

INTERACTION IN THE EFL CLASSROOM TO PROMOTE COMMUNICATIVE
COMPETENCE IN THE ORAL SKILL

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Abstract

This paper conducted on a descriptive study among 40 English students of the University of Nariño, contemplates the three types of interaction and the interaction activities that promote the communicative competence in the oral skill in an EFL classroom. Current curricula in the EFL context seek for the implementation of new strategies to develop the spontaneous use of the target language and interaction seems to fill the gap between traditional and alternative English teaching. To support this implementation, three different instruments were analyzed so as the results to emerge with some useful ideas to possible improve the teaching and learning of a foreign language. At the end, this paper's outcomes are expected to serve as a wake-up call for students and teachers of English on the matter of communicative competence, as a starting point for further interaction studies as well as interaction activities' research on the other skills, and as a self-reflection on the roles in the foreign language teaching-learning process performed by both students and teachers.

Key words: Interaction; Communicative Competence; Social Strategies; EFL classroom.

Resumen

Esta investigación conducida a través de un estudio descriptivo entre 40 estudiantes de Inglés de la Universidad de Nariño, contempla los tres tipos de interacción y las actividades de interacción que promueven la competencia comunicativa en la habilidad oral en un ambiente de Inglés como lengua extranjera. Los currículos actuales sobre la lengua extranjera buscan la implementación de nuevas estrategias para desarrollar el uso espontáneo del idioma extranjero y la interacción parece llenar la brecha entre la educación tradicional y alternativa del Inglés. Para sustentar esta implementación, tres instrumentos fueron analizados así como los resultados para surgir con útiles ideas para mejorar la enseñanza y el aprendizaje del Inglés. Al final, se espera que los resultados de esta investigación sirvan como un llamado de atención tanto para estudiantes como para profesores en el tema de la competencia comunicativa con el objetivo de realizar futuros estudios sobre interacción, sobre las actividades de interacción en otras habilidades, y como una reflexión personal sobre los roles llevados a cabo por profesores y estudiantes en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera.

Palabras clave: Interacción; Competencia Comunicativa; Estrategias Sociales; Inglés como lengua extranjera.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

This chapter aims to introduce the object of the study in an English as a Foreign Language context according to the different features representing a descriptive research.

The chapter contains the description of the problem, the problem statement, its significance, and the objectives of the study, its conceptual, population and geographical delimitations and the limitations of the study.

Problem Description

Throughout the history and all over the world, languages had been taught and learned within a social context. Humankind is completely integrated by social beings and the languages are the tools to develop the social relations existing in any culture and society. Halliday (1982) explains a dichotomy between language and society compounds. These concepts which need to be understood and investigated state that there cannot be a social being without a language and there cannot be a language without a social being. When teaching and learning a language this dichotomy appears to be the major trend for discussion; the isolated use of grammatical items or the profound knowledge of languages' phonology or syntax do not lead to success when using a language; the final goal attached to languages is communication. It is only in the different social interactions carried out by speakers that the language occurs in a complete way: there is an exchange of meaning and intention in what the speaker is saying or requesting for, the more a person relates to others, there are more chances to enrich his or her vocabulary, there is a disposition for sharing feelings and thoughts in written or spoken language, and finally, social interaction is the mechanism through a person learns, adopts and understands the rules for living in a society, their way of thinking, their values and beliefs.

Inside the EFL classroom and for the past decades, these social interactions have been the object for many trends and theories in language teaching and learning: Communicative Approach (1960), the Waldorf Pedagogy (1911), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (1991), Integrated Skills (2001), Learning Strategies (1990), Sociolinguistics (1960), Content-Based instruction (1989) and so forth have integrated in their studies the different interrelations a teacher or a student relies on. For this research paper, the authors will reflect on these relations in an EFL setting working with adults, attempting to recognize the amount, quality and frequency in which these interactions occur.

Problem Analysis

Recent research in the field of social interaction in both an ESL and an EFL classroom (Long, 1983; Tsui, 1995; Montenegro, 2007) encompass the relevance of these relations. When teaching and learning a second language what different authors have found is that the knowledge for teachers and students of diverse social strategies and social activities in the classroom improve the level of proficiency of English depending on the amount of interaction, the usual contact of students with their peers, the opportunities of using the target language, and the conscious and unconscious learning which take place in the classroom.

Communication is the ultimate goal to be attached in the language teaching and learning process; consequently, teachers should include interactional features when planning their classes since it has been demonstrated through research that the proficiency in English improves whilst the opportunities of language interaction increase.

