

An Ideal Second Language Discourse At Iraqi University Classrooms

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Abstract: This research investigates the nature and characteristics of ideal classroom discourse in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings within Iraqi universities, with a particular focus on postgraduate (M.A.) programs. The study explores the dynamics of interaction between instructors and students, examining how various discourse patterns influence language development and communication effectiveness. Drawing upon both theoretical perspectives and empirical data, the paper analyzes different types of classroom interaction—including teacher-to-student, student-to-student, and group-based communication—and evaluates their role in promoting learner engagement and linguistic competence.

To support the analysis, data were collected from a sample of M.A. students at the University of Kufa, College of Arts, Department of English. Through a structured questionnaire, the study identifies the key elements that contribute to successful classroom discourse. These include the instructor's ability to manage interaction, the students' linguistic proficiency and motivation, and the overall classroom environment. The findings emphasize the importance of diversifying teaching strategies, encouraging peer collaboration, and integrating interactive practices that reflect real-life communication scenarios.

Furthermore, the study highlights several challenges facing classroom discourse in Iraq, such as limited use of student-centered methods, lack of technological integration, and the influence of traditional educational norms. Based on these findings, the research offers practical recommendations aimed at fostering a more interactive, inclusive, and communicative learning atmosphere. Ultimately, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on EFL classroom interaction by offering context-specific insights and advocating for pedagogical reforms in Iraqi higher education.

Keywords: Classroom discourse, EFL, Iraqi universities, interaction, M.A. students, communicative teaching, second language learning.

Section One

1.1 Introduction

Classroom communication is a vital component of the learning process, serving as a bridge between ideas and enhancing cognitive development. It encompasses both verbal (spoken and written) and nonverbal (symbols, drawings, diagrams) forms of expression. Within the classroom, particularly in language learning contexts, interaction plays a crucial role in knowledge construction and exchange. Such interactions are not merely about information transfer but also involve negotiation and discourse that help reshape understanding and stimulate learning.

The concept of "the language classroom" specifically refers to a setting where the focus is on teaching a language that is not the learners' mother tongue. While much of the existing research in classroom discourse has been conducted at the high school level, relatively little attention has been paid to communication dynamics in university-level foreign language classrooms, especially in postgraduate (M.A.) programs. This study seeks to fill

that gap by exploring classroom interaction in Iraqi M.A. programs focused on English as a Foreign Language (EFL), with particular attention to the roles of both instructors and students.

Section Two

2.1 Classroom Discourse: An Overview

language classroom discourse has been interpreted in many different ways. According to Norton, & McKinney (2011: 81), Classroom discourse is "the particular form of conversation that takes place in classrooms." discourse in the language classroom refers to the oral use of language in the classroom. A prominent line of research in applied linguistics and education attempted to understand the nature and impact of different types of classroom interactions, or classroom discourse as it is commonly known, at least 35 years ago.

Language classroom discourse can be regarded as sociolinguistic settings (Cazden, 1988) and discourse communities (Hall & Verplaetse, 2000) in which learners' language development is supported by interaction. Across learners and sitting, Interactive processes are not strictly individual or comparable. language acquisition is a social endeavor, cooperatively constructed, and organically related to learners' repeated and regular participation, according to a review of studies in the domain of classroom interaction and language learning (Asbah, 2015: 137). Brown (2001: 168), states that "One way to look at your role as all initiators of interaction in the classroom is to look at yourself (and other teachers) interns of a well-known taxonomy for describing classroom interaction."

