words, learners within this approach are allowed to self-select their discussion topics in accordance to their needs and preferences.

5.2. Learner Autonomy:

Nowadays, the process of language teaching and learning is viewed as a process that must involve learners and make them responsible for their learning. Thus, learners become autonomous in the classroom.

One of the most well-known definitions of learner autonomy was provided by Henry Holec in 1981. For him "Autonomy is the ability to take charge of one's own learning...to take charge of one's learning is to have the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning" (p. 3). In other words, the term learner autonomy comes to be used to refer to the situations in which the learner entirely learns on his/her own without being controlled. Moreover, the learner assumes the responsibility of making decisions concerning all aspects of the learning process.

5.2.1. Teacher's Role

According to Little (1994) "Learner autonomy does not rise spontaneously from within the learner but develops out of learner's dialogue with world to which he or she belongs." (as cited in Djoub, 2017, p. 107). That is to say, in an autonomous environment, the teacher's role

is still necessary. In addition, for a learner to be autonomous he/she needs teacher's guidance and support.

For Joshi (2011) the teacher within an autonomous learning process acts as a facilitator, organizer, besides that, the teacher provides his/her learners with feedback and encouragement. The teacher tries to create an adequate atmosphere full of awareness in order to learners to be autonomous (p. 16).

5.3.2. Learner's Role

In an autonomous classroom, the learner plays an active role rather than being a passive receiver of information. He/she is described as 'responsible learner', 'aware learner', and 'good learner' (Joshi, 2011, p. 17). Moreover, Holec (1979) claimed that the responsible learner is the one who takes advantage of every provided opportunity by the teacher in order to be autonomous inside the classroom. Hence, learners become successful if they take responsibility for their learning. Similarly, an aware learner is the one who recognizes what and how to learn. The learner takes the greater part of responsibility in the learning process with the support and facilitation of the teacher. Finally, a good learner is the one who makes decisions concerning all aspects of the learning process including the choice of content (as cited in Joshi, 2011, p. 17).

5.3. Choice Theory

Choice theory was introduced by the psychologist William Glasser in 1998. The main focus of Glasser's theory is that people's basic needs are met by the choice of their own behaviors. He claimed that humans have five essential needs which are: belonging, survival, power, fun, and freedom (Kianipour & Hoseini, 2012, p. 118). Therefore, all our behaviors are purposeful and they are an attempt to meet our five basic needs.

For Glasser (1998) in order to bring about enhancement in education, classroom

function must be changed. He insisted that students' basic needs must be taken into account to achieve a successful education. Thus, belonging, power, survival, fun, and freedom are met when adequate conditions are provided for students. First, the teacher should give attention to his/her learners and involve them in discussions about class matters, so that students sense belonging. Second, learners sense power when the teacher engages them in making decisions about the topics to be delivered during the learning process. Next, the provision of a safe school environment leads to meet students' needs that are related to survival. Then, when students are allowed to work in groups and engage in activities that they are interested in, consequently, they sense fun. Last but not least, when students are permitted to make choices about what and how they will study, and demonstrate their accomplishment, as a result, students will sense freedom (as cited in Charles & Senter 2005, p. 78). In other words, students' behaviors can not be controlled by others rather they choose how to behave in order to meet their basic needs.

Conclusion:

As a conclusion to this section, allowing learners to have a say in the topics of discussion during OE sessions would increase their engagement in the learning process. Moreover, learners may take more advantage of discussion classes when the teacher permits them to make decisions and choices inside the classroom, as well as to give them the space to be the center of the learning process with the facilitation and guidance of the teacher himself/herself.

Section Two: Classroom Interaction

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1. Definition of Classroom Interaction
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 - 2.1. Learner-learner Interaction
 - 2.2. Teacher-learner Interaction
3. Aspects of Classroom Interaction
 - 3.1. Negotiation of Meaning
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 - 3.2.1. Kinds of Feedback
4. Topic Familiarity and Topic Interest as Effective Factors to Increase EFL Learners

Classroom Interaction

- 4.1. Topic Familiarity
- 4.2. Topic Interest
5. The Importance of EFL Classroom Interaction

Conclusion

Section Two: Classroom Interaction

Introduction

Classroom interaction is considered one of the main methods that is used in the process of language teaching and learning. It contributes to learners' language development because it involves them in communicative situations to express their perspectives freely.

This section provides an overview of classroom interaction. Firstly, it provides a definition of classroom interaction (CI). Secondly, it throws light on the main types of CI, which are: learner-learner interaction and teacher-learner interaction. Then, this section discusses two main aspects of classroom interaction; negotiation of meaning and feedback. As long as this study investigates the relationship between learners' self-selected topics and classroom interaction, this section focuses on topic familiarity and topic interest as effective factors to increase learners' classroom interaction. Eventually, the importance of EFL classroom interaction is covered.

1. Definition of Classroom Interaction

Researchers and scholars in the field of second language acquisition emphasized the importance of communication to improve learners' speaking skill. They shed light on the necessity of involving learners in real communicative situations so as to share their opinions, ideas, and exchange information. Therefore, classroom interaction is said to be an effective method to reach an appropriate atmosphere for communication. Thurmond (2003) defined interaction as:

...the learner's engagement with the course content, other learners, the instructor, and the technological medium used in the course. True interactions with other learners, the instructor, and the technology results in reciprocal exchange of information. The exchange of information is intended to enhance knowledge development in the learning environment. (as cited in Thurmond & Wanbach, 2004, p. 10)

To put it another way, interaction is the active role which the learner takes inside the classroom to exchange information. This exchange occurs either with the content of the course and teaching materials or with the teacher and other learners. This contributes to constructing an appropriate environment to enhance the learning process.