As students of the English and French Program and student-teachers at the Language Center of the University of Nariño, we have witnessed that communication is the true and main objective for the English instruction but most of the time, learners of both settings

depict a sense of failure and weakness when dealing with the target language and their successful communicative competence.

On the other hand, Brown (2007) claims that teachers understand the relevance of communication and interaction in the language classroom as well as the premise of applying some specific techniques to curricula regarding learner-centered instruction. In spite of this knowledge, teachers tend to turn the lessons into a teacher-centered instruction.

Brown (2007) compiles this phenomenon stating that

“Because language teaching is a domain that so often presupposes classrooms where students have very little language proficiency with which to negotiate with the teacher, some teachers shy away from the notion of giving learners the “power” associated with a learner-centered approach. Such restraint is not necessary because, even in beginning level classes, teachers can offer students certain choices to help them to get a sense of “ownership” on their learning...” (Brown, 2007: 52-53).

Thus, this research study integrated interaction and social strategies which need to be considered by teachers and students in order to accomplish communicative competence.

Problem Statement

Is Interaction in the EFL Classroom a way to promote Communicative Competence in the oral skill?

Significance

Interaction is a very important aspect for ESOL (English as a Second or Foreign Language) participants, thus, a research study concerning interaction becomes relevant since it is useful to know the influence that interaction has in an EFL classroom in the University of Nariño. It is also essential for students and teachers to know these findings on interaction

and social strategies so as to be applied in their lessons as language teachers and language learners.

General Research Question

Is Interaction in the EFL Classroom a way to promote Communicative Competence in the oral skill?

Sub – Questions

What types of interaction occur in the EFL classroom?

How often do these types of interaction occur in the EFL classroom?

Which interaction activities to promote communicative competence are more frequently used in an EFL classroom?

What are the students' perceptions regarding interaction types and interaction activities?

Do learners use Social Learning Strategies as a tool for improving the communicative competence in an EFL classroom?

Objectives

General Objective

To determine how Interaction promotes Communicative Competence in the oral skill in the EFL classroom

Specific Objectives

To describe the types of interaction occurring in an EFL classroom.

To determine the frequency on the use of the different types of interaction in an EFL classroom.

To describe which interaction activities to promote communicative competence are more frequently used in an EFL classroom

To identify what the students' perceptions regarding interaction types and interaction activities are

To describe if Social Learning Strategies are used by students

Delimitations

Conceptual

Interaction: According to Brown (2007) is the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings, or ideas between two or more people, resulting in a reciprocal effect on each other. Inside the language classroom, three different types of interaction take place: teacher-student, student-teacher, and student-student.

Communicative Competence: Hymes (1972) cited by Richards & Rodgers (2001), coined the term communicative competence referring to "what a speaker needs to know in order to be communicatively competent in a speech community". Hymes explained that when acquiring communicative competence a person relates to two sets of learning, this is the knowledge and the ability for using practical and appropriate language in relation to the situational context. He claims that communicative competence "represents the use of language in social context" (Sauvignon, 1983 in Celce-Murcia, 2001).

Canale and Swain (1980), also include four dimensions of communicative competence for learning a language: grammatical competence or accuracy, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence (Richard & Rodgers, 2001). Finally as Oxford (1990) states, communicative competence is "competence or ability to communicate. It concerns both spoken or written language and all four language skills."

Social Strategies: As Oxford (1990) had explained, language is a form of social behavior; it is communication and communication occurs among people.

Oxford observed three main sets of social strategies occurring inside the language classroom: a) Asking questions, b) cooperating with others, and c) empathizing with others. O'Malley & Chamot (1990) also integrated social strategies in their findings for Second Language Acquisition as the procedure of involving interaction with another person or ideational control over affect. They represent social strategies along with the different affective aspects concerning the learning of a second (or foreign) language.

EFL classroom: Harmer (2007) states that there is a distinction between the terms EFL and ESL. EFL (English as a Foreign Language) settings concerns students learning English in order to use it with any other English speakers of the world; it refers to the English taught and learned in the countries the speakers are from, whereas ESL (English as a Second Language) refers to the students who actually live in an English-speaking community. On this topic, Brown (2007) claims that foreign language contexts are those in which students use the target language only inside the classroom; there are few opportunities to use the target language in different contexts outside the classroom such as language clubs, special media opportunities, books, or on occasional tourism.

