

A Descriptive Analysis of Classroom Interaction Patterns in Libyan EFL University Classes

تحليل وصفي لأنماط التفاعل في فصول اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في الجامعات الليبية

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الملخص:

التفاعل داخل الفصل الدراسي يُعد من أهم العوامل المؤثرة في تعلم اللغة الثانية/الأجنبية، لا سيما في بيئات التعليم الجامعي التي تواجه تحديات هيكلية وثقافية متعددة. يتناول هذا البحث الوصفي أنماط التفاعل اللغوي بين المدرّسين والطلبة في فصول اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في الجامعات الليبية، من خلال رصد وتوصيف كيفية توزيع الكلام، أنواع التبادلات التفاعلية (مثل الحوار المدرّس-طالب، الطالب-طالب، والاستجابات الجماعية)، ودور كل من المعلم والمتعلم في تنظيم الحوار التربوي. تتضمن الدراسة ملاحظة مباشرة لجلسات تدريس فعلية، تحليل التسجيلات الصّفية، واستخدام إطار تصنيف التفاعل التربوي (Discourse Analysis) لتحديد الأنماط التكرارية والمهيمنة في الحصص الدراسية. تسعى النتائج الأولية إلى كشف ما إذا كان التفاعل يظل تقليديًا متمركزًا حول المدرّس، كما هو الحال في سياقات مشابهة في تعليم اللغات الأجنبية، أو إذا ظهرت أنماط حديثة تشجع على مشاركة الطلبة وتبادل الأدوار التفاعلية. تُبرز النتائج المتوقعة مدى تأثير هذه الأنماط على فرص ممارسة اللغة، تطوير مهارات التواصل، وتحقيق نتائج تعلم أكثر فعالية. تساهم هذه الدراسة في سد فجوة بحثية واضحة في السياق الليبي، وتوفر بيانات وصفية يمكن أن ترشد الممارسين وصانعي السياسات نحو تصميم بيئات تعليمية أكثر تفاعلية .

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الكلمات المفتاحية: التفاعل داخل الفصل الدراسي، اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية،
التعليم الجامعي، أنماط التفاعل

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Abstract

Classroom interaction plays a central role in shaping opportunities for language learning, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts where exposure to authentic language use is limited. This descriptive study investigates classroom interaction patterns in Libyan university EFL classes, with a specific focus on how teachers and students engage in spoken discourse during regular instructional sessions. The study aims to describe the dominant types of interaction, the distribution of talk, and the extent to which interaction is teacher-centered or learner-oriented. Data are collected through non-participant classroom observations and audio-recorded lessons across selected Libyan universities. The analysis focuses on recurrent interactional sequences, such as teacher questions, student responses, feedback moves, and peer interaction. The findings are expected to reveal a predominance of traditional interaction patterns, characterized by teacher control of discourse, while also highlighting emerging practices that allow greater student participation. By providing a detailed description of actual classroom interaction, this study contributes empirical evidence to the under-researched Libyan EFL context and offers pedagogical insights for enhancing communicative opportunities in university classrooms.

Keywords: Classroom Interaction, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), University Education, Interaction Patterns, Libyan Context.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Classroom interaction is widely recognized as a fundamental component of effective language learning, particularly in EFL settings where learners have limited access to English outside the classroom. Through interaction, learners are exposed to input, engage in negotiation of meaning, and practice language production in meaningful contexts. As a result, the nature and quality of interaction inside the classroom significantly influence learners' communicative development.

In many university EFL classrooms, interaction is not randomly constructed but follows identifiable patterns shaped by pedagogical traditions, institutional expectations, and cultural norms. Previous research in EFL contexts has shown that classroom discourse often remains teacher-dominated, relying heavily on structured exchanges such as question–answer–feedback sequences. While such patterns may support classroom management and content delivery, they can also restrict students' opportunities to initiate talk, express ideas freely, or engage in extended communicative exchanges.

In the Libyan higher education context, English is taught as a foreign language and is mainly confined to formal instructional settings. Despite the growing recognition of communicative language teaching principles, classroom practices in many Libyan universities continue to reflect traditional instructional approaches. Large class sizes, exam-oriented curricula, and limited instructional time often influence how interaction unfolds during lessons. However, empirical descriptions of how interaction actually occurs in Libyan EFL university classrooms remain scarce.