The quantity and quality of teacher speaking is assumed to have a lot of effects on student classroom interaction. First, it provides learners with linguistic input in the form of a language model. Second, having the instructor speaking in the language encourages students to do so. Finally, the appropriateness of teacher language can lead a friendly classroom environment and an informal or casual teacher-student relationship. If a diversity of teacher and student discourse is used in the classroom, classroom engagement can be more successful. Instead of lecturing, teachers may embrace students' feelings, applaud, and accept their ideas, and students could be encouraged to begin conversations rather than just replying to teachers (Asbah, 2015: 138)

2.2 Participants in Classroom Interaction

According to Mateja (2005: 129), Depending on who talks with whom, these are the most standard techniques of arranging classroom interaction:

- a) Teacher – learners
- b) Teacher – learner/ a group of learners
- c) Learner – learner
- d) Learners – learners

2.2.1 Teacher – learners

As explains by Mateja (2005: 129), "the first form of interaction (teacher – learners) is established when a teacher talks to the whole class at the same time. He takes the role of a leader or controller and deciding on the activity." The major purpose of this type of interaction is to allow for controlled practice of specific language structures or terminology. They frequently take the form of structures that repeat after the teacher (the model). A drill is another term for this sort of exercise.

2.2.2 Teacher – Learner/ a Group of Learners

The second arrangement is conducted when the instructor addresses the entire class, but just one student or a group of students is expected to respond or answer. It is frequently used to evaluate individual students. This design can also be utilized for a casual discussion at the beginning of the event or to bring students into a less structured activity (Mateja, 2005: 129).

2.2.3 Learner – Learner

Moreover, Asbah (2015: 141) says that "the third kind of interaction in classroom is called „pair work“. Students get an assignment, which they have to finish it together. The teacher holds the role of a controller or adviser, helping if it is necessary. After the activity, he puts the pairs into a whole group and each pair comment on their work."

2.2.4 Learners – Learners

Group work is the final kind of interaction in a classroom. The teacher's role is similar to that of a consultant in pair work, and individual groups report on their work as a follow-up exercise (Asbah, 2015: 141).

The last two ways of organizing are particularly useful for encouraging interaction among students. In large classes, they present the only possibility for as many students as possible to use the foreign language. It's assumed that students use more language functions in pair- and group-work than in other forms of interaction. It has also been proven that students perceive them as the most pleasant ways of learning, because they feel relaxed and subsequently communicate better. Such work encourages independent learning and gives some responsibility for learning to students. It approaches real-life communication where students talk to their peers in small groups or

pairs. Nevertheless, whole-class organization should not be completely neglected since it is still more appropriate for guided and controlled activities (Asbah, 2015: 142).

2.3 Teacher & Student Factors

Various aspects influence how the instructor manage the class and communicates with the students , as well as how the students respond . It is important to note that the teacher's language competency may impact how they interact with the learners and their reaction. It is also indicated that pedagogical ability, experience, and personality may impact interaction practices in addition to language competency. "Moreover, the teaching experience in various classes will enhance teachers` skill of managing classroom and building communication and interaction with the students. Each class, likewise each person, is unique, so is the interaction practice, even with the same teacher" (Sundari, 2017: 150).

The degree of proficiency, personality, intelligence, confidence, and enthusiasm of students all impact their interaction responses. Even if the teacher believes the learners are strong at understanding, they will give restricted responses. If students are highly motivated, the process of communication and interaction in the teaching-learning process is made easier; however, if they are not interested in learning and do not provide expected responses, the process of communication and interaction in the teaching-learning process is made more difficult. Communication and engagement are hampered as a result of this circumstance (Sundari, 2017: 151).

The way that the teachers are engage and communicate with their students is affected not just by the classroom setting, but also by external variables that may intervene and shape the face of teacher-student relations, communication, and interaction. Learning facilities in the classroom are extremely beneficial to the learning process in general, and especially for student engagement. Video, film, image, music, and photographs not only evolve the learning process, but they also enhance the way of responding (Sundari,2017:151).

2.4 An ideal Discourse Within Iraqi M.A Students

Despite the fact that the instructor has a stronger presence in the classroom, students in EFL classes played a significant part in talking-response and talking-initiation. The interaction of students with one another in the classroom makes the classroom environment more engaging. In an EFL classroom, situational student-student contact is crucial because if a student does not grasp the subject, he may ask other students for their thoughts, perspectives, suggestions, and explanations (Papaja, Katarzyna, 2011: 45).