Population

This research paper aims basically to explore the different interaction happening in a language classroom with adults; therefore the population will be divided into two groups: 20 students from the Language Center of the University of Nariño, level 3, and 20 third semesters' students from the English and French Program of the University of Nariño. Both groups study English as a Foreign Language under similar conditions.

Geographical

This research paper will be carried out in the University of Nariño in Pasto, a city located in the southwest part of Colombia. The University of Nariño is provided with the sufficient implements for developing an accurate instruction in the language field; it contains English labs, spacious classrooms with a TV set and a VCR/DVD device each one, and a complete Resource Center with bibliography, literature and audio/video tapes in English.

Limitations

It is possible that during the data gathering process, interviewed people will not answer the questions in an objective fashion; therefore, they will not always provide an accurate or completely honest response to the different questions. This could lead to encounter some sort of subjectivity within the surveyed people.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Theoretical Framework

Teaching and learning English as a foreign language has been the object of several researches during the past decades (Long, 1983; Tsui, 1995; Montenegro, 2007).

Recently, the object of study has advocated for an evolving interest on the role of students inside the classroom, in part due to the fact that teacher-centered theories for second language acquisition lack on success when it comes to communication both in and out the language classroom.

Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to pinpoint the different interactions happening in the class for achieving foreign language learning in a satisfactory mode.

Different concepts will be explained in order to clarify and understand why this major trend in research becomes more and more relevant for students and teachers of English.

Interactional Theory of Language

Tracing the background for an interactional theory of language, Piaget & Inhelder (1969), stated that language represents the knowledge a child have acquired by means of physical interaction with the setting around him/her. Vigotsky (1978) compiled his findings on sociocultural and psychologist studies in the sociocultural theory of human mental processing that claims that “language develops entirely from social interaction”. Vigotsky understands that in an interactive environment, a child is capable to achieve a deeper knowledge and performance in the language and in the social relations rather than in an independent, isolated scenery. When children cope with conversations with adults, they actually are originating both language and thought; then, children speech appears only during social exchanges and interactions (Vigotsky, 1978).

Based on Psychological Learning Theories, other authors as Hatch (1992), Pica (1994) and Long (1983) in Lightbown & Spada (2006), have claimed that conversational interaction helps second language acquisition. In Long studies with Native speakers and second language learners there is a need for modifying the input for communication to take place. On the other hand, Long also states that modified interaction is a necessary mechanism to accomplish this process.

Lantolf cited in Lightbown & Spada (2006), extends this theory arguing that if learners interact and collaborate with more knowledgeable speakers, they move forward to a higher level of communication. Montenegro (2007) also argued about the importance of interaction in the first stages of language acquisition. For children it is easier to be more expressive, spontaneous and creative than adults having the opportunity to modify the social sphere around them. Montenegro later explained that a child tends to explore the behavior of his/her peer classmates and friends; through this “children can develop their verbal, kinesic, and paralinguistic channels while learning to interact and develop a sense of cooperation and autonomy” (Montenegro, 2007: 77-78)

To conclude with the findings of the Psychological theory, Vigotsky (1978) asserts that the real importance of interaction is the one which focuses on the participation of both the learner and the interlocutor emphasizing the relevance of modified input.

On this matter, Ellis (1986) states that *motherese*, a type of modified input in a natural setting involving the mother and her child and the language adjustments she uses for making language clear, is a mechanism also employed with some modifications in the classroom setting known as *foreigner talk*. In foreigner talk the teacher or the native speakers with the learners, take the role of a mother and her child when communicating using shorter sentences, not many grammatical items, simpler vocabulary, imperative

commands and more clarification requests. Ellis also observes these adjustments and classifies them into three levels of modified input: pronunciation, grammar, and lexis.

Tsui (1995) explains these levels as follows:

“In terms of phonology, teachers tend to slow down their speech rate, and use less reduced vowels, fewer contractions, more standard pronunciation and more exaggerated articulation. In terms of syntax, teachers tend to use better-form and shorter sentences, and fewer subordinate and conditional clauses. In terms of vocabulary, teacher talk is more basic, with fewer colloquial expressions, more concrete and proper nouns, and fewer indefinite pronouns”. (Tsui, 1995: 55)

Long (1981), in Ellis (1986), states that foreigner talk has input and interactional characteristics; the former relates to the simplifications a speaker does inside the grammatical structure of the language and the simplifications that lead to ungrammatical speech, the latter relates to the functions of the specific discourse which are performed by native speakers. Foremost, Ellis simplifies Long’s characteristics as follows: foreigner talk consists of interactional adjustments with no formal simplifications, interactional and grammatical input adjustments, and interactional adjustments both grammatical and ungrammatical input adjustments.