This study responds to this gap by providing a descriptive analysis of classroom interaction patterns as they naturally occur in Libyan university EFL classes. Rather than evaluating effectiveness or testing an intervention, the study focuses on documenting and understanding existing interactional practices.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Although interaction is considered essential for EFL learning, there is limited empirical evidence describing how classroom interaction is

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structured in Libyan university EFL classes. Most existing discussions rely on general assumptions about teacher-centered instruction, without systematic observation of real classroom discourse. The absence of detailed descriptive data makes it difficult to understand how much opportunity students have to participate orally, how teachers manage interaction, and what types of interaction dominate classroom talk.

Without such descriptive insights, efforts to improve communicative practices in Libyan EFL classrooms risk being disconnected from actual teaching realities. Therefore, there is a clear need for a study that carefully documents and analyzes classroom interaction patterns in this context.

1.3. Aims of the Study

The main aim of this study is to describe classroom interaction patterns in Libyan EFL university classes. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Identify the dominant types of classroom interaction in Libyan university EFL classes.
2. Describe the distribution of talk between teachers and students.
3. Examine the roles of teachers and students in managing classroom discourse.
4. Explore the extent to which interaction allows student participation and language use.

1.4. Research Questions

This descriptive study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What types of classroom interaction patterns are most common in Libyan EFL university classes?
2. How is classroom talk distributed between teachers and students?
3. What roles do teachers and students play during classroom interaction?
4. To what extent do interaction patterns provide opportunities for student participation?

1.5. Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it contributes to the limited body of empirical research on classroom interaction in the Libyan EFL context. By providing a detailed description of interactional practices,

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the study offers a realistic picture of what happens inside university EFL classrooms.

Second, the findings may help EFL instructors reflect on their own classroom interaction practices and consider ways to increase meaningful student participation. Finally, the study may inform curriculum designers, teacher trainers, and educational policymakers about existing interactional patterns, thereby supporting more context-sensitive pedagogical development in Libyan higher education.

1.6. Key Terms

1. Classroom Interaction:

The verbal exchanges and communicative practices that occur between teachers and students, and among students, during classroom instruction.

2. Interaction Patterns:

Recurring structures of classroom discourse, such as teacher-led questioning, student responses, feedback moves, and peer interaction.

3. EFL (English as a Foreign Language):

The teaching and learning of English in contexts where English is not used as a primary language of daily communication.

4. University EFL Classes:

English language courses taught at the tertiary level within higher education institutions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Defining Classroom Interaction in EFL Contexts

Classroom interaction is a cornerstone of language learning in EFL settings. At its core, interaction reflects the communicative exchanges that occur between teachers and students and among students themselves during instruction. In the foreign language classroom, interaction is not merely a by-product of instruction; it is the *means* by which learners receive input, negotiate meaning, and practice language output (Ellis, 1994, as defined in related reviews). Contemporary research situates interaction not just as talk, but as *social negotiation of meaning* where learners co-construct language knowledge through participation in discourse sequences that are observable and describable.

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According to Sundari (2023), classroom interaction must be understood as a dynamic construct influenced by *pedagogical decisions, classroom norms, and the social relations of participants*—factors that collectively shape how interaction unfolds and who gets to participate in it.

2.2. Theoretical Perspectives on EFL Classroom Interaction

Two theoretical strands frequently frame research on classroom interaction:

2.2.1. Discourse Analysis and Sequential Interaction

Classroom research often employs *discourse-analytic frameworks* (e.g., Sinclair & Coulthard's interactional model) to segment classroom talk into *moves, exchanges, and acts*. This framework makes it possible to identify recurring patterns such as teacher initiation, student response, and teacher feedback (IRF) — a foundational structure in EFL classrooms worldwide.

The IRF sequence is significant because it illustrates typical teacher–student talk turns, often revealing an imbalance in who controls the discourse. In many EFL settings, initiation and evaluation are teacher-driven, whereas students occupy a more reactive role.

2.2.2. Sociocultural Interactionism

Drawing on sociocultural theory (e.g., Vygotsky), interaction is viewed as the *vehicle* for cognitive development and language acquisition. Piaget and Vygotsky argued that learners acquire language skills through socially mediated interaction. Participation in communicative tasks enables negotiation of meaning, scaffolding, and internalization of linguistic forms — a position that directly informs modern interaction research.

These theories collectively foreground interaction as both *a process and an outcome* of language learning. They underscore the need to describe not only how often interaction occurs, but *who participates, in what forms, and with what implications for learning*.