In fact, in an EFL classroom, both the teacher and the student play essential roles: the teacher as the leader of the class discussion, and the student as a participant who responds to the content. "Teaching/learning process in the class absolutely involves teacher and student, the successful of class is determined by the role of teacher as the centered of knowledge and the role of student as receiver of knowledge" (Douglas, 2006: 76).

As a result, the classroom activity begins with the teacher explaining the topic, followed by student responses or comments, resulting in continuous engagement in the classroom. Furthermore, classroom interaction is ideal not only in terms of the intensity of the teacher's discourse, such as displaying a question and having the students reply, but also in terms of a comprehensive approach, such as an emotional approach or an individual approach. This situation made the pupils or students feel more at ease while interacting with the teacher. "The types of question, the intensity of teacher delivered, giving the questions, giving the opportunity to students, all give opportunity for student to give feedback, or respond and create an ideal discourse." (Douglas, 2006: 76).

Furthermore, Douglas (2006: 77) insists that teachers play an important role in the classroom by motivating, empowering, and encouraging students. These are some of the most important considerations in creating an ideal interactive class that is not monotonous for the instructor as a knowledge facilitator in an English foreign language classroom.

The interactions within Classroom are not haphazard. The issue of who talks and when is frequently regulated by rules. According to Hall & Walsh (2002), "classroom interaction takes on an especially significant role in that it is both the medium through which learning is realized and an object of pedagogical attention" (Hall & Walsh, 2002: 186-203).

Hall & Verplaetse (2002: 10) claim that "it is in their interactions with each other that teachers and their students work together to create the intellectual and practical activities that shape both the structure and the content of the target language as well as the processes and outcomes of individual improvement".

Classroom interaction, in fact, may be viewed as a positive activity. According to Hall & Verplaetse, classroom interaction is valuable because it draws students together and helps them prepare for more rigorous teamwork and collaboration later in their courses. Teachers in the classroom interaction environment must also exhibit and interact with students in a wider variety of methods in order to enhance subject and language development (ibid).