When students cope with the learning of a foreign language, the adjustments performed by the teacher help them to understand better the target language.

But these linguistic adjustments made by the teacher are not sufficient enough for the students to comprehend the language, it is necessary that interactional modification takes place in the same setting; this makes input comprehensible since interactional modification not only deals with linguistic simplification but also with elaboration, slower speech rate, gesture or the provision of additional contextual cues. If there is a response, a joint communication or feedback in this process, interaction occurs. (Long, 1983)

Interaction

According to Brown (2007) it is the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings, or ideas between two or more people, resulting in a reciprocal effect on each other. Brown declares that interaction is very important for language teachers since it is closely related to communication, which is the main goal attained to the teaching and learning process. During the last decades many researches, theories and approaches have been done and applied to conclude that the best way to learn a language is through interaction.

On this field, Long in 1983 proposed an Interactional Hypothesis whose main claims are: a) comprehensible input is necessary for L2 acquisition, b) modifications to the interactional structure of communication which take place in the process of negotiating a communication problem help to make input comprehensible to a L2 learner, c) tasks in which there is a need for the participants to exchange information with each other promote more interactional restructuring, and d) a situation in which the conversational partners share a symmetrical role relationship affords more opportunities for interactional restructuring. On his hypothesis, Long explains that teachers should make efforts to use fewer display questions which lack the communicative quality and authenticity of referential questions; to avoid this, teachers should be aware of the need to implement different tasks or interaction activities in order to make the students produce more communication opportunities as group work, jig-saw activities, games, discussions, debates, interviews, problem-solving tasks and/or simulations. (In Rod Ellis' *The Interaction Hypothesis: A Critical Evaluation*, 1991). Pica (1984) who continued with the hypothesis proposed for Long emphasizes the importance of a social relationship in which

“learners and their interlocutors are aware of their unequal linguistic proficiencies in the second language, but nevertheless see themselves as having equivalent status with regard to

meeting their needs and fulfilling their obligations as conversational participants; also, there is a need for creating the classroom conditions in which the negotiation of meaning can take place” (Pica, 1984, in Ellis, 1991)

On this matter, negotiation of meaning is understood as the different modifications performed in interaction when students could express their feelings, thoughts, opinions, etc., in order to achieve a mutual understanding through meaningful activities. Lightbown & Spada (2006) summarize that negotiation of meaning accounts for what some theorists have called “say what you mean and mean what you say”, this is, when teachers and students engage into conversational interactions which lead to the recognition of meaningful and comprehensible input. Therefore, some types of modifications are comprehension checks or efforts made by the teacher (or native speaker) to ensure that the learner has understood, clarifications requests or the efforts made by the learner to get the teacher (or NS) to clarify something which has not been understood, and self-repetition or paraphrase when the teacher (or NS) repeats the sentence partially or entirely. (In Lightbown & Spada, 2006: 43).

Tsui (1995) continues with the explanation of these modifications and broadens them using the term “modification devices in interaction” which aid to avoid or repair communication failures; the devices portraying interaction are: a) Confirmation check, which is used to guarantee a correct understanding of what the other speaker has said, for example, making emphasis on the intonation of an item that is possibly misunderstood; b) Clarification request, which is used when a student asks for help to clarify what the other speaker has said, for example, using “What do you mean?”; c) Repetition request, which is used when the student does not catch what the other speaker has said and requests a repetition of the sentence uttered before, for example, “I beg your pardon”; d) Decomposition, which refers to divide the question into shorter questions in order to

promote a response from the other speaker, for example, “What is your name, please?...your name?...name?...”; e) Comprehension check, which refers to the use of “OK?” or “Right?” in order to know if the speakers do not understand the question or they do not know the answer; and f) Self-repetition, which occurs when the speaker repeats partially or completely his or her own sentences.

Types of Interaction in the EFL Classroom

In a classroom where the English instruction is conducted to speakers who are neither native speakers nor second language learners, but foremost, who are learners of English as a Foreign language, interaction and the exposure to the target language are likely to be the only moments in which these learners encounter language as the subject of study as well as the medium for learning (Tsui, 1995). It is possible to state that the participants of both interaction and exposure maintain a close communicative relationship translated into three types of interaction: student-teacher (Type 1), student-student (Type 2), and teacher-student (Type 3). The Interaction Type 1 is directly related to the interaction Type 3' lineups which it would be explained below. It refers, as Tsui (1995) asserts, to the interaction triggered by the student to the teacher when he or she uses one of the modified interaction devices to improve his or her language learning. This interaction could be affected by the students' active or passive participation in class which copes with other factors such as anxiety reflected on the students' reluctance to volunteer answers (Tsui, 1995: 21) and the lack of motivation for students to speak which is mainly a cultural issue in EFL settings (Lazaraton, 1991 in Celce-Murcia, 2001).