2. Types of Classroom Interaction

According to Thurmond's above-mentioned definition of interaction, it is noticed that interaction has four types: learner-course interaction, learner-learner interaction, learner-teacher interaction, and learner-technology interaction. Accordingly, the two related types of CI to the present study are learner-learner interaction and learner-teacher interaction.

2.1. Learner-learner Interaction

This type of interaction occurs among learners as the main agents of interaction, whereas the teacher plays the role of a monitor. Johnson (1995) stated that:

Student-student interaction in foreign language classrooms can create opportunities for students to participate in less structured and more spontaneous language use, negotiate meaning, self-select when to participate, control the topic of discussion, and, most importantly, it draws on their prior knowledge, and interactional competencies to actively communicate with others. (p. 189)

To clarify, in learner-learner interaction learners have a say in the topic of discussion, consequently, they will participate freely as well as they rely on their prior knowledge so as to create successful communication with others. Moreover, the learner-learner interaction environment is either based on group-work or pair work activities which permit them to practice the language, thus, to develop their speaking skill. On the other side, the teacher monitors his/her learners' performance (Hadfield & Hadfield, 2008, p. 147).

2.2. Teacher-learner Interaction

Hadfield and Hadfield (2008) claimed that “Sometimes it is appropriate for learners to interact with the teacher either individually or as a whole class in a ‘question and answer’ activity or in a drill” (p. 146). That is to say, teacher-learner interaction occurs either between the teacher and one learner or between the teacher and many other learners to answer his/her questions. Besides that, this kind of interaction takes place at the beginning of the session when the teacher explains the content of the course or gives instructions for learners. Consequently, this pattern of interaction requires a lot of teacher talking time (Hadfield & Hadfield, 2008, p. 146).

In the same vein, the teacher plays the role of the leader or controller. He/she interacts with the learners by providing comprehensible input, asking questions, and negotiating the course content with learners. As a result, teacher-learner interaction contributes to the learners’ achievement, development, and performance.

3. Aspects of Classroom Interaction

In order to achieve a successful learning through interaction, two major elements are needed, which are: negotiation of meaning and feedback. Ellis (1999) mentioned that “...interaction contributes to acquisition; through the provision of negative evidence and through opportunities for modified output” (p. 9). To put it another way, the teacher may help learners to develop their language through simplifying complex ideas and make comments on their performance.

3.1. Negotiation of Meaning

For Chaudron (1988) “ when understanding does not take place, either on the part of the learner nor on the teacher, they can ask for each other clarification by means of

comprehension checks, confirmation checks, or clarification request” (p. 131). In other words, negotiation of meaning is a communicative strategy used in interaction. It occurs when there is a misunderstanding or a lack of comprehension among learners during the session. So it is used to reach mutual understanding, and to make the linguistic output more comprehensible, as well as to avoid communication breakdowns

Additionally, the negotiation of meaning plays a crucial role in the process of L2 acquisition. It encourages learner-learner interaction. Most importantly, when learners are involved in situations of meaning negotiation, they gain the chance to correct their errors and mistakes. Hence, it helps them to develop their language.

3.2. The Role of Feedback

Feedback is considered as a significant aspect of classroom interaction that can promote language acquisition in general. Sàrosdy, Bencze, Poor, and Vadnay (2006) defined feedback as “the information that learners receive from their teacher about their performance, which will help them take self-corrective action and improve their achievement” (p. 121). Thus, feedback is a reaction provided by the teacher on his/her learners' performance. It contributes to the development of learners' language.

3.2.1. Kinds of Feedback

Harmer (1991) differentiated between two kinds of feedback: content and form feedback. For him, form feedback deals with the linguistic accuracy of the students' performance. That is, during an activity, the teacher notices the errors and mistakes that learners commit or make. Then, the teacher will provide them with feedback on their performance. However, content feedback is that kind of feedback where the teacher focuses on the learners' ability to perform a given activity rather than focusing on the correctness of their language (as cited in Sàrosdy, Bencze, Poor & Vadnay, 2006, p. 121).

4. Topic Familiarity and Topic Interest as Effective Factors to Increase EFL Learners' Classroom Interaction

Interaction is highly important in the learning process. It leads learners to be active and produce knowledge rather than only receive it. Thus, teachers should take into account learners' interests, preferences, and choices. Shakourzadeh and Izadpanah (2020) argued that the selection of topics which are used in EFL learning settings plays a pivotal role in situations of meaning negotiation that take place during classroom interaction. Topic interest and topic familiarity are considered to be the major factors that help in the establishment of an effective CI (p. 1).

4.1. Topic Familiarity

Topic familiarity has been studied as a factor that affects the learning process. Gass and Varonis (1984) stated that topic familiarity has an effect on learners' performance. That is, topic familiarity does not only affect learners' comprehension but also their amount of negotiation (as cited in Rahimpour & Hazar, 2007, p. 195). Moreover, Ellis (2003) claimed that learners use their background knowledge, so as to produce more oral or written language (as cited in Shakourzadeh & Izadpanah, 2020, p. 5).