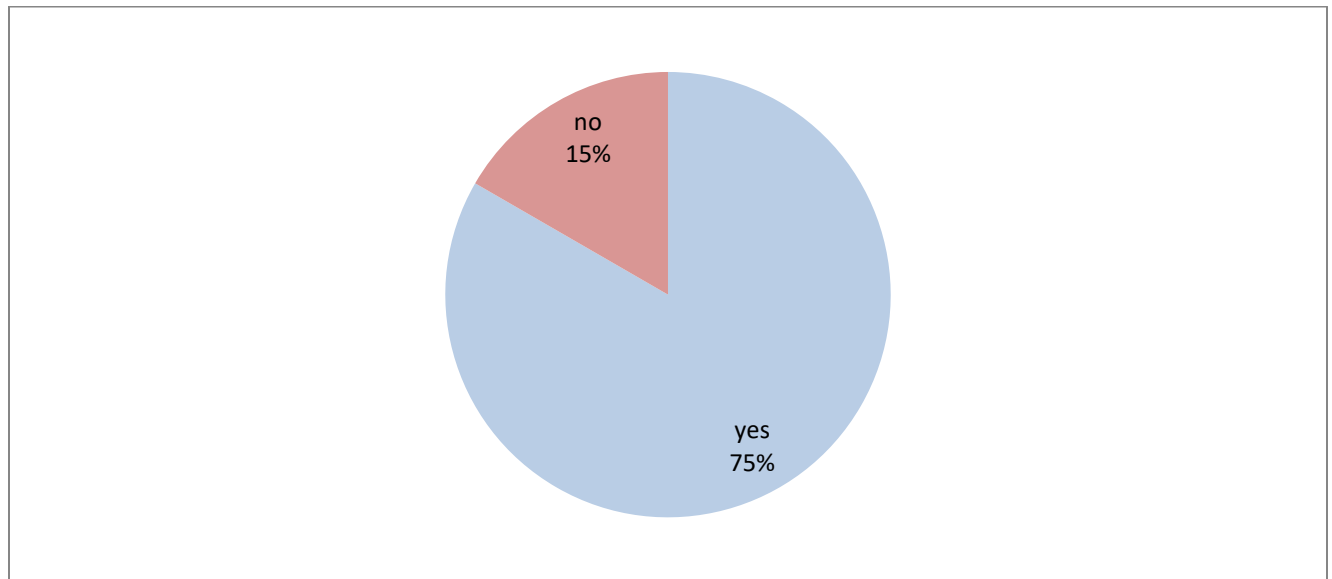
Section Three

3.1 Data Analysis

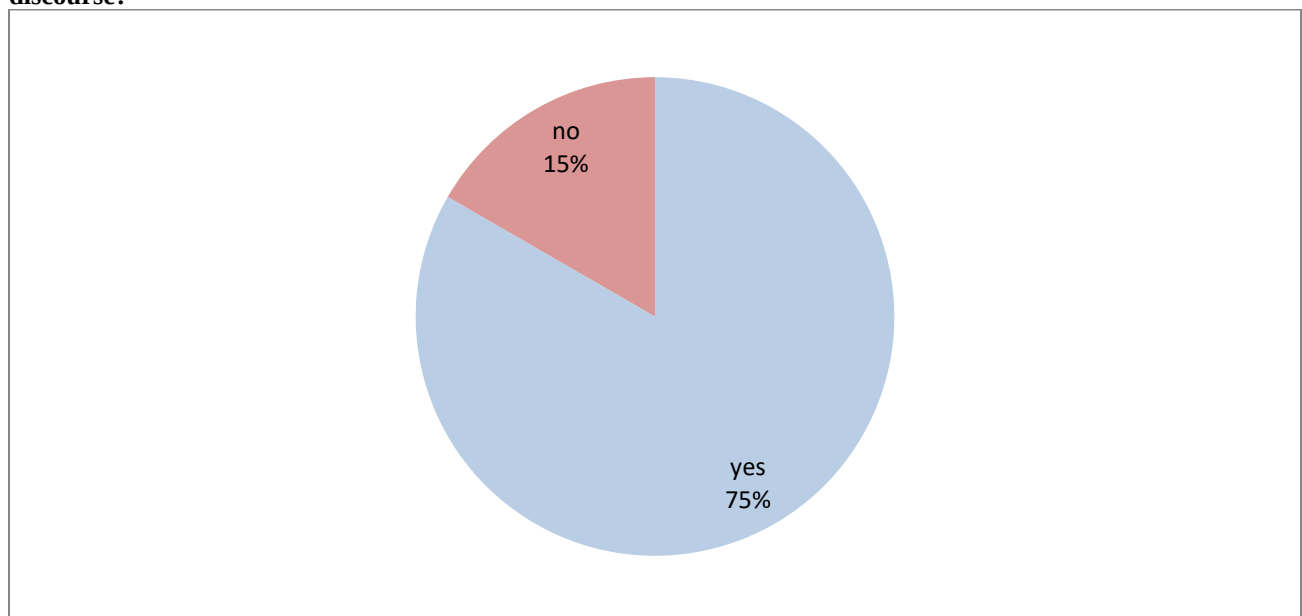
The data for this study were collected during the academic year 2024–2025 from a total of 20 postgraduate (M.A.) students enrolled in the Department of English, College of Arts, University of Kufa. The sample included 10 male and 10 female students, all of whom completed a structured questionnaire designed to explore their views on classroom interaction and the roles of instructors and learners in shaping effective discourse environments. These participants provided valuable insights into how classroom interaction is experienced and perceived in their academic context. The overall results of both genders are as follows:

Questions	Yes	No
1. Do you think that the role of the student is of crucial importance like the instructor's one?	75%	15%
2. Do you agree that the Teacher – Learner/ a Group of Learners form is the best way of classroom discourse?	75%	15%
3. Do you agree that collective classroom discourse is valuable in drawing students together and helps them prepare for more rigorous teamwork and collaboration later in their courses?	58%	42 %
4. Do you think that instructors in the classroom environment must exhibit and interact with students in a wider variety of methods in order to enhance subject and language development?	92 %	8%
5. Do you agree that instructors play an important role in the classroom environments by motivating, empowering, and encouraging students?	95 %	5%
6. Do you agree that the degree of proficiency, personality, intelligence, confidence, and enthusiasm of students all impact their interaction responses?	92%	8%