Concerning Interaction Type 2, students are able to interact with their peers in a collaborative way through different activities which provide them with opportunities to engage in genuine communication, for example, when using group work, the students would

be likely to produce coherent discourse and not only isolated sentences and would be likely to improve their communicative competence and not only the linguistic competence (Tsui, 1995: 21)

For the interaction Type 3, teachers' questions are the evident tool to promote interaction and communication; this could be reflected on the different question types (e.g. open and closed questions, display and referential questions), the nomination of a student to answer the question (turn-allocation), the student actually answering the question, and the feedback that the teacher provides after the students' response.

What is relevant in Type 3 interaction according to Tsui (1995), ultimately, is feedback understood as the way teachers make evaluations and give comments on students' performance in order to repair their utterances, to acknowledge the information given by the students, and the personal comments or contributions that a teacher could give after the students' answer. Lyster and Ranta (1997) cited in Lightbown & Spada (2006) and Crookes & Chaudron (1991) cited in Celce-Murcia (2001) highlight the types of feedback as follows: explicit correction or the teacher providing the correct form of what was incorrect; recasts or the teacher reformulating all or part of students' utterances minus the error; clarification request or the teacher indicating the misunderstanding of a students' utterance; metalinguistic feedback or the teacher providing information, comments or questions about how to form the students' utterance without giving the correct form; elicitation or the teacher using three techniques to correct students (elicit completion of the utterance, questions to elicit the correct form, and reformulation of utterances); and repetition or the teacher repeating the students' error adjusting the intonation to pinpoint the error.

Several tasks, techniques and activities are related to the three types of interaction as Tsui (1995), Klippel (1984) in Brown (2007) and Lazaraton (1991) in Celce-Murcia (2001) proposed and could be summarized in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

Interaction tasks, techniques or activities

INTERACTION TASKS, TECHNIQUES OR ACTIVITIES		
TYPE 1	TYPE 2	TYPE 3
Teacher questions	Role play demonstration	Group work
Teacher feedback	Simulations	Cued narrative dialogue
Teacher explanation	Games	Games
Turn allocation	Interviews	Small group talk
Games		Discussions/debates
Discussions/debates		Interviews
Interviews		Jigsaw activities
Problem-solving actvs.		Problem-solving actvs.

These activities help promote communicative competence which is by definition “what a speaker needs to know in order to be communicatively competent in a speech community” (Hymes, 1972 in Richards & Rodgers, 2001) and “the ability of classroom language learners to interact with other speakers, to make meaning, as distinct from their ability to recite dialogues or performed on discrete-point test of grammatical knowledge” (Savignon, 1983 in Celce-Murcia, 2001). Canale and Swain (1980), also include four dimensions of communicative competence for learning a language: grammatical competence or accuracy, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence (Richard & Rodgers, 2001)

A characteristic of a learner who has improved his/her communicative competence is the responsibility for his/her own learning: learning is no longer seen as a one-way process from teacher to student; these days a learner could learn a language from different means,

for instance, from the teachers, the classmates and the world around him/her revealing the types of interaction explained above.

Lazaraton (1991) states that the learner will learn to use the language if he or she seeks for profitable opportunities to do it. Students should be given communicative moments to use the target language when possible through the development of oral skills; thus, students could evaluate their own production and learning progress.

To sum up, as Rivers (1987) in Brown (2007) mentions, the language store of a student can be increased by using interaction devices, authentic linguistic material, output from peers performed in discussions, skits, problem-solving tasks or dialogue journals. When interacting, students can use all their knowledge in the target language for real life exchanges. (Rivers, 1987 in Brown, 2007: 213). Also when interacting in the classroom, students should be aware of the different types of language strategies that reinforce the interaction process and the language learning itself.

Social Strategies

As any other type of strategies, social strategies are techniques to help students to improve their language learning.

As Oxford (1990) affirms, language is a form of social behavior; it is related to communication, and communication occurs between and among people. As seen before, learning a language depends on the interaction involving the participants of the interactional procedure. Of course, this interaction actually takes place when sharing the knowledge of the target language in terms of expressing ideas, thoughts and feelings in spoken or written language.