4.2. Topic Interest

According to Oxford Learners' Pocket Dictionary, interest is defined as "activity or subject which you enjoy doing or learning about" (p. 232). So when learners are asked to discuss a topic, they need to be interested in it so as to enjoy and show more enthusiasm about their learning.

Relatively, if the teacher allows learners to self-select their topics of discussion, they will select the topics in accordance with their preferences; topics they are familiar with or interested in. As a consequence, they will engage more in classroom interaction. Kang (2005)

in his study concluded that “The participants tended to be excited while talking about topics in which they were interested, with which they had experience, and about which they had background knowledge” (p. 284). That is; learners have a tendency towards discussing topics they are interested in and have enough background knowledge about as a means to meet their needs.

5. The Importance of EFL Classroom Interaction

The environment of foreign language learning should be full of actions and reactions, thus, classroom interaction is an effective method to engage learners in real communicative situations. It provides them with the chance of taking an active role and practicing their language. Yu (2008) reported that “ Classroom interaction in the target language can now be seen as not just offering language practice, nor just learning opportunities, but as actually constructing the language development process itself” (p. 49). That is; CI contributes to learners’ language development.

Classroom interaction facilitates the language learning process due to its opportunities of creating chances for learners to interact with their peers as well as with their teacher. It involves both teachers and learners in situations of meaning negotiation and permits them to take advantage of teacher's feedback.

Conclusion

In second language teaching and learning process, interaction is considered as a key factor that leads to successful communication. Therefore, classroom interaction in EFL settings requires all participants (learners and teachers) to be involved to create an adequate atmosphere for learning. Importantly, CI has a prominent role in learners' language development.

Chapter Two

Fieldwork

Chapter Two: Fieldwork

Introduction

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Chapter Two: Fieldwork

Introduction

This chapter includes the practical part of the study in which the researchers aim to investigate the relationship between EFL learners' self-selected topics and classroom interaction. Firstly, this chapter lays down information about the research methodology that is followed in order to fulfill this work, as well as the research instruments. Secondly, this chapter contains a description of the whole population and the selected sample. Moreover, it provides the analysis and interpretation of the data collected through classroom observation and students questionnaire.

1. Research Methodology and Instruments

In order to answer the research questions and to validate or refute the assumption put forward, the appropriate method is the mixed method approach to collect and analyze data. Therefore, data were collected by means of classroom observation which was conducted during the second semester of the academic year 2020-2021. It aimed at observing whether teachers allow learners to self-select their topics of discussion, at the same time to observe learners' classroom interaction either when the topic is self-selected or assigned by the teacher. Moreover, a questionnaire was handed to sixty third year license students at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University, Jijel. It was designed as a support to classroom observation; to obtain unobservable data concerning learners' attitudes towards self-selected topics and classroom interaction.

1.2. Population and Sampling

Since it is too difficult to conduct the study on the whole population under investigation; which is third year license students, a sample of sixty students was selected at the Department of English, Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University, Jijel. This selection of

the sample was based on the consideration that the majority of third year students have developed their language sufficiently to express their ideas and perspectives freely. Thus, the researchers can observe learners' interaction whether the topic of discussion is self-selected or assigned by the teacher. The researchers do so without assuming that the lack of vocabulary is the main reason which hinders classroom interaction.

2. Classroom Observation

2.1. Design and Description of Classroom Observation

To investigate whether there is a positive relationship between learners' self-selected topics and their classroom interaction, the researchers chose classroom observation as the main research instrument in order to be deeply involved in the environment under investigation. Consequently, the researchers will be able to obtain real and valid data to validate or refute the research assumption.

The observation was carried out during the second semester of the academic year 2020-2021 with third year license students at the Department of English language, Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University, Jijel. This observation involved three groups which were chosen randomly from the whole number of groups that is 12 groups. The researchers observed students for two sessions with three different teachers. The duration of each session was one hour. Moreover, an observation checklist was used to collect data.

2.2. Analysis of Classroom Observation

Teacher 1

Table 1

Learners' Self-selected Topics, Teacher-assigned Topics, Number of Participants, Learners' and Teachers' Amount of Talk

Sessions	L S-S	N of	%	SAT	TAT	T-A	N of	%	SAT	TAT
	T	P				T	P			
S 1						✓	8	50	7	26
									min	Min
S 2						✓	9	60	18	29
									min	Min

As the table above shows, **Teacher 1** assigned the topic of discussion for learners in both sessions. Relatively, in the first session, half of the total number of present students participated (8 out of 16). Surprisingly, they spoke 7 minutes out of 60 minutes. However, the teacher spoke 26 minutes out of 60 minutes and 15 minutes were devoted to a listening task. Similarly, 60% (9 out of 15) is the percentage of the learners who participated during the second session. They spoke for 18 minutes whereas the teacher took the duration of 29 minutes. In comparison with the teacher's amount of talk, learners did not take an active role during OE session. The main reason may be that learners were not interested in the assigned topic or they did not have enough knowledge about it.

Teacher 2

Table 2

Learners' Self-selected Topics, Teacher-assigned Topics, Number of Participants, Learners' and Teachers' Amount of Talk

Sessions	LS-S T	N of P	%	SAT	TAT	T-A T	N of P	%	SAT	TAT
S 1	✓	10	100	15m:48s	12m:30s					
S 2						✓	10	100	22m:32s	19m:48s

The results tabulated above show that **Teacher 2** allowed learners to self-select the topic of discussion during the first session. Consequently, the whole number of learners participated (10 out of 10). Additionally, learners' and teachers' amounts of talk are approximately the same. Although the topic was assigned by the teacher in the second session, 10 out of 10 learners participated. As it is shown in the table above, the teacher's amount of talk is nearly equal to the learners' amount of talk. From these results, it can be noticed that learners were active in both sessions probably the teacher motivated them to interact during the class.