The following charts illustrate the participants' responses to each of the six questions. It provides a visual representation of the percentages of "Yes" and "No" answers, offering a clearer understanding of students' perspectives on classroom interaction. The majority of students responded positively to all six statements regarding classroom interaction and the roles of instructors and learners. Questions 4, 5, and 6 received the highest agreement levels, suggesting strong support for diverse teacher interaction methods, motivation, and the influence of student traits on communication.

1. Do you think that the role of the student is of crucial importance like the instructor's one?**Figure 1: Students' Responses to Question 1**

The chart clearly shows that **75%** of the participants answered “Yes,” indicating a strong belief in the equal importance of the student’s role in the classroom. In contrast, only **15%** of respondents answered “No,” suggesting a minority still view the instructor as the more dominant figure in classroom discourse. This result highlights a growing recognition among M.A. students of their own responsibility and involvement in the learning process. It also reflects a shift toward more **student-centered learning** environments in Iraqi university classrooms, where interaction is no longer entirely instructor-led but is increasingly shared between teacher and student.

2. Do you agree that the Teacher – Learner/ a Group of Learners form is the best way of classroom discourse?**Figure 2: Students' Responses to Question 2**

As the figure (2) shows, 75% of the students agreed with this form of interaction, indicating their preference for a structured yet interactive classroom environment where the teacher engages with either an individual student or a small group. Only 15% disagreed, suggesting that most students find this type of discourse effective for focused communication and active participation. This aligns with communicative teaching strategies that emphasize both control and collaboration, allowing for more inclusive discussions and targeted feedback from instructors.

3. Do you agree that collective classroom discourse is valuable in drawing students together and helps them prepare for more rigorous teamwork and collaboration later in their courses?

