

Theoretical Review on Oral Interaction in EFL Classrooms

Luu Trong Tuan¹

Nguyen Thi Kim Nhu²

Abstract: The primary aim of learning a language is to use it in communication in its spoken or written forms. Classroom interaction is a key to reach that goal. This paper seeks to revisit the two forms of oral interaction in EFL classrooms encompassing teacher-learner interaction involving Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) pattern and teacher questioning, and learner-learner interaction involving pair work and group work, and topic-based and task-based activities. Besides exploring factors influencing classroom oral interaction, the paper reviews the linkage between classroom interaction and second language acquisition predicated on the three hypotheses, namely input hypothesis, interaction hypothesis, and output hypothesis.

Keywords: oral interaction; teacher-learner interaction; learner-learner interaction; second language acquisition

1. INTRODUCTION

The main aim of learning a language is to use it in communication in its spoken or written forms. Classroom interaction is a key to reach that goal. It is the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings or ideas between two or more people, leading to a mutual effect on each other as Rivers writes:

“... Through interaction, students can increase their language store as they listen to or read authentic linguistic material, or even output of their fellow students in discussions, skits, joint problem-solving tasks, or dialogue journals. In interaction, students can use all they possess of the language – all they have learned or casually absorbed – in real life exchanges ...” (Rivers, 1987: 4-5)

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2004) describes interaction as follows:

“In interaction at least two individuals participate in an oral and/ or written exchange in which production and reception alternate and may in fact overlap in oral communication. Not only may two interlocutors be speaking and yet listening to each other simultaneously. Even where turn-taking is strictly respected, the listener is generally already forecasting the

¹ National University of Ho Chi Minh City Nguyen Thi Kim Nhu Nguyen Tat Thanh College, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

² Nguyen Tat Thanh College, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

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remainder of the speaker's message and preparing a response. Learning to interact thus involves more than listening to receive and to produce utterances." (p.4)

In addition, theories of communicative competence emphasize the importance of interaction as human beings use language in various contexts to "negotiate" meaning, or simply stated, to get one idea out of your head and into the head of another person and vice versa (Brown, 1994, p. 159).

According to Ellis (1990), interaction is meaning-focused and carried out to facilitate the exchange of information and prevent communication breakdowns. However, classroom interaction is of a particular nature and a range of functions including formal instruction, whole class and task management and development of group cohesion. Therefore, it involves everything communicative happening in the classroom. Ellis defined classroom interaction broadly:

"... not only to those exchanges involving authentic communication but to every oral exchange that occurs in the classroom, including those that arise in the course of formal drilling..." (Ellis, 1990, p.12)

Classroom interaction consists of two types: non-verbal interaction and verbal interaction. Non-verbal interaction is related to behavioral responses in class. It means students interact through their behaviors such as head nodding, hand raising, body gestures, and eye contact. Verbal interaction, on the contrary, contains written interaction and oral interaction. Written interaction is the style of interaction in which students write out their ideas, thoughts. It means they interact with others through written words, documents and so forth. By contrast, oral interaction implies that students interact with others by speaking in class, answering and asking questions, making comments, and taking part in discussions. These two types of interaction are summarized by Robinson (1997):

"Interaction is the process referring to "face-to-face" action. It can be either verbal channeled through written or spoken words, or non-verbal, channeled through touch, proximity, eye-contact, facial expressions, gesturing, etc." (Robinson, 1994:7)

2. FORMS OF ORAL INTERACTION

In communicative approach of language teaching, classroom interaction became an important feature of second language pedagogy. It can occur between the teacher and learners, and/or between learners themselves, either collectively or individually. According to Angelo (1993), classroom interaction comprises teacher-learner and learner-learner interaction, which is one of ten principles of effective teaching: "create an active learning environment; focus attention; connect knowledge; help students organize their knowledge; provide timely feedback; demand quality; balance high expectations with student support; enhance motivation to learn; encourage faculty- student and student-student interaction and communication; and help students to productively manage their time. Learners will get more knowledge from the lessons when they actively participate in their learning." However, Van Lier (1996) has pointed out that two types of classroom interaction present different opportunities for negotiation, so each type needs to be evaluated within its particular context.

2.1 Teacher-learner interaction

In the classroom, the teacher often asks questions to learners and learners answer the questions and vice versa; or the teacher participates in learning activities. These forms are called teacher-learner interaction. Generally, such interactions take place between the teacher and the class and/or small groups in the class and/or individuals.

In the traditional classroom, the teacher only sits or stands behind a desk, and spends a large amount of time giving lectures and directions whereas students' role are sitting, listening and taking notes passively. The focus of interaction was predominant between the teacher and learners. This one is usually initiated and controlled by the teacher. The teacher's central role is to dominate in terms of the

talking time and of the running of the process. The teacher controls the topic for classroom talk, and determines when start and stop talking in the classroom (Cazden, 1988; Tsui, 1995). At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher reviews what has already been done, introduces new content, explains problematic concepts and then clarifies complex requests and activities during the lesson. At the end of the lesson, the teacher sums up the new content studied and gives feedback. The teacher is central to the classroom interaction while students are passive listeners. At times, students are required to participate only by answering questions which their teacher already knows the answers. They also have no time to ask questions and always rely on the teacher's instructions and cannot solve problems independently. According to Chaudron (1988), teacher talk takes up the largest proportion of classroom talk. It represents approximately two-thirds of the discourse in both L1 and L2 classrooms. The findings of a study of teacher-student interaction conducted by Musumeci (1996) showed that the teacher talk time occupies about 66% or 72%. Kundu (1993) observes the analogous phenomena:

"Most of the time we talk in class hardly ever giving our students a chance to talk, except when we occasionally ask them questions. Even on such occasions because we insist on answers in full sentences and penalize them for their mistakes, they are always on the defensive." (Kundu, 1993: 13)

Edwards and Westgate (quoted by Van Lier in Candlin and Mercer, 2001: 91) echoes the sentiment: "... students have only very restricted opportunities to participate in the language of the classroom." Therefore, this kind of interaction does not clearly provide a motivating learning environment. However, teaching is always a shared-relationship job. It involves the participation from many people as Brown (2001: 99) recommends: "Teacher talk should not occupy the major proportion of a class hour; otherwise, you are probably not giving students enough opportunity to talk." According to Harmer (1991: 49), to foster learners to produce communicative outputs, learners should be engaged in communicative activities. It means the teacher's intervention should be avoided.

Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) pattern

Thornbury (1996) found that this typical interaction pattern in the teacher-dominated language classroom follows the Initiation - Response - Feedback (IRF) sequence. The percentage of utterances falling into this three-part structure may be over half (about from 50% to 60 %, Van Lier (op cit)). Since the IRF structure produces a single pattern of interaction where the teacher both initiates and closes the exchange and the student's output is limited to the response in the second turn. This pattern of interaction is a product of the institutional setting of the classroom (Hall, 1998; Musumeci, 1996; Walsh, 2002). The talking time for the teacher and students are unequal (Cazden, 1988; Seedhouse, 2001). The teacher controls the topic and general discourse by directing turn taking through the use of questions.

Here is a typical example of such pattern in classroom.

Teacher initiates the first turn

"I" - T: What do you do when you're under stress?

Student responds in the second turn

"R" - L: Go shopping

Teacher follows up at the third turn

"F" - T: Good.

The teacher initiates the conversation with a question, and asks a student to answer the question, and then provides feedback to the student's answer. This is the most common pattern of language interaction between the teacher and students in a classroom. According to Van Lier (1996, p.152), this model has been characterized as a "closed, rather than an open, discourse format". Therefore, it makes the lesson less communicative. However, Wells (1993) demonstrated that the nature of the feedback provided by the teacher in the third turn of the IRF should be to constrain or provide opportunities for further interaction. Therefore, the teacher should ask students to extend their thinking, justify, clarify their ideas or make links with their own experience. This pattern supplies learners with more opportunities for meaning negotiation.

Here is a typical example of the pattern for further interaction.

Teacher initiates the first turn

“I” - T: What do you do when you’re under stress?

Student responds in the second turn

“R” - L: Go shopping

Teacher follows up at the third turn

“F” - T: Good. Any other ones?

From the example above, the teacher’s third turn (F) evaluates the student’s response (R) to her open question (I), but then includes another question “Any other ones?” This question helps generate more opportunities for learners to practice the target language and foster them to maintain the floor during discussions. This IRF follows the sequence: the teacher initiates an exchange, usually in the form of a question; a student answers, and the teacher gives feedback; and the teacher initiates the next cycle by asking question(s) and so on. As a result, students will attain a higher quality of language output from responding to the teacher’s questions. In Dillion’s studies, questioning at the third turn helps elicit higher quality talk from students, make the length of their utterances and increase language output. The initiation from the teacher serves as the input of the target language. Students’ performance in the language is the output of language. The feedback from the teacher enhances learners’ acquisition of language. This IRF pattern supports and promotes interaction more effectively (Hall & Walsh, 2002; Ohta, 2001; Van Lier, 1996). If the teacher utilizes the third turn to provide further opportunities for interaction rather than using evaluative comment, the IRF pattern can be less restrictive (Antón, 1999; Hall, 1998; Hall & Walsh, 2002; Ohta, 2001; Walsh, 2002).

Teacher questioning

The tool used in the direct interaction between the teacher and learners is “questions”. According to Corey (1940, in Hargie, et al: 1981: 66), the teacher questioning is a fundamental and important means of classroom interaction. It is considered one of the teacher’s initiating activities and facilitates students’ language acquisition by asking questions and initiating responses from students. In quoting Ascher (1961) and Gall (1970), the teacher is called “a professional question marker” and the asking of questioning is “one of the basic ways by which the teacher stimulates students’ thinking and learning”. In Ur’s view (2000: 229), the teacher questioning serves purposes such as letting learners present their ideas, testing their understanding knowledge or skills, engaging them actively in participating in learning, stimulating their thinking and getting them to review and practice previously learnt materials. According to Kissock and Iyortsuun (1982), questions keep the central role, so it is important that teachers are familiar with the impact questions on communicating and learning in the classroom, and find ways to improve the use of questions by themselves and their students. Learning occurs as the result of questions; questions serve to focus the objectives of the curriculum; a good teacher is a good questioner (Morgan and Saxton, 1991). Wood (1988, in Myhill, Dunkin, 2005: 424) wrote that “the aim of pedagogical questions is to motivate, sustain and direct the thought-processes of the pupil”.

Types of questions

Hargie (1981) classifies teacher questions into procedural questions, recall/ process questions and closed/ open questions. Procedural questions are used as the part of teacher language in giving instructions in classroom. They are for “teacher-student cooperation” and do not require students to produce any language. The recall question largely focuses on retrieving knowledge and checking whether learners mastered the previous lessons. The answer to a recall question provides particular information learnt and learners do not need to apply their high cognitive capacity. By contrast, with process questions, learners have to go through more complex mental process because the teacher ask them to make a decision, to voice out their opinions as well as to justify or evaluate any given statement or situation, which stimulates their thinking and motivates them to deal with the matter. With closed questions, learners’ answers are very narrow in a few words or a short sentence. They encourage learners to find out the facts, or to present their knowledge. They can be subdivided into three types: alternative questions, Yes/ No questions, identification questions (Hargie, 1981: 73). Open questions require all

possible answers. So, they provide learners with more opportunities of interactions at advanced level of thinking and encourage learners to participate actively in their learning for producing more language output.