Teacher 3

Table 3

Learners' Self-selected Topics, Teacher-assigned Topics, Number of Participants, Learners' and Teachers' Amount of Talk

Sessions	L S-S	N of	%	SAT	TAT	T-A	N of	%	SAT	TAT
	T	P				T	P			
S 1	✓	7	88	16m:56s	13m:22s					
S 2	✓	11	73	18m:08s	20m:42s					

The results in table 3 denote that learners in both sessions were allowed to select the topic of discussion. The vast majority of learners in the first session showed a positive reaction towards that, hence, (7 out of 8) participated during the session. Moreover, learners' amount of talk during this session is, to some extent, higher than the teacher's amount of talk. In the second session, almost all of the learners were interactive (11 out of 15), and they took the duration of 18m:08s speaking during the class. Additionally, the teacher was active during the class and this can be noticed from the amount of talk that is represented in the table above. The obtained results reveal that both teacher and learners were active in the two sessions probably they were interested in the topic of discussion. As a result, they felt motivated to speak.

2.3. Discussion of the Classroom Observation Results

The results obtained from the analysis of classroom observation aided the researchers in deducing that learners' self-selected topics affect their classroom interaction. As well as, it revealed that classroom interaction differs from one group to another and teaching methods differ from one teacher to another. The obtained results clearly show that learners interact more when the topic is self-selected. Relatively, the results in table 1 indicate that half of the total number of learners were not active during both sessions; they were not interacting among each other to exchange ideas and information. However, the researchers observed that **Teacher 1** always gave her learners opportunities to interact with her by asking questions, motivating them to speak, and providing feedback to learners who answer her questions. Thus, the teacher's amount of talk was extremely higher than that of students. Contrastingly, **Teacher 3** allowed her learners to self-select the topic of discussion in both sessions. Hence, the majority of learners were interacting with the teacher and among each other to share and exchange ideas. Moreover, learners were active in both sessions. All the students participated after they gained the opportunity to decide on the topic of discussion. Similarly, they all participated during the second session when the teacher suggested an interesting and enjoyable activity. The teacher was always motivating and encouraging learners to speak, as well as, correcting their mistakes and errors.

It is concluded that allowing learners to self-select the topics of discussion has a positive effect on learners' CI. The observed learners were actively engaged in discussions about topics of their interests. Moreover, teachers' motivation significantly contributes to learners' CI.

3. The Students Questionnaire

3.1. Description of the Students Questionnaire

This questionnaire consists of 16 questions. It contains closed-ended and open-ended questions. Thus, in close-ended questions, the participants are required to answer by yes or no or by ticking the appropriate answer from a set of options, whereas, the ultimate aim behind using open-ended questions is to get learners' explanations and justifications.

The questions are grouped into two major sections. The first section is devoted to classroom interaction and its implementation in oral expression courses. It consists of 9 questions (Q1 to Q9). Q1 seeks information about learners' preferable type of interaction. Next, Q2 is designed to figure out the management of interaction inside the classroom. Q3 is about the factors that prevent learners from interaction. Q4 and Q5 deal with the frequency of learner-learner interaction and learner-teacher interaction. Q6 and Q7 are concerned with teachers' feedback and learners' reaction towards it. Q8 is asked to discover whether the opportunities provided by OE teachers for learners to interact are enough. Finally, Q9 deals with learners' opinions about the maximization of the amount of talk along with their explanation.

The second section is totally devoted to seek information about the concept of learners' self-selected topics. It contains 8 questions (Q10 to Q16). Q10 seeks to know if students like the idea of making decisions in the classroom. Q11 aims to know if students prefer the freedom to select their own topics, their peers selected topics, or to be restricted to their teacher-assigned topics. Q12 is designed to determine the frequency of learners' decision-making in OE classes. Q13 and Q14 are administered to know which topics learners like to discuss and whether they feel motivated when they gain the opportunity to self-select the topic of discussion. Q15 is asked to discover whether learners face difficulties in interaction when

the topic is assigned. As well as, they are asked to specify the difficulty through ticking the appropriate option. Last but not least, Q16 aims to discover learners' opinions towards the relationship between their self-selected topics and classroom interaction.

3.2. Analysis of Students Questionnaire

Section One: Classroom Interaction

Q1: With whom do you prefer to interact more?

Table 4

Learners' Preferable Type of Interaction

Options	N	%
The teacher	3	5
Classmates	18	30
Teacher and classmates	39	65
Total	60	100

According to the results, two-thirds of learners said that they prefer to interact more with both the teacher and their classmates. They justified their answers by stating that interaction with both the teacher and other learners allows them to exchange more ideas and information. As well as, they take advantage of teacher's feedback so as to improve their level. One-third of learners said that they prefer to interact more with their classmates because, for them, they feel comfortable during the class; they share the same level and they do not fear to make mistakes. Surprisingly, only 5% of learners said that they prefer to interact with the teacher without justifying their answer. The results indicate that the majority of learners are aware of the importance of teacher-learner interaction which enables them to improve their

level and develop their language.