For this process to occur in the EFL classroom, knowledge on Social Strategies is a remarkable tool for learning a language.

Oxford classifies Social Strategies into three different groups:

Asking Questions: This is one of the most basic social interactions. It helps learners to understand intended meaning and provides larger quantities of input in conversations, indicating interest and involvement in the target language. Feedback takes place when the partner responds, showing if the question was understood or not. Examples of these questions are questions for clarification, verification and correction.

Cooperating with Others: Oxford highlights the importance of cooperating with peers, this is, when working with small groups in the classroom avoiding competition between the individuals, and the importance of cooperating with advanced users of the target language due to the fact that this interaction helps the learners to enrich their knowledge and gain a higher level for communication.

Empathizing with Others: Learners differ in their nature, so it is essential to understand the other's perspectives by developing cultural awareness through the consciousness of others' thoughts and feelings.

Finally and as seen throughout the second chapter, Interaction and Social Strategies are closely related to the success in the learning of a foreign language and in the development of communicative competence for learners.

These two main aspects of the Literature Review done for this research study will be described deeply in a nearby EFL setting.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

Design

The design of this study contained the features required to carry out a descriptive qualitative research.

This research study intended to describe systematically the influence, types and frequency regarding Interaction in the EFL classroom.

Therefore, in order to collect a detailed description of the influence of interaction in the EFL classroom, the data was entirely gathered by means of a structured survey, class observations and questionnaires. The authors intended to describe a problematic situation using these data gathering instruments to obtain relevant, sufficient and objective information from the population selected for this research study.

Participants, Setting and Sample

Participants

This research study was carried out with a group of forty (40) adult learners of English as a foreign language who currently belong to the English and French Program and to the Language Center of the University of Nariño.

Setting

This research paper was carried out in the University of Nariño in Pasto, a city located in the southwest part of Colombia. The University has the sufficient elements for teaching English as a foreign language in the English and French Program as well as in the Language Center.

Sample

The sample of the study consisted of forty (40) adult language learners from the University of Nariño: twenty (20) adult learners from the English and French Program and twenty (20) adult learners from the Language Center, chosen at random.

Data Collection Techniques

This research study was developed by applying a classroom observation, a students' questionnaire and a structured survey to the sample selected. The classroom observation format was divided into two parts, the first one consisting of the observation of the types of interaction (Type 1, Type 2, Type 3) and the occurrence of them, and the second part consisting of the activities used in the classroom to promote communicative competence and the occurrence of them as well.

The students' questionnaire consisted of 4 open-ended questions to find out if students are aware of the concepts of interaction and communicative competence, the types of interaction they think occur in the English instruction and which interaction activities promote communicative competence. The questionnaire also consisted of 4 multiple-choice questions to find out how frequently the types of interaction occur, which activities promote communicative competence (the activities are found displayed in a list), how frequently are these activities used in class and if students think interaction activities promote the communicative competence.

Finally, the structured survey called the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL; Oxford, 1990), Oxford's classification of language learning strategies, Part F for Social strategies which comprises of 6 strategies and the frequency in which they are used by students, was also implemented to find out if students consider social interaction as a

valuable tool to promote communicative competence or at least improve their knowledge of English.

These instruments, along with the books and articles reviewed provided the information needed for the analysis of data.

Validation Criteria

This research study used triangulation as validation criteria; this was carried out by comparing surveys, observations, questionnaires and bibliographic information and the authors' interpretation of the criteria.

Pilot Study

Two of the three instruments for collecting information for this research study (the survey and the questionnaire) were given to six (6) students chosen at random from the English and French Program as well as from the Language Center of the University of Nariño in order to possibly encounter some failures or misunderstandings in the questions and directions included in both the questionnaire (open and multiple choice questions) and the survey (social strategies' use and frequency). The pilot study also served as an indicator of the time devoted to the instruments for the examinee students.

CHAPTER IV: DATA ANALYSIS

For this chapter we considered the information collected during the research process through the implementation of a classroom observation format (See Annex 1), a students' questionnaire (See Annex 2) and a structured survey (See Annex 3). The three data gathering instruments were described and analyzed to report the different findings of this research found on the population interviewed and see if they complement the findings of other authors and studies about interaction and its influence in the EFL classroom in order to promote communicative competence.