According to Long et al. (1984), questioning helps to activate the teacher-learner interaction and ensure that all students participate in their learning. Long and Sato (1983) suggested two questioning techniques for the teacher in EFL classrooms: “referential” and “display” questions. “Display” questions are those questions for which the teacher knows the answers beforehand and requires students to display knowledge. This kind of question is asked for comprehension checks, confirmation check or clarification requests. It generates interactions that are typical of didactic discourse. This stance relates to the nature of classroom interaction in that the IRF pattern is the mostly seen type of classroom interaction (Long and Sato, 1983; Brock, 1986). According to Bloom (1956), it could be classified as lower-order questions. Here are some examples about display questions:

1. What is the opposite of “near”?
2. What does this paragraph say?
3. What’s the meaning of “current”?

With display questions, not only does the teacher evidently know the answers, but students are also more likely to know them. The teacher uses display questions in EFL classrooms to generate practice in the target language and to increase students’ participation in the form of “natural” conversation which is characterized by non-solicited turn-taking.

“Referential” questions are the questions whose answers are not already known by the teacher. Therefore, it has greater potential to generate social discourse. With the purpose for communicating rather than testing the students’ knowledge, it is used when the teacher’s aim is to enhance students’ speaking skills and to create a social-like atmosphere in the classroom. Besides, students’ answers to referential questions are more meaningful, longer and subjective in most circumstances (Brock 1986, Gebhard 1996, and Tsui 1995). Thus, when asked such these questions, learners are required to give interpretations and judgments, so they will have genuine communicative purposes. “Referential” questions contain two sub-types: closed referential and open referential questions. When the teacher expects to get complicated and long responses from learners, open referential questions should be asked because such these questions can elicit more information than closed ones. So, learners need to think more and use more language to answer open referential questions. By contrast, with closed referential questions, learners only need to give short responses not containing much information.

Here are some examples about two types of referential questions:

Some open referential questions are

- a. What are your hobbies?
- b. Could you tell us how you found your wife? Why did you select her?
- c. What do you think about our new teacher?

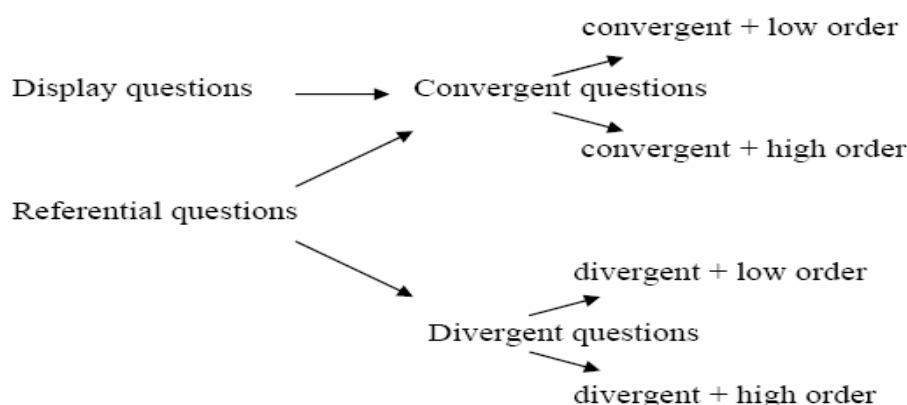
Some closed referential questions are

- a. Are you married?
- b. What’s your name?
- c. What’s your job?

The purpose of teacher questioning determines types of teacher questions in the classroom. In Corey’s research, the teacher asked a question every 72 seconds. There is a dominance of display question type over referential question type. Teachers tend to ask more display questions than referential questions (Barnes, cited from yu & yu, 2005; Long & Sato, 1983; Pica & Long, cited from Ellis, 1994). Teachers have used display questions 4.4 times more than the number of referential questions. In other words, out of a total of 1628 questions, 1335 have been display questions (about 82%) and only 293 referential questions (about 18%). In a study carried out in the early 1980s, Long and Sato (1983) found that on average only one in every seven questions asked by the teacher was a referential question. Moreover, this

study shows that referential questions create more interaction in the classroom than display questions. There are two reasons for the teacher to ask referential questions. The first reason is quantitative. Learners tend to give longer responses than asked with “display questions”. The second reason is qualitative. Learners need to have classroom experience to take the initiative in speaking. However, according to Brock (1986) and Long and Sato (1983), classroom interaction is characterized by the use of display questions. They encourage language learners, especially beginners, to get interested since such these questions require short and contained small pieces of information such as on parts of speech, word stress, intonation, antonyms and synonyms, word pronunciation and meaning. Display questions require short or even one-word answers and less likely to get learners to produce large amounts of speech. By contrast, referential questions are used in high proficient language classroom, and require long and complex answers consisting of important points such as interpretation, elaboration and giving information. In other words, referential questions increase the amount of output from learners than display questions. When the teacher asks a referential question, learners can create a more near-normal speech. Besides, when asking referential questions to seek unknown information, the teacher needs to elicit longer and more authentic responses than display questions, for which responses are predetermined by lesson content. For Ellis (1992), when language lessons whose focus is on form, display questions are likely to predominate. In content-focused lessons, referential questions may be overwhelmingly used. Many studies (Tollefson, 1989; Lynn, 1991; Ellis, 1994; Pica, 1994) recommend the use of referential questions in place of display ones because of their authentic communicative value. Brock (1986, in Nunan, 1989) & Tsui (1995) found that learners’ responses to referential questions were on average more than twice as long and more than twice as complex in terms of syntax as responses to display questions. Therefore, with referential questions the teacher generally receive longer and more grammatically complex responses from students. Referential questions might well reinforce critical thinking and help to increase articulation, language output. Lynn (1996) added that only with referential questions can students practice initiating interactions. Also, such questions are important classroom tools to generate more target language use by the learners by increasing the amount of learner output and participation. On the other hand, display questions are likely to encourage to regurgitate facts or pre-formulated language items. Therefore, they discourage students from trying to communicate their own ideas in the target language and therefore potentially restrict students’ language output (Tsui, 1995).