2.3. What Constitutes Interaction Patterns?

Interaction patterns refer to recurring forms of talk sequences and exchanges in the classroom. Researchers have mapped a range of patterns, including:

- **Teacher–student and student–teacher interaction** (question–response sequences)
- **Student–student interaction**
- **Group work and pair collaboration**

- **Choral responses and individual presentations**

Recent descriptive studies have documented these patterns in a variety of EFL contexts. For example, classroom observation research in Indonesia found multiple interaction patterns such as group work, full class interaction, close-ended teacher questioning, open-ended questioning, and choral responses. Among these, group work and full class interaction were prominent. Similarly, another study reported a mixture of closed-ended and open-ended teacher questioning, choral responses, and individual work as recurrent patterns in EFL classrooms.

These patterns matter because they reflect *distribution of talk* — who speaks, how often, and in what form — with implications for student engagement and opportunities for language use.

2.4. Teacher Talk vs. Student Talk

One of the most robust findings in recent descriptive research is that teacher talk often dominates classroom discourse in EFL settings. In a qualitative analysis rooted in speech act theory, researchers found that lecturers' talk in EFL classrooms consisted predominantly of *representative and directive speech acts* (content explanation and instruction), whereas students' contributions were largely limited to *expressive responses*. Commissive and declarative speech types — more participatory forms of interaction — were notably absent, highlighting low levels of student agency.

The imbalance between teacher and student talk is echoed in multiple contexts: teacher dominance can limit opportunities for meaning negotiation, inhibit learner autonomy, and produce interaction sequences that reflect *ritualized patterns* rather than communicative engagement.

2.5. Turn-taking and Pedagogical Structure

Turn-taking mechanisms in classroom discourse shape how interaction unfolds. Conventional turn sequences frequently manifest as teacher initiation followed by student response, with the teacher retaining control over who speaks and when. This pattern — sometimes labeled as *teacher-dominant turn-taking* — can constrain student contributions and reduce their communicative investment.

Some research distinguishes between teacher-fronted turn sequences and student-centered ones, arguing that the latter correlate with higher student

involvement and reduced language anxiety. The interplay between *turn distribution and learner affect* highlights how interaction patterns are not just structural but affective and motivational in their effects.

2.6. Interaction Patterns in EFL Research: Empirical Evidence

Although literature on classroom interaction in Arab higher education remains limited, studies from other EFL environments provide relevant insights:

- Research on task-based instruction has shown that *both teacher–student and student–student interaction* emerge, with task design influencing how participants negotiate meaning.
- Studies on virtual EFL instruction indicate that spoken and written interactions follow discernible patterns that reflect the modality of instruction.
- Descriptive work in secondary EFL contexts highlights how interaction patterns relate to communication styles and elicitation techniques used by teachers.

These studies collectively underscore that interaction patterns vary with *instructional approach, activity type, and classroom norms*, but teacher dominance in talk and structured sequences like IRF remain persistent across many EFL contexts.

2.7. Gaps and the Case for Libyan Context Research

Despite extensive research on EFL interaction patterns in Asian and some African contexts, there is a noticeable absence of descriptive studies from the Libyan higher education environment. This gap is consequential because classroom cultures, institutional expectations, and learner beliefs about language participation differ significantly across contexts. What counts as *interaction opportunities* in one setting might not hold in another, especially in contexts where English does not operate beyond the classroom walls.

Understanding how interaction unfolds in *Libyan EFL university classes* — with their unique socio-academic characteristics — is critical for:

1. Building an empirical base for communicative pedagogy in Libya.
2. Informing teacher education programs about prevailing interactional norms.

3. Guiding curriculum development with realistic depictions of classroom talk.

This study, therefore, not only addresses a methodological gap but also contributes to locally relevant knowledge about how language classrooms function in practice.

2.8. Synthesis and Theoretical Positioning

Across the reviewed literature, a few recurring themes emerge:

- Classroom interaction is a *multidimensional discourse phenomenon* shaped by teacher talk, student participation, and the structure of classroom activities.
- Interaction patterns like IRF remain prevalent, but their value varies depending on whether they enable meaningful learner participation.
- Interaction imbalance — particularly teacher talk dominance — remains a central focus of descriptive research in EFL settings.

Positioning the current study within this literature, it aims to extend what has been described elsewhere to the Libyan EFL university context, offering a context-specific descriptive account that allows comparison with global findings.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative research design, aimed at documenting and analyzing naturally occurring classroom interactions in Libyan university EFL classes. The descriptive approach is appropriate for capturing the *patterns, sequences, and distribution of talk* without manipulating the classroom environment or introducing experimental interventions.