Classroom Observation

Method

The classroom observation format consisted of two parts: the first one containing of three types of interaction (Type 1: student-teacher, Type 2: student-student, and Type 3: teacher-student), their occurrence and the amount of times a type of interaction was performed during the class; the second part containing of a list of interaction activities to promote communicative competence, their occurrence and the amount of times these activities were performed in the class.

For the observation, two teachers, one from the English and French Program and the other from the Language Center, were asked to collaborate allowing us to go into their class in order to apply the instrument for about 1 hour and a half to 2 hours. The main objective of the classroom observation was to observe and describe the different types of interaction inside an EFL classroom, the frequency in the use of these types, and to observe the frequency on the use of interaction activities.

Concerning the description of the data collected in the observation format about the three interaction types and their occurrence, a chart was taken into account in which a score

from 0 to 5 is given to each frequency value displayed as follows: for the score 1, the frequency is never or almost never used; for the score 2, the frequency is generally not used; for the score 3, the frequency is sometimes used; for the score 4, the frequency is usually used; and for the score 5, the frequency is always or almost always used. Finally, these frequency values were interpreted as low, medium, and high as shown in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1

Interpretation of values

Score	Frequency value	Average
1	Never or almost never used	LOW
2	Generally not used	
3	Sometimes used	MEDIUM
4	Usually used	HIGH
5	Always or almost always used	

To begin with, the outcome of this instrument was analyzed through the implementation of statistics that were reported in different tables and barcharts intended to complement the understanding of the information. Then, a separate analysis describing the findings from both settings (English and French Program and Language Center) was displayed, and finally, a comparison between the two settings was carried out to provide information about the differences obtained, this is, in which extent the types of interaction and the interaction activities influence the promotion of communicative competence in both EFL contexts which might answer the questions “What types of interaction occur in an EFL classroom?, how often do these types of interaction occur in an EFL classroom?, and which interaction activities to promote communicative competence are more frequently used in an EFL classroom?”

Results

Types of Interaction

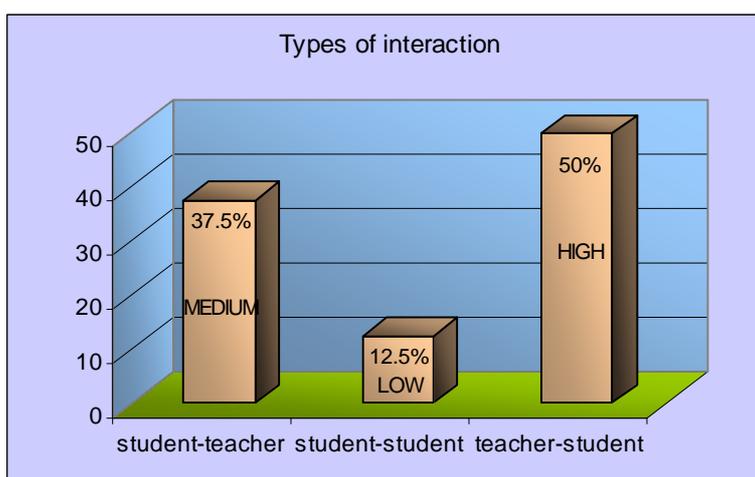
English and French Program

Bearing in mind that the foreign language instruction from the English and French Program of the University of Nariño divides the teaching of English into two subjects, Listening and Speaking and Reading and Writing, and since our research study looked for the promotion of the communicative competence in the oral skill, we only observed the Listening and Speaking class in the third semester. As mentioned before, the observation lasted one hour and a half, in which the class was conducted in a normal way. As it can be seen in Table 4.1 the first type of interaction, Type 1 for student – teacher interaction, obtained a medium average range with the 37.5% of the occurrence during the session. In contrast, the second type of interaction, Type 2 for student – student interaction, obtained a low average range with only the 12.5% of the occurrence. This means that the third type of interaction, Type 3 for teacher – student interaction, obtained a high average range with the 50% of occurrence during the instruction.

The results revealed that apparently the language instruction is mostly given by the teacher with a small amount of interventions from the students; the teacher manages the class almost the entire time and students are keen on going after his/her directions, responding only to questions and giving the information required. The type 2 of interaction, student – student, is almost non-existing since there was little time to discuss or analyze the tasks and there was little effort to make a contribution to the class on their own. In the end, the purpose of interacting with the foreign language and developing the communicative competence by the students was to some extent difficult to convey.