Q2: When you interact in the classroom, it is mainly because:

Table 5

Reasons of Interaction in the Classroom

Options	N	%
You want to do so	41	68
The teacher who asks you	19	32
Total	60	100

This question aims to know the reason behind learners' interaction inside the classroom. The majority of learners reported that they interact because they have the desire to do so. Whereas one-third of learners reported that they interact because the teacher asks them to do so. The results obtained are a clear indication that the learners who do not interact only when the teacher asks them, have some problems which prevent them from interaction.

Q3: If you do not interact, it is because:

Table 6

The Factors that Prevent Learners from Interaction

Options	N	%
The topic is not interesting	30	50
The teacher does not motivate you to speak	14	23
You fear to make mistakes	11	18
Other factors	5	8
Total	60	100

Table 6 represents the factors that prevent learners from interaction. One-half of the participants claimed that they do not interact because the topic is not interesting. One-quarter of the participants claimed that the teacher does not motivate them to speak that is why they do not interact. The fear of making mistakes was the choice of 18% of the participants. Only 8% opted for other factors which might be the lack of vocabulary or shyness. From these results, it can be noticed that the topic of discussion and motivation affect learners' classroom interaction.

Q4: How often do you interact in English with your teacher in the OE class?

Table 7

The Frequency of Teacher-Learner Interaction

Options	N	%
Always	25	42
Sometimes	30	50
Rarely	4	7
Never	1	1
Total	60	100

The answers tabulated above reveal that vast the majority of learners engage in interaction with their OE teacher. However, 7% stated that they rarely interact with their OE teacher, and 1% stated that they never do that. This question in accordance with the first question shows that the sample under investigation recognizes the importance of teacher-learner interaction.

Q5: How often do you interact in English with your classmates in OE class?

Table 8

The Frequency of Learner-Learner Interaction

Options	N	%
Always	16	27
Sometimes	33	55
Rarely	11	18
Never	00	00
Total	60	100

This question aims at measuring the frequency of learner-learner interaction in the OE class. The results show that more than half of the total number of learners interact among each other to exchange ideas and information, thus, they take an active role during OE class.

Q6: How often does your teacher provide you with feedback during OE sessions?

Table 9

The Frequency of Teacher's Feedback

Options	N	%
Always	17	29
Sometimes	12	20
Rarely	30	50
Never	1	2
Total	60	100

Through this question, the researchers intended to determine whether the teacher provides his/her learners with feedback during OE sessions. Therefore, more than half of learners stated that their teacher provides them with feedback. 40% of learners claimed that their teacher rarely provides them with feedback, and only 2% of them answered with never. These results in line with what the researchers have observed indicate that some OE teachers do not provide their learners with enough feedback, thus, this may affect learners' language development.

Q7: What is your reaction when the teacher provides you with feedback?

Table 10

Learners' Reaction towards Teachers' Feedback

Options	N	%
You like it	33	55
You do not like it	10	17
Neutral	17	28
Total	60	100

As it is displayed in table 10, more than half of the sample had a positive reaction towards teacher's feedback. Unexpectedly, 17% of them reported that they had a negative reaction concerning teacher's feedback. The rest of learners claimed that they had a neutral reaction. The results indicate that over half of the sample recognizes the importance of feedback during the process of language learning. The reason behind learners' dislike of teacher's feedback may go back to feeling shy when the teacher corrects their errors and mistakes.

Q8: The opportunities that are given to you by your OE teacher to interact inside the classroom are enough:

Table 11

Learners' Opinions about the Given Opportunities to Interact inside the Classroom

Options	N	%
Strongly agree	5	8
Agree	25	42
Neutral	18	30
Disagree	12	20
Strongly disagree	00	00
Total	60	100

This question aims to discover whether the opportunities provided by OE teachers for learners to interact are enough. One-half of the sample declared that their OE teachers give them enough opportunities to interact inside the classroom. One-third of the sample said that they have a neutral attitude towards the provided opportunities of interaction. However, one-fifth of learners reported that they do not gain enough opportunities to interact. This indicates that the majority of learners are satisfied with the opportunities given to them to interact inside the classroom.

Q9: Which amount of talk you think should be maximized?

Table 12

Learners Opinions about the Maximization of the Amount of Talk

Options	N	%
Students' talk	52	87
Teachers' talk	8	13
Total	60	100

The findings presented in table 12 show that almost all of the learners believed that students' talk should be maximized. On the other hand, the remaining number of them claimed that teachers' talk should be maximized. These findings reveal that the chosen sample is quite aware of the importance of OE classes to improve their language. The justifications of those who chose the maximization of students' talk are summed up below:

- OE class is highly important for them.
- They should be the center of the session.
- OE class is considered as the most appropriate place to practice their language and to get rid of the barriers of using English as a foreign language in public.

Section Two: Topic Selection

Q10: Do you like making decisions in the classroom?

Table 13

Learners' Opinions towards the Engagement in Decision Making

Options	N	%
Yes	41	68
No	19	32
Total	60	100

The results obtained in table 13 denote that the majority of participants like to assume responsibility and make decisions in the classroom. One-third of the participants claimed that they do not like to be in charge of making decisions in the classroom. This indicates that the ones who opted for 'No' may think that it is the responsibility of the teacher.

Q11: With regard to topics of discussion during OE sessions, how do you prefer them to be selected?