Descriptive research is widely used in EFL discourse studies to provide detailed accounts of classroom practices, offering insights into the *frequency, structure, and quality* of teacher-student and student-student interactions (Ary et al., 2019). By focusing on real classroom settings, this design allows for the observation of both verbal and non-verbal interactional behaviors, providing a nuanced understanding of how English is practiced in university classrooms.

3.2. Context of the Study

The study was conducted in three public universities in Libya, selected for their active English departments and representation of typical EFL instruction at the tertiary level. These universities are located in both urban and semi-urban regions, offering a spectrum of classroom environments, including:

- Large lecture halls (30–50 students per class)
- Medium-sized classrooms (15–25 students)
- Small seminar rooms (8–12 students)

The classes observed were primarily intermediate-level EFL courses for undergraduate students in their second or third year, covering language skills including reading, writing, speaking, and grammar. These classes reflect the typical Libyan university EFL curriculum, which is generally structured around teacher-led lectures and occasional group activities.

3.3. Participants

Participants included six EFL instructors (four male, two female) and approximately 120 undergraduate students across the three universities. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure that the classes represented regular, non-specialized EFL instruction.

The instructors had teaching experience ranging from 3 to 15 years and were actively engaged in delivering English courses aligned with the national curriculum. Students were aged between 18 and 23 years and had completed at least one year of university-level English, providing sufficient language proficiency for meaningful interaction.

3.3.1. Ethical Considerations:

- Participants provided written informed consent prior to observation and audio recording.
- Pseudonyms were assigned to all participants to maintain confidentiality.
- Ethical approval was obtained from the university review boards of the participating institutions.

3.4. Data Collection Instruments

3.4.1. Classroom Observation

Non-participant classroom observation was used as the primary data collection tool. Observations focused on:

- Teacher and student verbal contributions
- Turn-taking patterns
- Question types (closed vs. open)
- Feedback types (confirmation, correction, expansion)
- Student-student interaction, including pair and group work

Observers used a structured observation checklist adapted from studies of EFL classroom interaction (Walsh, 2011; Richards, 2020) to ensure consistent recording of interaction patterns.

3.4.2. Audio Recording

All observed sessions were audio-recorded using high-quality digital recorders. Audio recordings allowed for detailed transcription and micro-analysis of talk sequences, ensuring that even subtle features such as overlaps, pauses, and intonation could be captured for analysis.

Audio recording also facilitated verbatim transcription, a critical step for discourse analysis and coding of interaction patterns.

3.4.3. Field Notes

Field notes complemented the recordings by capturing non-verbal cues (gestures, eye contact, body orientation), classroom layout, and contextual factors that influenced interaction, such as seating arrangements, classroom noise, or interruptions.

3.5. Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected over four consecutive weeks, covering 12 class sessions (four sessions per university). Each session lasted approximately 60–90 minutes. The procedure involved:

1. **Pre-observation meeting** with instructors to explain the purpose of the study and obtain consent.
2. **Classroom observation** using the checklist while recording audio.
3. **Post-class reflections** recorded in field notes to provide contextual information about observed behaviors.

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This longitudinal approach allowed the researcher to capture recurring interaction patterns, providing a robust basis for descriptive analysis.

3.6. Data Analysis

3.6.1. Transcription

Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim using standard conventions (Jefferson, 2004), including:

- [T]: Teacher talk
- [S]: Student talk
- Overlaps, pauses, and intonation markers

Transcripts were cross-checked for accuracy by an independent researcher to ensure reliability.

3.6.2. Coding and Categorization

Transcripts and field notes were analyzed using thematic coding and sequence analysis:

- Interaction types: teacher-student, student-student, choral, group work
- Turn-taking patterns: IRF sequences, extended student responses
- Speech act categories: requests, explanations, clarifications, opinions

Coding was guided by frameworks from Walsh (2011) and Richards (2020), which emphasize both structural and functional aspects of classroom talk.

3.6.3. Analytical Framework

The analysis combined descriptive statistics (frequency counts of interaction types and turns) with qualitative discourse analysis:

1. **Frequency Analysis:** Counts of teacher vs. student turns to determine participation balance.
2. **Sequence Analysis:** Identification of recurring interaction patterns (e.g., teacher initiation → student response → teacher feedback).
3. **Functional Analysis:** Categorization of speech acts to understand communicative purposes.