Richards and Lockhart (1994) also classify teacher questions as “convergent” and “divergent”. The former refers to as “closed question” as it is information-seeking in nature and results in simple elicitations of factual information. It does not require original thought or critical reflection, so possible answers are limited, generally short and recall previously memorized information. The latter requires the application of knowledge, not just the recalling of information. Therefore, it is referred to as an “open question” and requires a higher level of thinking, like interpreting, evaluating, inquiring, making inferences and synthesizing.



A suitable choice of different question types fosters students’ participation, is beneficial for their learning and encourages the production of linguistically complex sentences. The analysis carried out on teacher questioning has shown that questions that stimulated most oral speech by students were simple , short, and easy to understand. They were not closed and did not limit the range of choices or even

suggest the answers. Furthermore, the most effective questions were process-oriented rather than product-oriented, that is, they required students' thinking on "how" and "why" rather than "what".

Wait-time

Teachers need to take into account another device: wait-time. Mary (1986) research shows that after asking a question, teachers typically wait only one second or less for a student response. If the response is not forthcoming in that time, teachers rephrase the question, ask another student to answer it, or answer it themselves. They should allow a few seconds of silence after posing a question. In any case, a suitable pause should last 3-4 seconds of uninterrupted silence. Wait-time is strictly connected to improvements in student achievement and, more exactly, it increases the length of student responses, stimulates the variety of responses offered and decreases students' failure to respond. If teachers can learn to increase their wait time from one second to 3-5 seconds, significant improvements in the quantity and quality of student response usually will take place. However, there is a significant relationship between the use of higher cognitive questions and wait-time: the higher the cognitive process required by the teacher question, the longer should be the post-question wait-time. After students complete an answer, teachers often begin their reaction or their next question before a second has passed. Mary (1986) has determined that increasing the pause after student gives an answer is equally as important as increasing wait time.

In a nutshell, the classroom interaction includes teacher's talk and student's talk. Teacher's talk consists of all speech acts by the teacher that were addressed to learners. It contains three categories: academic instruction - the teacher's academic presentation, answering student's academic questions, and supportive and corrective feedback; motivation - various illocutionary acts aimed at activating students (initiative calls, initiative markers, academic questions, and initiative feedback); evaluation - positive and negative feedback, and classroom management - discipline markers, discipline pauses, procedural instructions, procedural directives, and procedural markers. According to Nunan (1991), teachers "need to pay attention to the amount and type of talking they do and to evaluate its effectiveness in the light of their pedagogical objectives" and points out: "Teacher talk is of crucial importance, not only for the organization of the classroom but also for the processes of acquisition. It is important for the organization and management of the classroom because it is through language that teachers either succeed or fail in implementing their teaching plans. In terms of acquisition, teacher talk is important because it is probably the major source of comprehensible target language input the learner is likely to receive." The amount and type of teacher talk is even regarded as a decisive factor of success or failure in classroom teaching (Hakansson, cited from ZhouXing & ZhouYun, 2002). Student's talk includes all student utterances directed to the teacher.

In addition, the teacher needs to show the same interest in all students and patience to all students, especially weaker students. When students feel the attention from their teacher, they become eager to participate in the lesson. The success of teacher-learner interaction is determined by the teacher's teaching style. The duty of the teacher is to provide guidance and inspiration, decide what questions to ask and how to ask them and create learning situations which stimulate learners to listen, read, write, discuss, ask questions, perform tasks, solve problems or engage in other activities. The teacher needs to apply the flexible teaching in classroom. The teacher behaves warmly toward learners and fosters interpersonal communication skills and patterns of cooperative interaction. Whereby learners will have more opportunities to express their ideas, join classroom activities and interact with the teacher.

2.2 Learner-learner interaction

Learner-learner interaction occurs among learners. In this form of interaction, the teacher plays a role as a monitor and learners are the main participants. Learner-learner interaction occurs in groups called learner-learner interaction, in pairs called peer interaction.

Pair work and groupwork

Many researchers assert that practice is the most beneficial when carried out in collaboration with small groups or peers rather than with the teacher or in a whole-class setting. Significantly, students almost always initiate their questions during small-group rather than whole-class activities.

Open discussion in cooperative groups can make clarification of ideas and perspectives in a context free of the perpetual scrutiny of the teacher and the wider class group (Gillies, 2006). Furthermore, learners do not have to rely on the teacher to be their only interlocutor and source of language input (Nunan, 1992). It is possible for peers to provide language models and to interact with each other (Erten, 2000). Peers act as natural interlocutors resulting in the availability of a much greater variety of models with whom to practice (Long and Porter, 1984). Peers are often more aware than teachers of understanding (Gillies, 2006). In fact, cooperation in groups also contributes to a more relaxed atmosphere in the classroom, lessens anxiety and inhibitions, and thus leads to an increase in both the quantity and quality of practice (Ur, 1996, Altay and Ozturk, 2004). Collaborative work often exerts a beneficial effect on task performance (Storch, 2001). Therefore, it can be concluded that collaborative practice should facilitate language development.

According to Long and Porter (1985), learner-learner interaction pattern is an attractive alternative to teacher-learner interaction. Harmer (2001) proposed that pair work increases the amount of talking time available to every learner in classroom. It allows learners to work and interact independently without the necessary guidance of the teacher, thus promoting learners' independence. It allows teachers to have time to work with one and more pairs while other learners continue working. This cooperation helps the classroom become a more relaxed and friendly place. According to Sullivan (2000), pair or group work is considered the most interactive way. It does not pay attention to the socio-cultural and personal experience that guide learners' behavior in the classroom. It has three value systems of choice, freedom and equality. The reasons are that learners in pairs or groups have the right to talk freely and are also free from the teacher's control. Learners in groups are equal, and the power of the teacher within groups is also diminished or neutralized. The teacher should frequently use group work to maximize each learner's opportunity to speak and reduce the psychological burden of public performance. Long, Adams, Mc Lean and Castanos (1976) & Rulon and Mc Crery (1986) found that "learners express a wider range of language functions in group work" and "in group work on reading and listening comprehension, learners give fuller answers than in whole-class work with a teacher". Doughty and Pica (1986), moreover, contends that "group work is more likely to lead to negotiation of meaning than interaction with the teacher." The extent to which group work results in cooperative learning through collaborative interaction depends on the frequency of communicative interaction (Mercer, 2004) and the quality of that discourse (Ellis, 2003). Group learning seems to occur when participants are required to communicate and discuss together to solve a problem (Light and Glachan, 1985). Wegerif, Mercer, and Dawes (1999: 495) describe the conditions that are required for collaborative interaction as follows: (1) All information is shared; (2) The group seeks to reach agreement; (3) The group takes responsibility for decisions; (4) Reasons are expected; (5) Challenges are expected; (6) Alternatives are discussed before a decision is taken; and (7) All in the group are encouraged to speak by other group members.