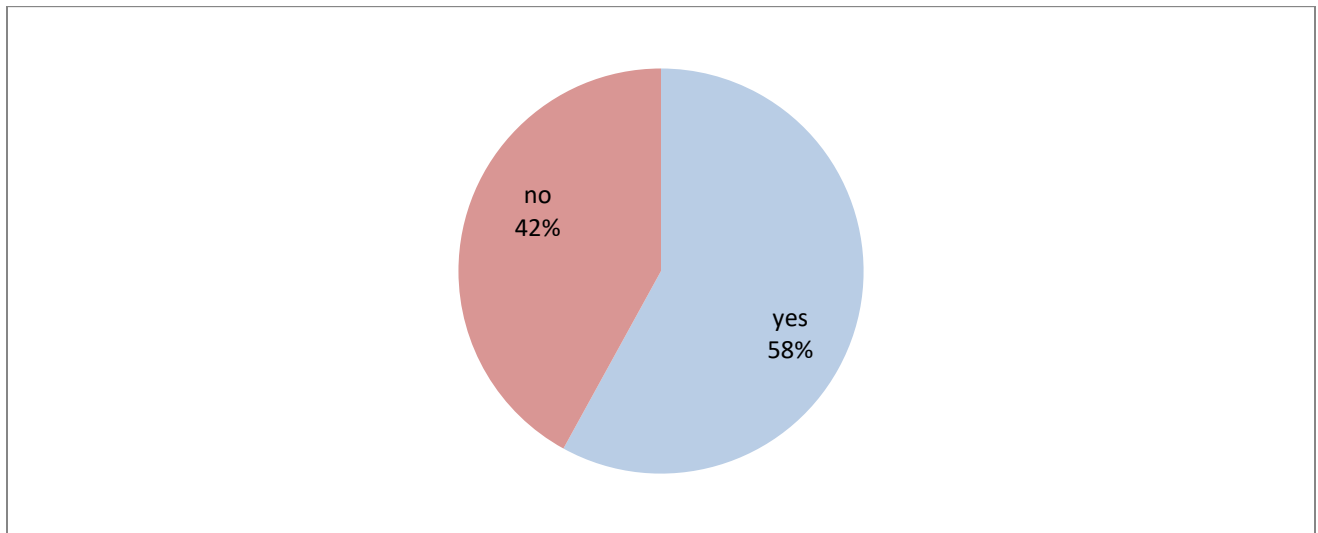


Figure 3: Students' Responses to Question 3

The results show that 58% of the students agreed with this statement, indicating that more than half of the participants recognize the importance of collaborative classroom activities in building communication and teamwork skills. However, a significant 42% disagreed, suggesting that not all students view collective discourse as effective or may have concerns about its practical application. This division in opinion highlights the need for carefully structured group activities that ensure equal participation and clear objectives to maximize learning benefits.

4. Do you think that instructors in the classroom environment must exhibit and interact with students in a wider variety of methods in order to enhance subject and language development?

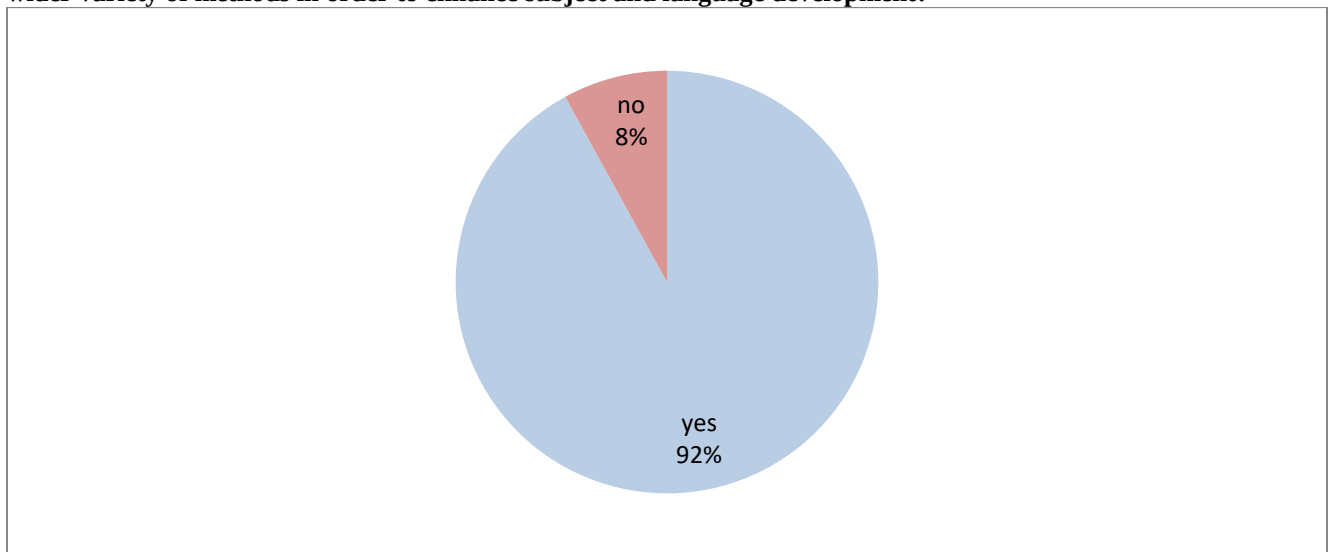


Figure 4: Students' Responses to Question 4

The data reveal that an overwhelming **92%** of the participants agreed with this statement, reflecting a strong preference for varied and dynamic teaching approaches. Only **8%** disagreed. These results emphasize the importance of using diverse instructional strategies—such as discussions, multimedia tools, interactive questioning, and group work—to cater to different learning styles and promote active student involvement. The high level of agreement suggests that students believe a flexible and responsive teaching style is essential for effective language acquisition and classroom engagement.

5. Do you agree that instructors play an important role in the classroom environments by motivating, empowering, and encouraging students?