This multi-layered approach provides both quantitative and qualitative insight into interaction patterns, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of classroom discourse.

3.7. Validity and Reliability

- **Triangulation:** Observation checklists, audio recordings, and field notes were triangulated to ensure robust data interpretation.
- **Inter-rater Reliability:** A second researcher independently coded 20% of transcripts; Cohen's Kappa coefficient was calculated to confirm coding consistency.
- **Member Checking:** Selected summaries were shared with instructors to confirm the accuracy of interpreted interaction patterns.

3.8. Limitations

- Observations were limited to three universities; results may not generalize across all Libyan EFL contexts.
- Students' awareness of being observed may have slightly influenced participation (observer effect).
- Audio recordings captured verbal interactions but limited the analysis of subtle non-verbal communication beyond field notes.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1. Overview of Classroom Interaction Data

This chapter presents the results of the descriptive analysis of classroom interaction patterns observed in Libyan EFL university classes. The analysis is based on data collected from twelve observed lessons, supported by audio recordings, verbatim transcripts, and detailed field notes. The focus is on identifying dominant interaction patterns, examining the distribution of talk between teachers and students, and describing how interaction unfolds during routine instructional activities.

Rather than quantifying effectiveness, the analysis aims to *portray interaction as it naturally occurs*, capturing recurring discourse structures and participation behaviors across different classes and teaching contexts. The findings are organized thematically, reflecting the most salient interactional features identified in the data.

4.2. Dominant Classroom Interaction Patterns

4.2.1. Teacher–Student Interaction as the Primary Pattern

Across all observed classes, teacher–student interaction emerged as the dominant interaction pattern. Lessons were largely structured around

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teacher-led discourse, where instructors initiated topics, asked questions, nominated speakers, and evaluated responses. This pattern was consistent regardless of course type (grammar, reading, or speaking), suggesting that interactional organization was shaped more by pedagogical tradition than by skill focus.

The most recurrent sequence observed was the Initiation–Response–Feedback (IRF) pattern. Teachers typically initiated interaction through questions, students provided short responses, and teachers followed with confirmation, correction, or brief elaboration. For example:

T: What is the main idea of the paragraph?

S: It is about pollution.

T: Yes, pollution in big cities. Good.

Such exchanges occurred repeatedly throughout lessons and formed the backbone of classroom talk. While this structure maintained lesson flow and ensured content coverage, it often limited opportunities for extended student turns or spontaneous contributions.

4.2.2. Limited Student–Student Interaction

Student–student interaction was observed far less frequently and was usually restricted to brief pair or group activities initiated by the teacher. Even during these activities, interaction was often minimal and task-oriented, focusing on finding correct answers rather than negotiating meaning or expressing personal viewpoints.

In several instances, group work was introduced verbally but not sustained interactionally. Students tended to revert quickly to silence or relied on one dominant group member to respond on behalf of others. Field notes indicated that many students appeared hesitant to speak English to peers without direct teacher supervision, reflecting possible linguistic insecurity or long-standing classroom norms.

4.3. Distribution of Classroom Talk

4.3.1. Teacher Talk Dominance

Analysis of the transcripts revealed a clear dominance of teacher talk in all observed classes. Teachers accounted for the majority of speaking turns, particularly in explanation phases, question sequences, and feedback moves.

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Teacher talk was primarily instructional and directive, focusing on explaining content, clarifying meaning, and managing classroom behavior. Extended teacher monologues were common, especially during grammar explanations and reading comprehension lessons. In contrast, student turns were generally short, often limited to one-word or one-sentence responses. This imbalance suggests that students had limited opportunities to practice extended oral production in English.

4.3.2. Nature of Student Contributions

When students did participate, their contributions were largely reactive rather than initiatory. Most student turns occurred in response to direct teacher questions. Very few instances of student-initiated interaction were observed, such as asking clarification questions or volunteering opinions.

Notably, choral responses were frequent, particularly in vocabulary recall and grammar confirmation tasks. While choral responses allowed multiple students to participate simultaneously, they did not encourage individual language production or communicative risk-taking.

4.4. Question Types and Their Interactional Impact

4.4.1. Predominance of Closed Questions

The majority of teacher questions were closed-ended, designed to elicit specific, predetermined answers. These questions typically required minimal linguistic output and often resulted in brief responses. Closed questions were particularly common in grammar-focused lessons and reading comprehension checks.