Topic-based and task-based activities

The need for well-planned and well-designed group work activities seem to be of great significance (Gillies, 2004). To increase the quality and quantity of such discourse in the classroom, the teacher needs to organize the most beneficial speaking activities that afford the most opportunities for students to collaborate and negotiate meaning during the interaction (Bygate, Skehan, & Swain, 2001; Ellis, 2003). Ur (1996) describes some characteristics of good speaking activities: There is a large amount of learner talk during these activities. Learners have ample opportunities to speak and participate in activities. Learners are also highly motivated and interested in the activity. They use language which is relevant, comprehensible and fairly accurate. The question then arises as to what kinds of activities tend to incorporate these characteristics and would seem to be useful in promoting collaborative group practice. In addition, Ur (1996) proposed two activities for oral communication: topic-based and task-based activities. According to Duff (1986), topic-based activities tend to be

‘divergent’ or open-ended in nature, since the emphasis is on the discussion of a particular subject and the actual production of relevant speech. There are generally no specific goals or outcomes to be but only converse relevantly on the topic in question. These activities contain discussions and debates which do not appear to support negotiation. During such sessions, learners express individual ideas independently without the need to engage in collaboration very much, so they do not necessarily need to exchange information during the activity (Pica et. al, 1993). Besides, with divergent goals and optionality in information supply, negotiation of meaning decreases (Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun, 1993).

Task-based activities, on the other hand, are ‘convergent’ in nature (Duff, 1986) since learners are required to use the target language as a means to reach a specific outcome or consensus. This outcome may be open-ended, however, with no single “right” answer. During the activity, there is more emphasis on learners through expressing the meaning by using all the target language to ensure comprehension, rather than using particular linguistic features or conversing on a specific topic. This category includes things such as role-play, problem solving and information-gap activities. The main objective is to engage in real communication as Nunan states:

“a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on meaning rather than form.” (Nunan 1989:10)

The pair and group work activities and tasks were classified according to two categories taken from Ellis (2001): functional language practice and focused communicative tasks. Ellis (2001, p. 20) defines functional language practice as “instructional materials that provide learners with the opportunity to practice producing the target structure in some kind of situational context” and notes that, although the activities involved appear to concentrate on meaning, “the primary focus remains on form, and learners are aware that the purpose is to master accurate use through repeated use of the target feature.” The particular activities in pair work group are for students to practice targeted vocabulary and structures through asking each other questions on a predetermined topic such as daily routines or descriptions of an item, person or a picture, or engaging in role play. According to Willis (1996), a successful task-based contain the following characteristics. Firstly, the task should provide an appropriate level of complexity and difficulty. Secondly, the task’s primary goal should reflect what learners need to do in real-life situations such as exchanging information, giving instructions, or presenting an oral report. Moreover, tasks must be based on authentic materials obtained from written or oral texts that have not been adapted to simplify their level difficulty. Finally, the task includes a particular feature of language form for students to use in conveying meaning during the tasks. In order to accomplish them, students must negotiate, plan, and anticipate. In other words, they have to use and practice with the language, elaborating and revising their work. According to Willis (1996), two general goals for using task-based activities are communicative effectiveness and second language acquisition. The reasons are that task-based activities give learners confidence in trying out whatever they know, give learners experience of spontaneous interaction, give learners the chance to benefit from noticing how others express similar meanings, give learners chances for negotiating turns to speak, engage learners in using language purposefully and cooperatively, make learners participate in a complete interaction, not just one-off sentences, give learners chances to try out communication strategies and develop learners’ confidence that they can achieve communicative goals. Negotiation takes place as students discuss and reach an agreement regarding the topic of the conversation they want to put together. Oral exchange is necessary to carry out the task, as proposed by Gass (1997), as is collaboration in order to produce an outcome.

Ellis described focused communicative tasks as “designed to elicit production of a specific target feature in the context of performing a communicative task” (Ellis 2001, p. 21). Such tasks primarily focus on meaning rather than on form. Students work collaboratively to construct text and to ask other students; for example, make one or two-way information gap tasks, make a debate, create a role play, prepare part of a procedural text such as a recipe, and list the ingredients of an imaginary dish and so on.

With task-based activities, however, learners need to communicate with and comprehend each other for successful performance to reach an outcome (Ellis, 2003, Skehan and Foster, 2001). Because the task is open and discovery-based, group members are interdependent, and interaction is vital to productivity

(Gillies, 2004). Cooperative group learning involves working together on a common group task, helping each other and facilitating each other's learning, and accepting responsibility for contributing to the group's task. Unless members of the group collaborate, they cannot successfully complete the activity (Wegerif et. al, 1999).

“A task-based curriculum, then, specifies what a learner needs to do with the English language in terms of target tasks and organizes a series of pedagogical tasks intended to reach those goals.” (Brown, 1994, P. 229).

In brief, for language learners in classroom setting, interactional language activities occur either between the teacher and other learners or between learners themselves.

3. FACTORS INFLUENCING ORAL INTERACTION

There are many factors influencing classroom interaction. According to Fawzia (2002), factors are divided into three categories: student factors, social factors and educational factors. Student factors contain student's perception, attitudes, language factors, learning styles, background of students and personal affective factors. Social factors include the gender of students in class and nature community feelings in a group. The lecturer, the course and the topic are all related to pedagogical factors.