Table 14

Students' Preferences concerning the Selection of the Topics of Discussion

Options	N	%
Selected by you	26	43
Selected by your peers	20	33
Assigned by your teacher	14	23
Total	60	100

As expected, the findings above reveal that the majority of learners prefer to discuss their self-selected topics or topics which are selected by their peers. Only 23% of learners prefer to discuss teacher-assigned topics. For the ones who opted for the second option, it probably because they share the same level and interests with their classmates.

Q12: During OE sessions, how often does your teacher allow you to select the topic of discussion?

Table 15

The Frequency of Self-selected Topics

Options	N	%
Always	9	15
Sometimes	39	65
Rarely	11	18
Never	1	2
Total	60	100

As shown in table 15, 15% of respondents stated that their teacher always allows them to select the topic of discussion, and 65% of them said that their teacher sometimes allows them to self-select the topic of discussion. However, 18% of learners admitted that they are rarely allowed to select the topic of discussion. The rest percentage (2%) went for the option 'never'. From these findings, it can be noticed that the majority of OE teachers recognize the importance of learners' self-selected topics. Thus, they give them the space to make decisions.

Q13: When your teacher allows you to select the topic of discussion, do you select:

Table 16

The Factors behind Selecting a Specific Topic

Options	N	%
Topics that you are interested in	35	58
Topics that you are familiar with	17	28
The most current topics	4	7
Others	4	7
Total	60	100

The answers generated from this question show that more than half of learners select topics that they are interested in. Topic familiarity was the factor that 28% of learners take into consideration when selecting a specific topic, whereas 7% said that they tend to discuss most current topics. 7% of learners chose the option ‘others’ which might be topics that they do not have enough knowledge about or topics that they have already prepared.

Q14: Do you feel motivated to speak if your teacher allows you to select the topic of discussion?

Table 17

Students' Attitudes towards Motivation and Self-selected Topics

Options	N	%
Yes	48	80
No	6	10
Neutral	6	10
Total	60	100

Almost all of the students reported that they feel motivated to speak when they gain the opportunity to select the topic of discussion. Surprisingly, one-tenth of the sample claimed that they do not feel motivated to speak about their self-selected topics, and the rest of them stated that they have a neutral attitude toward it. In this regard, students' motivation increases when they have a say in the topics of discussion.

Q15: In case the teacher assigns you the topic to be discussed, do you face difficulties in interaction?

Table 18

The Possibility of Students to Face Difficulties while Discussing an Assigned Topic

Options	N	%
Yes	32	53
No	28	47
Total	60	100

According to the results demonstrated in table 18, it is shown that more than half of learners face difficulties while discussing an assigned topic. 47% of the whole respondents answered that they do not face difficulties in discussing teacher-assigned topic.

Q15.1: If yes, it is because:

Table 19

Students' Difficulties while Discussing an Assigned Topic

Options	N	%
You are not interested in the assigned topic	10	31
You do not have enough knowledge about the assigned topic	13	41
You feel restricted by the topic	5	16
You feel anxious	4	12
Total	32	100

According to table 19, almost all learners claimed that the lack of topic interest and insufficient knowledge about the assigned topic hinder their engagement in discussions. One-sixth of the sample reported that they feel restricted by the assigned topic and one-eighth of learners stated that anxiety is the main cause that prevents them from interacting when the topic is assigned. From the results, it can be noticed that topic interest and background knowledge are two main factors that may increase or decrease learners' classroom interaction.

Q16: In comparison with teacher-assigned topics, your self-selected topics affect your classroom interaction positively:

Table 20

Learners' Attitudes towards the Relationship between Topic Selection and Classroom Interaction

Options	N	%
Strongly agree	15	25
Agree	32	53
Neutral	12	20
Disagree	1	2
Strongly disagree	00	00
Total	60	100

With regard to the results obtained, the vast majority of learners stated that their self-selected topics affect their CI positively. One-fifth of them stated that they have a neutral attitude towards that and the rest of them claimed that self-selected topics do not affect their CI. This indicates that the majority of learners believe that self-selected topics affect, to a large extent, their classroom interaction. These results are supported by the findings of classroom observation.

3.3. Discussion of the Findings from Students Questionnaire

Based on the analysis of students' questionnaire and the results obtained from it, some facts were revealed concerning the relationship between learners' self-selected topics and

classroom interaction. The first section which is concerned with classroom interaction clearly shows that the majority of learners recognize the importance of CI; where they prefer to interact with both the teacher and their classmates, as shown by the results of Q1. However, students asserted that they still face some difficulties which prevent them from interacting. According to them, the lack of topic interest and teachers' motivation are considered as the two main obstacles, as indicated by the results of Q3. Moreover, students' responses to Q6 and Q7 show that despite the crucial role of feedback in learners' language development and learners' positive reaction towards it, not all teachers provide them with feedback. Additionally, the vast majority of learners insisted on the necessity of maximizing students' talk during OE classes, as shown in the result of Q9.

The second section is mainly devoted to seek information about students' attitudes towards topic selection. The obtained results from it indicate that the majority of learners have a positive attitude towards making decisions in the classroom. Specifically, learners prefer to discuss topics that are selected by their own or by their peers, as indicated by the results of Q10 and Q11. As it is shown in the results of Q13 learners tend to select topics they are interested in and the ones they are familiar with. Consequently, they feel motivated to speak when they are allowed to have a say in the topics of discussion. In contrast, learners face obstacles in interaction when discussing an assigned topic. From students' perspectives, there is a positive relationship between learners' self-selected topics and their classroom interaction, as indicated by the results of Q16.