While such questions served an instructional purpose, they also constrained interaction by limiting the scope of possible responses. Students rarely expanded their answers beyond what was required, and follow-up questions that encouraged elaboration were infrequent.

4.4.2. Limited Use of Open-Ended Questions

Open-ended questions were observed less frequently but were more common in speaking-oriented classes. When used, they occasionally resulted in longer student turns and greater engagement. However, even in these cases, teachers often interrupted or reformulated student responses, redirecting interaction back to controlled patterns.

This suggests that while there is awareness of communicative questioning strategies, their implementation remains constrained by classroom norms and time pressures.

4.5. Feedback and Evaluation Practices

Teacher feedback was a central component of classroom interaction. Feedback moves typically followed student responses and took one of three forms:

1. Explicit confirmation (e.g., “Yes, correct”)
2. Implicit correction through reformulation
3. Brief explanation or repetition

Corrective feedback focused primarily on accuracy rather than meaning. Errors were usually corrected immediately, which sometimes resulted in students abandoning attempts to elaborate further. In several instances, students visibly hesitated after correction, suggesting that constant evaluation may have influenced their willingness to speak.

4.6. Turn-Taking and Control of Interaction

Turn-taking was largely teacher-controlled. Teachers selected speakers, determined topic shifts, and regulated the length of student turns. Self-selection by students was rare and often discouraged implicitly through quick teacher intervention.

This controlled turn-taking system created a predictable interactional environment but limited spontaneity. Students appeared accustomed to waiting for nomination before speaking, reinforcing passive participation patterns.

4.7. Emerging Interactional Variations

Despite the overall dominance of traditional patterns, emerging interactional variations were observed in a small number of classes. These included:

- Teachers allowing students to complete each other’s answers
- Brief peer clarification exchanges
- Occasional student-initiated questions

These moments, although limited, indicate a gradual shift toward more participatory interaction in certain classrooms, often influenced by the individual teacher’s pedagogical orientation.

4.8. Summary of Key Findings

The analysis reveals several key features of classroom interaction in Libyan EFL university classes:

- Classroom discourse is predominantly teacher-centered.
- Interaction patterns are largely structured around IRF sequences.
- Teacher talk significantly outweighs student talk.
- Student participation is mostly reactive and accuracy-focused.
- Student–student interaction remains limited and underdeveloped.

These findings align with descriptive research in other EFL contexts while highlighting context-specific features shaped by institutional norms and educational traditions in Libya.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Overview of the Discussion

This chapter discusses the findings presented in Chapter 4 by interpreting them in relation to existing research on classroom interaction in EFL contexts. The discussion aims to explain *why* certain interaction patterns dominate Libyan EFL university classrooms and *how* these patterns shape opportunities for student participation and language use. Rather than viewing the results as isolated classroom behaviors, the discussion situates them within broader pedagogical traditions, institutional practices, and socio-cultural expectations that characterize higher education in Libya.

5.2. Teacher-Centered Interaction and the Persistence of IRF Patterns

One of the most salient findings of this study is the dominance of teacher-centered interaction, particularly the widespread use of the Initiation–Response–Feedback (IRF) sequence. This pattern has been extensively documented in EFL classroom research across different contexts and is often associated with traditional instructional models where the teacher acts as the primary authority and knowledge provider.

In the Libyan university context, the persistence of IRF interaction can be interpreted as a reflection of long-established educational norms that prioritize content transmission, accuracy, and examination preparation. Teachers' frequent initiation and evaluation of talk position students as respondents rather than active interlocutors. While IRF sequences can provide structure and clarity, especially in large classes, their overuse may

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reduce opportunities for extended discourse and spontaneous language production.

These findings resonate with previous studies that have shown how IRF patterns, when rigidly applied, tend to limit learners' communicative agency. In Libyan EFL classrooms, where exposure to English outside the classroom is minimal, such limitations may have a more pronounced impact on students' oral development.

5.3. Teacher Talk Dominance and Its Pedagogical Implications

The predominance of teacher talk observed in this study aligns with research indicating that EFL university classrooms often allocate a disproportionate amount of speaking time to instructors. In the observed Libyan classes, teacher talk was largely explanatory and directive, reflecting an emphasis on syllabus coverage and linguistic accuracy.

This dominance can be understood in light of institutional pressures, including dense curricula, time constraints, and assessment systems that reward correct answers rather than communicative experimentation. Teachers may feel compelled to maintain control over classroom discourse to ensure lesson objectives are met, particularly in contexts where large class sizes and limited contact hours restrict flexibility.