In Tatar's study (2005), classroom interaction is influenced by the factors: learners' lack of language skills as well as inadequate content knowledge, avoiding making mistakes in front of the teacher as well as their friends, and avoiding any embarrassing situations that can make them lose their face. Therefore, learners' silence is an effective face-saving strategy.

In Fassinger (1995), there are three main factors class traits, student traits and teacher traits to oral interaction. Class traits include interaction norms and emotional climate. They are pressures from other students in class such as discouragement, attention and supportiveness. Student traits come from themselves such as lack of confidence, pre-preparation, organization skills as well as communication apprehension and fear of offending. The last trait is teacher traits which are the supportiveness, the attention and the evaluation from the teacher.

The study of Liu (2001) showed five main categories: cognitive, pedagogical, affective, socio-cultural and linguistic. Cognitive category consists of learning experiences and learning style that learners are applying, their preparation before entering classes, their knowledge of subject matter, and their interest in the topics. Pedagogical category refers to teacher's encouragement, class size, peer support, and the way that the teacher conducts the lesson. The research has proved that learners are more willing to participate in pair or group discussion than in whole-class discussion. Thus, student-centered classroom encourages more participation as compared to teacher-centered classroom. (Barry, King & Burke, 2000). The affective factors contain learners' personality, motivation, attitude, anxiety, and risk-taking. In Morrison and Thomas (1975), personality is described as “self-esteem”. It is the set of evaluative attitudes that a person has about himself or his accomplishments. Self-esteem has some influences on students' behaviors. The learners with low self-esteem give limited responses in the classroom whereas the learners with high self-esteem display strong communication skills and are interactive with others. Besides, McCroskey (1991) shows communication apprehension also influences learners' participation. The reason is that excessive communication apprehension may lead to low self-esteem, poor communication skills and low education achievement. Lai (1993) points out that the teacher frequently complains learners' ability of using the language, which results in low self-esteem. Therefore, they experience language anxiety in using English for communication. In McCroskey (1991), shyness influences learners' oral interaction. Introverted learners are shy; therefore they are often quiet, unsociable, reserved and passive. On the other hand, extroverted learners are more likely to participate in class. The socio-cultural category refers to the students' belief, values, and moral judgments. They are influenced by learners' cultural backgrounds and educational experiences. The last factor is linguistic factors denoting students' linguistic abilities and communicative competence. Many students are

reluctant to interact with others because of their poor speaking skill, whereas others with good speaking skill feel eager to join oral interaction activities in classroom.

Many researchers have proved that classroom interaction is influenced by the gender, the academic dominance and the teacher communication style. A study was carried out in two 7th grade classes (7A and 7B; in 7A, females outnumber males) of a high school. The study is to investigate the influence of student gender, academic composition, and teacher communication style on teacher-learner interaction. The results show differences in teacher's behaviors are an important factor in teacher-learner interaction. Besides, female's academic dominance influences classroom interaction in both directions: from the teacher to learner and from the learner to the teacher. The teacher influences learners as well as being influenced in return. The degree of this influence varies by teacher and class. The style of communication pertains to teacher's ability to control classroom interactions and to reach all learners regardless of gender. Therefore, the academic composition of a class, teacher's composition styles and attitudes toward gender are important factors in teacher-learner interaction.

The finding of Julie Wilson (1999) about high and low achievers' classroom interaction patterns in an upper primary classroom shows that:

The high achieving learners attempted a greater number of student-initiated interactions than the low achieving learners. When encouraged by the teacher, the low achieving learners were still reluctant to interact. High achievers put up their hand to initiate interactions and these interactions were predominantly for the purpose of providing an answer to a question. Low achievers often combine verbal and non-verbal strategies to initiate interactions. The factors influencing the interaction patterns of the high achieving learners are being uncertain answer, not wanting to be involved, not wanting to be the only person in the class initiating an interaction. By contrast, the factors influencing the willingness to interact in the classroom by the low achieving learners are getting teased by other students, feeling embarrassed, concerned about being wrong, lack of enjoyment and knowledge in particular subject areas, personal attitudes towards learning, personal attitudes towards socializing/ forming relationships with other students.

Walsh (2002) found teachers' choice of language and their capacity to control the language use to be crucial to facilitate or hinder learners' participation in face-to-face exchanges. Teacher verbal behaviors increase the level of learners' participation such as applying open and direct approaches to error correction, using of real-life conversational language appropriately when giving feedback, allowing extended wait-time for learner responses, scaffolding by providing needed language to pre-empt communication breakdowns and offering communication strategies to maintain and extend learners' turns. In contrast, teacher verbal behaviors interrupt learners' language use such as latching or completing a learner's turn, echoing or repeating all or part of what learners has said and making learners loose the thread of their utterances.

4. CLASSROOM INTERACTION AND SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

There are two concepts in second language acquisition: "nature" and "nurture". The former means that learners learn the language by the innate knowledge about language, whereas the latter assumes that language development is inspired by the environment as learners are engaging in the interaction (Doughty & Long, 2003).

Interaction is a key of second language acquisition and exists as the central feature. It describes the interpersonal activity taking place during face-to-face communication (Vygotsky, 1978, cited in Ellis, 1999). The interaction influencing second language acquisition occurs among non-native speakers of second language or between non-native speakers and native speakers. According to Ellis (1985), interaction is concerned as the discourse which is jointly constructed by learners and their interlocutors and output is the result of interaction. It facilitates language learning, engages students in participating language learning activities and makes more outputs of the language. In second language learning

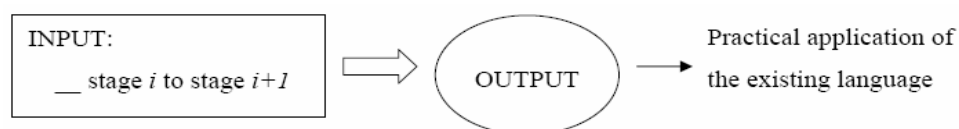
context, language learning is mainly conducted and initiated by language teachers in different ways such as teacher questioning, teacher instructions, or any other kind of activities that facilitate learners' language acquisition.