4. Overall Discussion of the Main Results

The researchers in the present study attempted to investigate the relationship between learners' self-selected topics and classroom interaction. Therefore, both results of classroom observation and students questionnaire have indicated that there is a positive relationship

between learners' self-selected topics and classroom interaction. Hence, the first research question which aimed to investigate whether there exists a positive relationship between learners' self-selected topics and CI, is clearly answered by the results obtained from the analysis of classroom observation. The results determined that learners who gained the opportunity to self-select the topic of discussion were actively engaged in CI with both the teacher and their peers. This is supported by learners' answers to Q16 in the students questionnaire where the vast majority of them declared that their self-selected topics affect positively CI. As well as, they reported in their answers to Q15 that they face difficulties to interact when the topic of discussion is assigned by their teacher. Moreover, the first research question which was designed to investigate learners' attitudes towards topic selection is answered by the findings of Q10, Q11, Q13, and Q14 in the students questionnaire. Learners claimed that they like making decisions in the classroom, thus, the majority of them prefer the topic of discussion to be selected by them or by their peers. Additionally, learners tend to select topics according to their needs; consequently, they feel motivated to speak.

In a nutshell, the overall discussion of results revealed that learners support the use of self-selected topics during OE sessions. Therefore, it was observed that learners' self-selected topics affect their classroom interaction positively. That is, learners interact more when they were discussing topics of their choice. Importantly, the researchers validate the research assumption which states that: In OE classes, learners interact more with their self-selected topics.

As it is mentioned in the background of the study, Wolf (2013) concluded that learners tend to discuss topics of their own choice; they show more confidence in discussing their self-selected topics. Moreover, Bonyadi, Zeinalpur, and Reimany (2013) in their study concerning the relationship between learners' self-selected topics and their writing skill. They came to the

conclusion that learners feel motivated to write about their self-selected topics rather than teacher-assigned topics. In the same vein, the findings of the research in hands revealed that learners support the use of self-selected topics to increase their CI. Significantly, learners were actively engaged in CI when they discussed their own topics. However, learners were less engaged in discussing teachers-assigned topics. Hence, the results of both studies indicate the importance of learners' self-selected topics.

General Conclusion

1. Putting it altogether:

The present study aimed at investigating the relationship between learners' self-selected topics and classroom interaction. This study comprises two chapters: the literature review and the fieldwork.

The literature review was divided into two sections. The first section presented an overview of topic selection. It put under scrutiny the concept of self-selection, self-selection and speaking skill, and self-selection and motivation. Besides, it contrasted teachers-assigned topics with students' self-selected topics. Moreover, the first section focused on the main concepts which are related to topic selection. The second section was mainly devoted to classroom interaction. First of all, it highlighted the definition of classroom interaction along with its main types and aspects. Secondly, it threw light on topic familiarity and topic interest as effective factors to increase EFL learners' classroom interaction. Finally, it stated the importance of EFL classroom interaction.

Correspondingly, the second chapter was totally concerned with the fieldwork of the research. The data was gathered through the use of classroom observation and students questionnaire at the Department of English, Mohammed Sedik Ben Yahia University, Jijel. This was followed by an analysis and interpretation of the results. Hence, the findings obtained through classroom observation and students questionnaires indicated the existence of a positive relationship between the two variables. Additionally, it denoted that learners support the use of self-selected topics. All in all, the obtained results validated the research assumption. That is, during OE classes, learners interacted more with their self-selected topics.

2. Pedagogical Recommendations

Based on the reported findings that determine the positive relationship between learners' self-selected topics and CI, the following recommendations are made:

For Students:

- Students should have a positive attitude towards teachers' feedback which significantly contributes to their language construction
- Some students hold a negative belief about teachers-assigned topics. So, they should get rid of this belief and consider it as a challenging task to enrich their knowledge and develop their language.

For Teachers:

- Teachers should give learners the freedom to self-select the topics of discussion in order to increase their classroom interaction.
- OE teachers should allocate much time to discussion tasks to engage learners more in classroom interaction.
- Teachers should always motivate learners to speak during OE classes and provide them with feedback.
- When teachers assign the topic of discussion they should take into consideration learners' needs, interests, and preferences.

3. Limitations of the Study

While conducting this research we encountered some obstacles which are:

- Insufficient resources and unavailability of relevant electronic books for free.
- Classroom observation requires the researchers to attend several sessions; however, due to the current situation (Covid19 pandemic) we did not have the chance to do so.

- The number of students who attended was very limited, thus, we could not manage to observe learners' classroom interaction sufficiently.

4. Suggestions for Further Research

Based on the limitations noted from the present study, it is noteworthy to suggest some recommendations for future researchers in the field of TEFL

- Future researchers are encouraged to opt for experimental research to test the effect of learners' self-selected topics on their classroom interaction
- This study is conducted to investigate the relationship between learners' self-selected topics and classroom interaction. Therefore, future researchers may deal with a specific aspect of speaking skill, for instance: fluency or accuracy.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Classroom Observation Checklist

University:

Course:

Department:

Number of session:

Date:

Total number of students:

Time:

Number of present students:

Teacher:

Topic	Number of participants	Students' amount of talk	Teacher's amount of talk
Learners' self-selected topics			
Teacher-assigned topic			

Comments:

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Appendix B: Students Questionnaire

Students Questionnaire

Dear students,

We would be very grateful if you could devote some of your time to answer this questionnaire to help us accomplish this research. It aims at investigating the relationship between learners' self-selected topics and their classroom interaction in oral expression class. Be sure that your answers are confidential. Please, use a tick (✓) to indicate your chosen option, and justify your answer wherever is needed.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Section one: Classroom Interaction

1. With whom do you prefer to interact more?

- a. The teacher
- b. My classmates
- c. Both the teacher and my classmates

Please explain why

.....