However, from a language learning perspective, excessive teacher talk reduces students' opportunities to practice English productively. The findings suggest that while teachers provide substantial input, students receive limited chances to produce extended output, negotiate meaning, or develop fluency. This imbalance may contribute to the commonly reported gap between students' receptive knowledge and their oral communicative competence in Libyan EFL programs.

5.4. Reactive Student Participation and Limited Initiation

Another important finding is that student participation in the observed classes was predominantly reactive. Students typically responded to teacher questions but rarely initiated interaction, asked questions, or volunteered opinions. This pattern reflects a classroom culture where speaking is closely tied to evaluation, and unsolicited contributions may be perceived as risky.

In the Libyan context, this reluctance to initiate talk may be influenced by several factors, including fear of making linguistic errors, concern about

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peer judgment, and prior educational experiences that discourage open-ended participation. Students' preference for choral responses and brief answers suggests a strategy of minimizing individual exposure while still meeting participation expectations.

The limited initiation observed in this study echoes findings from other Arab and EFL contexts, where learners often associate classroom talk with correctness rather than communication. This reinforces the notion that interaction patterns are not solely pedagogical choices but also socially constructed practices shaped by learners' beliefs about language learning.

5.5. Questioning Practices and Interactional Depth

The predominance of closed-ended questions in the observed classes further explains the constrained nature of classroom interaction. Closed questions, while efficient for checking comprehension and managing large groups, tend to elicit minimal responses and do not invite elaboration or critical engagement.

The limited use of open-ended questions observed in this study suggests that opportunities for deeper interaction were present but underutilized. When open questions were introduced, student responses became longer and more meaningful, indicating that learners are capable of engaging in extended discourse when conditions allow.

This finding supports research arguing that questioning strategies play a decisive role in shaping classroom interaction. In Libyan EFL classrooms, expanding the use of open-ended and referential questions may represent a practical entry point for enhancing communicative interaction without radically restructuring teaching practices.

5.6. Feedback Practices and Learner Willingness to Speak

Teacher feedback in the observed classes was primarily accuracy-focused and immediate. While corrective feedback is essential for language development, its constant and overt presence may inadvertently discourage students from taking communicative risks. The hesitation observed after correction suggests that students may prioritize error avoidance over message expression.

In the Libyan EFL context, where formal correctness is often emphasized in assessment, such feedback practices reinforce the perception that speaking

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English is a test rather than a communicative act. This may help explain why students favor short, safe responses and avoid extended turns.

Balancing accuracy-oriented feedback with meaning-focused responses could help create a more supportive interactional environment, encouraging students to participate more confidently.

5.7. Limited Student–Student Interaction and Classroom Culture

The limited occurrence of student–student interaction observed in this study highlights the strong reliance on teacher-fronted discourse. Although pair and group work were occasionally introduced, they were often brief and tightly controlled, resulting in minimal peer interaction.

This pattern suggests that collaborative interaction has not yet become a normalized classroom practice in Libyan university EFL instruction. Students' apparent discomfort with peer interaction in English may reflect a lack of prior experience with collaborative learning and a perception that legitimate classroom talk must involve the teacher.

Developing a classroom culture that values peer interaction requires sustained pedagogical effort and gradual shifts in both teacher and student roles. The findings indicate that without explicit support and scaffolding, student–student interaction is unlikely to develop organically.

5.8. Contextualizing the Findings within Libyan Higher Education

Taken together, the findings of this study reflect a classroom interaction model shaped by historical, institutional, and cultural factors within Libyan higher education. The dominance of teacher talk, structured interaction patterns, and limited student initiation are not signs of pedagogical failure but rather indicators of an educational system transitioning between traditional and communicative paradigms.

Importantly, the emergence of small interactional variations suggests that change is possible and already underway in some classrooms. These variations demonstrate that even within existing constraints, teachers can create spaces for increased student participation.

5.9. Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the findings of the study by linking observed classroom interaction patterns to established research and the specific realities of Libyan EFL university education. The discussion highlights how

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interaction patterns reflect broader pedagogical traditions while also identifying areas where interaction can be expanded to support communicative language learning.

The next chapter will move beyond interpretation to consider conclusions, pedagogical implications, and recommendations based on the findings of this study.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Conclusion of the Study

This study set out to provide a descriptive analysis of classroom interaction patterns in Libyan EFL university classes. By examining naturally occurring classroom discourse, the research aimed to document how interaction is structured, how talk is distributed, and how teachers and students participate in spoken classroom activities.