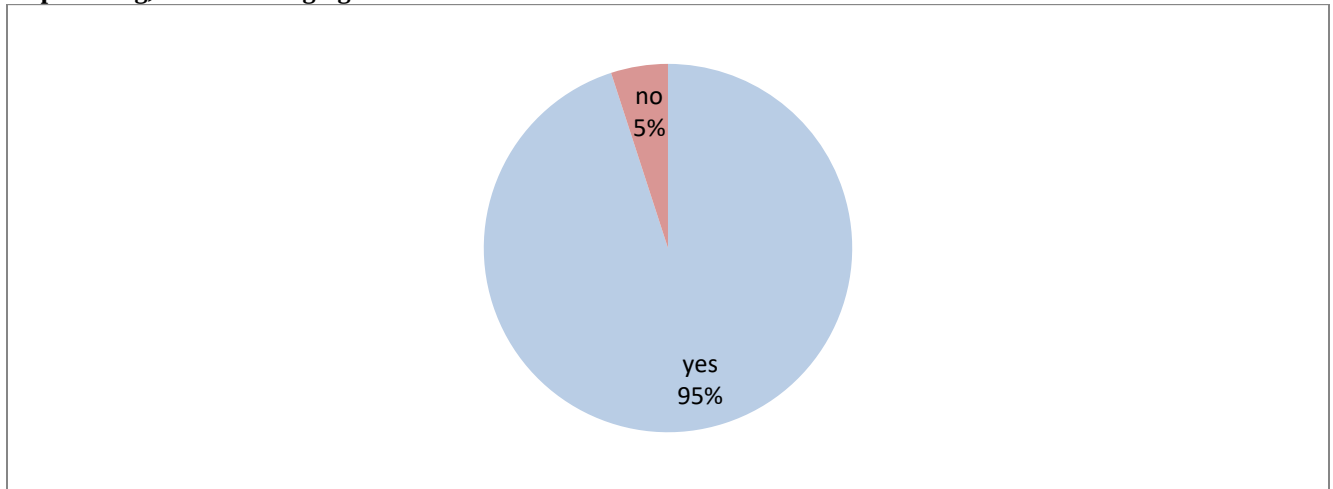


Figure 5: Students' Responses to Question 5

The chart shows that **95%** of the respondents agreed with this statement, confirming that nearly all participants recognize the instructor's role not only as a knowledge provider but also as a source of emotional and motivational support. Only **5%** of students disagreed, indicating minimal resistance to this view. This strong agreement underscores the critical function of teacher encouragement in fostering a productive and interactive classroom environment, where students feel supported and confident enough to engage in learning.

6. Do you agree that the degree of proficiency, personality, intelligence, confidence, and enthusiasm of students all impact their interaction responses?