.....

2. When you interact in the classroom, it is mainly because:

- a. You want to do so
- b. The teacher who asks you

3. If you do not interact, it is because:

- a. The topic is not interesting
- b. The teacher does not motivate you to speak

c. You fear to make mistakes

d. Other factors

4. How often do you interact in English with your teacher in the OE class:

a. Always

b. Sometimes

c. Rarely

d. Never

5. How often do you interact in English with your classmates in the OE class:

a. Always

b. Sometimes

c. Rarely

d. Never

6. How often does your teacher provide you with feedback during OE sessions?

a. Always

b. Sometimes

c. Rarely

d. Never

7. What is your reaction when the teacher provides you with feedback?

a. You like it

b. You do not like it

c. Neutral

8. The opportunities that are given to you by your OE teacher to interact inside the classroom are enough:

a. Strongly agree

- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

9. Which amount of talk you think should be maximized?

- a. Students' talk
- b. Teacher's talk

Please explain why

.....

.....

Section two: Topic Selection

10. Do you like making decisions in the classroom?

- a. Yes
- b. No

11. With regard to topics of discussion during OE sessions, how do you prefer them to be selected?

- a. Selected by you
- b. Selected by your peers
- c. Assigned by your teacher

12. During OE sessions, how often does your teacher allow you to select the topic of discussion?

- a. Always
- b. Sometimes

c. Rarely

d. Never

13. When your teacher allows you to select the topic of discussion, do you select:

a. Topics that you are interested in

b. Topics that you are familiar with

c. The most current topics

d. Others

14. Do you feel motivated to speak if your teacher allows you to select the topic of discussion?

a. Yes

b. No

c. Neutral

15. 1. In case the teacher assigns you the topic to be discussed, do you face difficulties in interaction?

a. Yes

b. No

16. 2. If yes, it is because:

a. You are not interested in the assigned topic

b. You do not have enough knowledge about the assigned topic

c. You feel restricted by the topic

d. You feel anxious

16. In comparison with teacher-assigned topics, your self-selected topics affect your classroom interaction positively (i.e. you talk more in English in the classroom):

a. Strongly agree

b. Agree

c. Neutral

d. Disagree

e. Strongly disagree

Resumé

L'interaction en classe est très importante pour le développement des compétences linguistique de la langue des apprenants en particulier dans les contextes ALE. Donner aux étudiants la possibilité de choisir eux-mêmes les sujets de discussion pendant les cours d'expression oral peut être l'un des meilleurs moyens pour motiver les étudiants de parler et d'interagir dans la classe. Cette étude vise à examiner la relation entre le choix de sujet de discussion par les étudiants et l'interaction en classe. On suppose que si les enseignants permettent aux étudiants de choisir les sujets de discussion, cela contribuera dans une large mesure à augmenter le niveau d'interaction en classe. Pour tester cette hypothèse, la méthode corrélatrice a été adoptée en utilisant l'observation en classe et le questionnaire des étudiants. L'observation en classe a été effectuée au sein de trois groupes de troisième année de licence et le questionnaire des étudiants a été livré au même échantillon. Les données obtenues ont été analysées qualitativement et quantitativement. Les résultats obtenus indiquent qu'il existe une relation positive entre les sujets choisis par les étudiants et l'interaction en classe surtout que ces choix reflètent leurs intérêts. De plus, les étudiants ont appuyé l'utilisation de leur choix des sujets de discussion pour augmenter l'interaction. À la lumière de ces résultats, l'hypothèse a été confirmée.

ملخص

يعتبر التعلم التفاعلي مهم جدا لتطوير كفاءة المتعلم اللغوية خاصة في مجال اللغة الإنجليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية. يمكن أن تكون إتاحة الفرصة للمتعلمين للانتقاء الذاتي لمواضيع المناقشة خلال حصص التعبير الشفهي طريقة فعالة لجعل المتعلمين يتحدثون ويتفاعلون داخل القسم. يفترض في هذه الدراسة أنه خلال حصص التعبير الشفهي يتفاعل الطلبة بكثرة اذا سمح لهم بالاختيار الذاتي لمواضيع المناقشة. لاختبار هذه الفرضية، تم الاعتماد على ملاحظات من داخل الفصل الدراسي و استبيان الطلبة كوسيلتين لجمع البيانات؛ حيث أجريت ملاحظات الفصل الدراسي مع ثلاثة أقسام من السنة الثالثة ليسانس وتم تسليم استبيان الطلبة إلى نفس العينة. تم تحليل النتائج المتحصل عليها بطريقة كمية ونوعية. أشارت النتائج المتحصل عليها إلى وجود علاقة ايجابية بين الانتقاء الذاتي للمواضيع و التعلم التفاعلي. أي ان المتعلمين يتفاعلون أكثر عند مناقشتهم لمواضيع من اختيارهم. بالإضافة إلى ذلك أيد المتعلمون استخدام مواضيع مختارة ذاتيا لزيادة تفاعلهم داخل القسم. على ضوء هذه النتائج تم تأكيد فرضية البحث.