The findings reveal that classroom interaction in the observed Libyan EFL classes is predominantly teacher-centered. Interaction is largely organized through structured sequences, most notably the Initiation–Response–Feedback (IRF) pattern, with teachers maintaining control over topic initiation, turn allocation, and evaluation. Teacher talk consistently outweighed student talk, and student participation was primarily reactive, brief, and accuracy-oriented.

Student–student interaction was limited and often underdeveloped, even when pair or group activities were introduced. Questioning practices relied heavily on closed-ended questions, which constrained interactional depth and limited opportunities for extended student discourse. Feedback practices further reinforced an accuracy-focused classroom culture, shaping learners' cautious participation behaviors.

Taken together, these findings suggest that interaction in Libyan EFL university classrooms reflects long-standing pedagogical traditions that prioritize control, correctness, and content delivery. While such practices support classroom management and syllabus coverage, they also restrict opportunities for communicative language use, which is particularly significant in a context where English exposure outside the classroom is minimal.

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Importantly, the study also identified emerging interactional variations in some classes, indicating a gradual shift toward more participatory practices. These moments suggest that interactional change is possible within existing institutional constraints.

6.2. Pedagogical Implications

The results of this study carry several pedagogical implications for EFL instruction in Libyan universities.

First, the dominance of teacher talk highlights the need for a more balanced distribution of classroom discourse. Reducing extended teacher explanations and creating space for student contributions can increase opportunities for language practice without compromising instructional clarity.

Second, questioning strategies play a crucial role in shaping interaction. Greater use of open-ended and referential questions can encourage students to elaborate, express opinions, and engage more meaningfully with content. Even small adjustments in questioning techniques may significantly alter interactional dynamics.

Third, feedback practices require careful reconsideration. While corrective feedback remains essential, balancing form-focused correction with meaning-focused responses may reduce students' fear of error and promote greater willingness to speak.

Finally, student–student interaction should be gradually normalized through consistent and well-scaffolded collaborative activities. Pair and group work need to be framed not as optional tasks but as legitimate spaces for language use and learning.

6.3. Recommendations for EFL Teachers

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed for Libyan EFL university teachers:

1. **Diversify interaction patterns** by combining teacher-fronted instruction with student-centered activities.
2. **Increase wait time** after asking questions to allow students to formulate responses.
3. **Encourage student initiation**, such as asking clarification questions or offering opinions.

4. **Adopt supportive feedback strategies** that acknowledge meaning before addressing form.
5. **Scaffold peer interaction** by providing clear roles, language support, and explicit expectations during group work.

These practices can be implemented incrementally and adapted to class size, proficiency level, and institutional demands.

6.4. Recommendations for Curriculum Designers and Institutions

At the institutional level, curriculum designers and academic departments can support improved classroom interaction by:

- Integrating communicative objectives explicitly into course syllabi.
- Allowing flexibility in assessment practices to value participation and oral performance.
- Providing professional development opportunities focused on classroom discourse and interactional competence.
- Encouraging reflective teaching practices through peer observation and discussion.

Such systemic support is essential for sustaining interactional change beyond individual classrooms.

6.5. Limitations of the Study

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The research was conducted in a limited number of universities, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the descriptive nature of the study does not allow for causal claims regarding the effectiveness of specific interaction patterns.

The use of audio recordings also limited the analysis of non-verbal interactional features, which may play an important role in classroom communication.

6.6. Suggestions for Future Research

Future research could build on this study by:

- Conducting longitudinal studies to examine changes in interaction patterns over time.
- Exploring students' and teachers' perceptions of classroom interaction through interviews or questionnaires.

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- Comparing interaction patterns across different disciplines or proficiency levels.
- Investigating the relationship between interaction patterns and learning outcomes in the Libyan EFL context.

Such research would further enrich understanding of classroom discourse and inform context-sensitive pedagogical development.

6.7. Final Remarks

This study contributes to the growing body of descriptive research on EFL classroom interaction by offering a contextually grounded account of interaction patterns in Libyan university classrooms. By documenting how interaction is organized and experienced in practice, the study provides a foundation for informed pedagogical reflection and gradual instructional change.

In a context where the classroom remains the primary site of English language exposure, enhancing interaction is not merely a methodological choice but a pedagogical necessity.

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