According to Krashen (1981), acquisition is considered an explicit process and implicit process. The former involves learners' attending consciously to language in order to understand and memorize rules. By contrast, the latter takes place when the language is used for communication. Acquisition occurs when learners focus on conveying meaning. Language acquisition is mainly referred to as the process by which both linguistic competence and communicative competence are acquired by learners. It can be conducted through direct exposure of the target language to learners and based on the formal language instruction (Ellis, 1999: 12).

In the Mackey's research (1999) about the relationship between interaction and second language acquisition, he asserted that the nature of interaction and the role of learners are critical factors through interaction. He concluded that one feature interacting with the learner's internal factors to facilitate development is the participation in the interaction through the provided condition for the negotiation meaning. Long (1990) asserts that language acquisition is the result of an interaction between the learners' mental abilities and the linguistic environment. Interaction is necessary for second language acquisition.

4.1 The input hypothesis

According to Krashen (1985:2), two-way interaction is a particularly good way of providing comprehensible input which plays a critical role in language learning since there is no learning without input. The language used by the teacher affects the language produced by learners. Acquisition occurs by means of a learner's access to comprehensible input which is the crucial factor in second language acquisition. In Krashen's (1982) view, learning only takes place by means of a learner's access to comprehensible input and will occur when unknown items are only just beyond the learner's level. It is explained in detail "i+1" structure. "i" stands for learners' current linguistic competence, and "1" stands for the items learners intend to learn.



The Input Theory also has two corollaries (Krashen, 1985: 2):

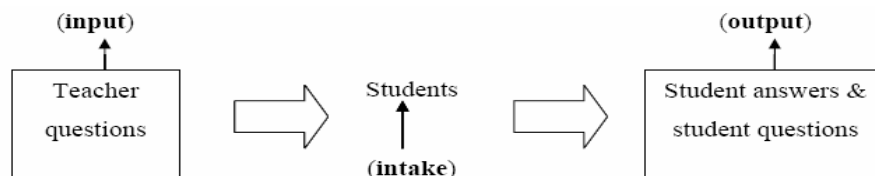
Corollary 1: Speaking is a result of acquisition, not its cause; it emerges as result of building competence via comprehensible input.

Corollary 2: If input is understood and there is enough of it, the necessary grammar is automatically provided. The language teacher need not attempt deliberately to teach the next structure along the natural order - it will be provided in just the right quantities and automatically reviews if the student receives a sufficient amount of comprehensible input.

Long (1983; 1985) emphasized the importance of comprehensible input in second language acquisition. Long identifies conversational or interactional adjustments as the most effective means of promoting comprehension. The particular conversational adjustments were clarification requests and confirmation checks and, comprehension checks. For Long, the presence of these interactional features indicates the occurrence of meaning negotiation which provides more comprehensible input to the learner and therefore promotes acquisition.

Pica and Doughty (1985) emphasize the role of teachers in creating input. Teacher talk actually serves as the main source of input in second language learning. Therefore, teachers should make their input comprehensible and in right quantities. In the second language classroom where teacher questioning is concerned, intakes through teacher questioning can facilitate students' output in the target

languages. Teacher questions act as language inputs for language learners and students' answers to teacher's questions are language outputs. Students' response includes their answers to the teacher's questions as well as the questions they ask.



Input & output through teacher questioning

However, Pica and Doughty (1985) found that teacher-student interaction generated less input for students than student-student interaction, but the input provided was more grammatical. There are two reasons. The first one is that teachers produce most of the grammatical input and use more of the conversational adjustments that help make input more comprehensible. The second one is that students in the teacher-directed context took less turns and produced less language.

4.2 The interaction hypothesis

Interaction Hypothesis emphasizes on the role of negotiated interaction in language development. Doughty & Long (2003) have cited Long's (1996), negotiation for meaning triggers interactional adjustment and facilitates language acquisition because it connects input, internal learner capacities and output in production ways. According to Long (1983a; 1983b), for language acquisition to occur, learners should be afforded ample opportunities to negotiate meaning to prevent a communicative breakdown. Negotiation raises learners' awareness of those language features which do not match the standard of the target language and the parts beyond them (Gass, 1997). Through negotiation, learners obtain feedback from interlocutors on their language output in the forms of the conversational adjustments. The feedback serves as an indication for learners to modify their production. Gass & Varonis (1994) discuss the importance of negotiated interaction in promoting second language acquisition:

“... crucially focuses the learner's attention on the parts of the discourse that are problematic, either from a productive or receptive point of view. Attention in turn is what allows learners to notice a gap between what they produce/ know and what is produced by speakers of the second language. The perception of a gap or mismatch may lead to grammar restructuring” (p.299).

The Interaction Hypothesis by Long (1996) is based on the following propositions: Comprehensible input is a necessary but not sufficient condition for acquisition and is one of several processes required for acquisition to occur. Learners need to attend, notice and consciously perceive mismatches between input and their output in order for input to become intake. Meaning negotiation during interaction promotes noticing. Negative feedback gained during negotiation work may be facilitative of second language development and necessary for particular structures. Skehan and Foster (2001) also stated that collaborative interaction provides the negotiation of meaning, an important feature of interaction. According to Long (1981), speakers can modify the input or structure the interaction by using interactional strategies to avoid conversational trouble or repair misunderstandings. Such behaviours represent ways in which participants in a conversation collaborate in order to communicate effectively (Dörnyei and Scott, 1997) and also probably provide comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985).