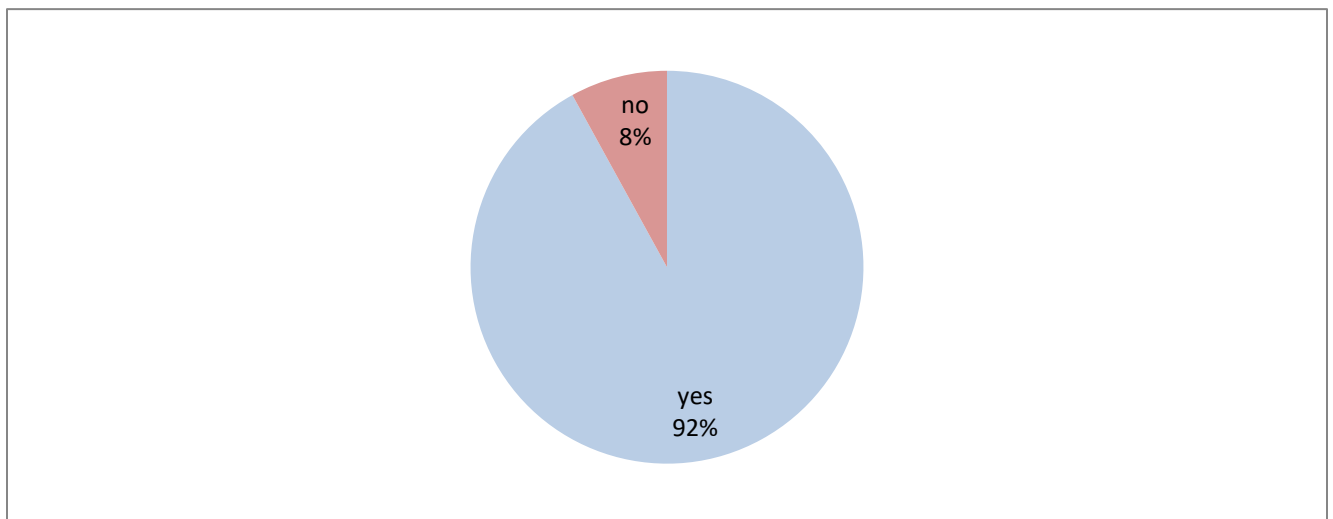


Figure 6: Students' Responses to Question 6

The results indicate that 92% of the students agreed with this statement, suggesting that most participants are aware of the personal and psychological factors that influence classroom interaction. Only 8% disagreed. This high level of agreement reflects the recognition that individual differences among students significantly shape how they participate in classroom discourse. It highlights the need for instructors to adopt inclusive teaching strategies that accommodate various student abilities, personalities, and motivational levels.

These findings suggest that students value both the instructor's dynamic role and their own active participation in classroom communication. The results highlight a clear preference for interactive, varied, and motivational teaching practices that account for individual differences among learners.

3.2 Results & Discussion

The results show that 75% of students agree upon the crucial importance of the student's role in the classroom, while only 15% disagree and believe the instructor holds the more dominant role. Similarly, 75% of students prefer the Teacher-Learner or Group of Learners interaction model, and 58% support collective classroom discourse as a way to build teamwork and communication. Furthermore, 92% agree that instructors should use a variety of interaction methods, 95% believe instructors must motivate and empower students, and 92% acknowledge that student traits—such as confidence, enthusiasm, and language proficiency—significantly affect their participation.

These findings reflect several of the most important considerations in building an ideal interactive class. Both the student and instructor play essential roles in fostering meaningful classroom discourse. When both parties are actively engaged, and when the classroom environment supports open communication, interaction becomes more effective and enjoyable. Instead of relying solely on lectures, instructors should welcome students' input, encourage peer conversations, and create opportunities for students to take initiative during discussions.

In summary, the six-question survey reveals strong student support for interactive, student-centered classroom practices. Most participants agree on the equal importance of student roles, the value of group-based and teacher-guided interaction, and the positive impact of varied teaching methods. The data also highlight the importance of instructor motivation and individual student traits in shaping effective communication. These insights emphasize the need for teaching strategies that are flexible, inclusive, and responsive to students' academic and personal needs.

Conclusion

Although classroom interaction is complex, it remains a fundamental component of the language teaching and learning process. It enables learners to understand and use language through meaningful exchanges with both instructors and peers. Several factors influence how this interaction unfolds, including the characteristics of teachers and students, specific learning objectives, and the targeted language skills. External and internal classroom circumstances also shape the strategies used by instructors.

Effective classroom interaction leads to two main outcomes: first, it creates a comfortable and engaging learning environment; second, it helps learners become confident communicators in a foreign language. Achieving this requires varying the roles of teachers and students, incorporating diverse classroom structures, promoting peer interaction through group work and one-on-one exchanges, and encouraging student expression in a supportive environment.

Furthermore, classroom interaction is not random. The question of who speaks when and how is usually governed by regulations. Teachers can play a number of functions, including that of consultant or co-communicator. To enhance peer interaction, classroom structure can be modified more often for one-to-one or group-work arrangements.

Therefore, this study has identified key features of ideal discourse in Iraqi university classrooms, emphasizing the active involvement of both instructors and students. The findings suggest that promoting student participation and diversifying teaching strategies can significantly enhance classroom communication. Nonetheless, challenges remain, particularly the continued reliance on traditional methods and the limited adoption of modern interaction techniques. Additionally, low student engagement—often shaped by contextual or personal factors—needs to be addressed to realize the full potential of classroom discourse.

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