According to Gass & Torrens (2005), negotiation is the first step to learning and is one part of interaction. Interaction is essential condition for second language acquisition because it modifies speeches and interaction patterns to help learners participate in a conversation (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Therefore, Interaction Hypothesis is considered conversational exchanges to prevent a

communicative breakdown. Acquisition is promoted when the input is made comprehensible through arising interactional modifications from meaning negotiation. Long (1981, 1983, 1996) emphasizes the crucial role of the process of negotiation on learning. Negotiation, or the 'modification and restructuring of interaction occurs when learners and their interlocutors anticipate, perceive, or experience difficulties in message comprehensibility' has a number of beneficial effects (Pica, 1994, p. 493). Firstly, it aids in increasing understanding, and thus results in learners receiving more, and more comprehensible input, necessary for learning to take place. Negotiation exchanges are said to result in 'denser' than average speech, with more repetitions, reformulations, expansions, extra stress, and a range of other features. All of them increase frequency and saliency of aspects of the input. Learners are also more likely to benefit from this enhanced input as they have at least partial control over the semantic content of the interaction and can thus free form paying attention to form in the input. Secondly, interaction takes place in a context that is meaningful to the interlocutors. From this context learners derive a degree of support which helps them in their understanding as well as in getting their meaning across. They also derive support from their conversation partners who may supply words, or restate utterances, and in so doing provide scaffolding, allowing learners to express meaning they would otherwise be unable to. Next, interaction can also lead to the occurrence of negative feedback i.e. information about what is and is not understandable and/or correct in a speaker's output. Negative feedback is generally facilitative of L2 acquisition. Gass (1997; Gass & Varonis, 1994) has argued that since such negative feedback is situated in a communicative context and is thus linked to actual communicative goals, it is more likely to be usable to the learner. Negative evidence can perform different functions. Firstly, it can help learners 'notice the gap' between the input and their own output. As a result of realizing this gap, participants can then attempt to reformulate their utterance or store information about that aspect of the language. It may also result in quite sudden shifts in the learner's interlanguage, for example when it leads to a realization that certain forms cannot be used in the target language at all. Secondly, negative evidence can also increase learners' awareness of the target language in a broader sense. By drawing attention to what is not possible in the target language, negative feedback necessarily contrasts different linguistic forms and encourages learners to understand the differences (Schmidt, 1990). In sum, output and interaction can provide additional input, result in comprehensible input which impacts on learning, enhance fluency by allowing participants to produce the target language, facilitate form-meaning connections, result in negotiation of meaning which in turn can raise awareness of the target language, provide opportunities for negative feedback and impact on learning directly as a result of verbalization.

4.3 The output hypothesis

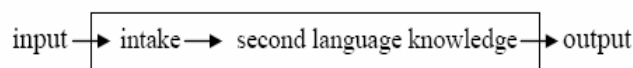
Learners can improve their language level through producing output – in written or spoken forms. Swain (1985) concludes the role of output in three points. Firstly, the need to produce output in the process of negotiating precise, coherent and appropriate meaning encourages learners to develop the necessary grammatical resources. Secondly, output provides learners with opportunities to try out hypothesis to see if they work. Thirdly, production helps to force learners to move from semantic to syntactic processing. Long (1985; 1996) suggests that "second language interaction can facilitate development by providing opportunities for learners to receive comprehensible input and negative feedback, as well as modify their own output, test hypotheses and notice gaps in their interlanguage" (Mackey, 2002, p.380). Swain (1985: 249) particularly emphasizes that language output can contribute to language acquisition, only when learners are pushed to can use, improve and develop the target language. In short, students do not achieve nativelike productive competence "not because their comprehensible input is limited but because their comprehensible output is limited". The reason is that students are simply not provided with adequate opportunities to use the target language in the classroom. Swain's Output Hypothesis also emphasizes the importance of feedback. She believes that learners can improve the accuracy of output if they receive feedback from their teachers. So language teachers should offer adequate input, manage to push the students to produce the target language by giving more opportunities and much more practice time to students during the process of language learning.

In summary, input and output of language are the most important factors towards the successful learning of a second language. According to Cook (2000), for acquisition to take place, learners have to

be able to absorb the appropriate parts of the input. With more comprehensible inputs, they can gain more proficiency in the target language. Swain (1985, in Gass, 1997: 138) posited that learners need more opportunities for meaningful use of their linguistic resources to achieve full grammatical competence. To produce comprehensible output, they would be pushed to be more accurate and to pay attention to both form and meaning, and in so doing move from semantic to syntactic processing. The theory of the comprehensible input Krashen (1981, 1985, and 1989, in Ellis, 1994: 273) claimed that learners make progress in language learning by their perception of input above their current level of knowledge. However, comprehensible input is not a sufficient condition for second language acquisition to take place. "Input alone is not sufficient for acquisition." (Gass, 1997:138). Therefore, it is only when input becomes intake, acquisition takes place. For Swain (1985), output in second language may simply be the practical application of the existing language acquired by learners. She also emphasizes the role of outcome in second language acquisition.

There are three aspects of interactional features: input, production and feedback. Input is the language which the language learners get. Production (or output) is the language spoken by the language learners themselves. Feedback is the reaction offered by the conversational partners to the production of the language learners. It means the interaction implies improving the quantity and quality of input, production and feedback.

Here is a computational model of second language acquisition:



Firstly, input is attended and taken into short-term memory. It is referred to as intake. Then, intake is stored in long term memory as second language knowledge. Finally, second language knowledge is used by learners to produce spoken and written output. In Ellis's (1985, 159) view, input is data that the second language learner hears and intake is some of the second language which is assimilated and fed into the inter-language system. Hence, input needs to become intake. When learners receive the quantity of input, they will combine input and the regular use of their second language to develop in their second language. From the pattern above, in language acquisition process, learners receive input from their interlocutors. Input becomes intake when learners process the information internally. Learners produce the output which in turn becomes the input for interlocutors providing feedback to that input. And this process continues as conversation or communication and therefore enhances second language learning. Therefore, interaction is very necessary for the second language learning. Second language learners need comprehensible input, need to be in situations that provide maximum personal involvement in the communication and need opportunities to use the target language in social interactions. Learning a language is using the language for communicative purposes.

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