Table 4.1
Types of interaction - English and French Program

Interaction	Types	Frequency	Relative frequency	Cumulative frequency	Cumulative relative frequency	Average range
Student-teacher	1	3	37.5%	3	37.5%	MEDIUM
Student-student	2	1	12.5%	4	50%	LOW
Teacher-student	3	4	50%	8	100%	HIGH
Total		8	100%			



Barchart for Types of Interaction - English and French Program

Language Center

Since our research study looked for the promotion of the communicative competence in the oral skill, we observed a whole class in the Language Center of the University of Nariño. The observation lasted two hours, in which the class was conducted in a normal way. As it can be seen in Table 4.2 the first type of interaction, Type 1 for student – teacher interaction, obtained a high average range with the 50% of the occurrence during the

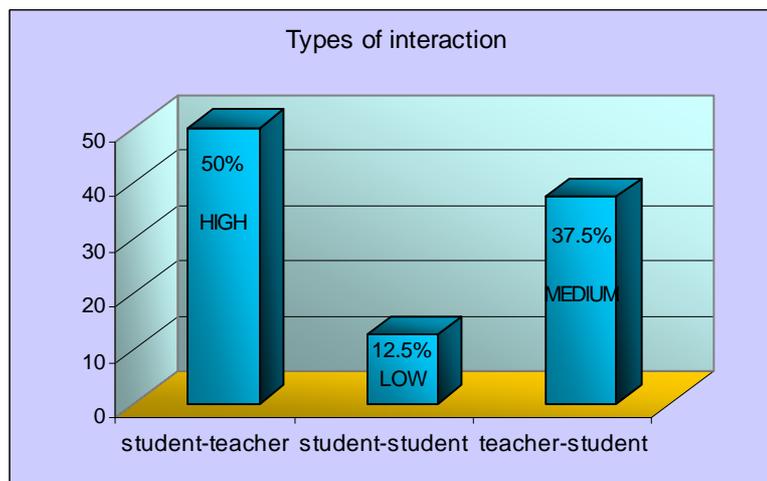
session. The second type of interaction, Type 2 for student – student interaction, obtained a low average range with only the 12.5% of the occurrence. Finally the third type of interaction, Type 3 for teacher – student interaction, obtained a medium average range with the 37.5% of occurrence during the instruction.

The results revealed that apparently the student-teacher interaction occurs more frequently than the other ones mentioned. The amount of interventions from the students seems to be higher during a class in the Language Center; although the teacher is the one that gives directions, the participation of the students is clearly seen almost the entire time when asking for questions, answering them, or clarifying items and giving the information required. The type 2 interaction, student – student, is almost non-existing since the time is not spent in doing discussion or debate tasks between students. The purpose of interacting with the foreign language and developing the communicative competence can be seen with the two main objects of the teaching and learning process (the student and the teacher) but the interaction when only the students are involved is losing its importance during a class.

Table 4.2

Types of interaction – Language Center

Interaction	Types	Frequency	Relative frequency	Cumulative frequency	Cumulative relative frequency	Average range
Student-teacher	1	4	50%	4	50%	HIGH
Student-student	2	1	12.5%	5	62.5%	LOW
Teacher-student	3	3	37.5%	8	100%	MEDIUM
Total		8	100%			



Barchart for the Types of interaction – Language Center

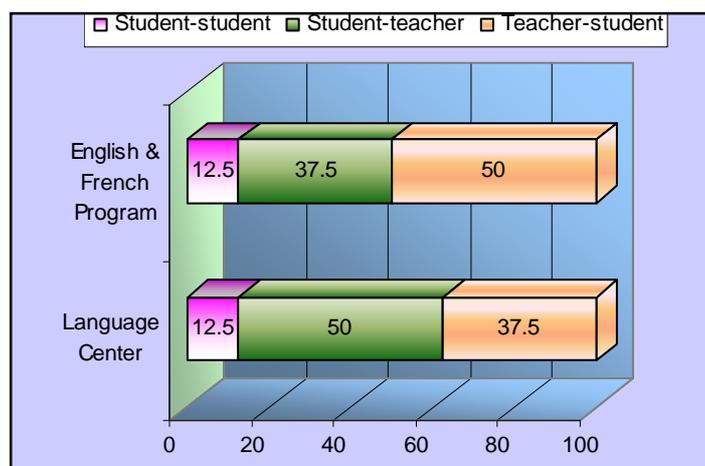
Types of Interaction

For the first part of the classroom observation findings and in order to answer the questions “What types of interaction occur in an EFL classroom?”, and “How often do these types of interaction occur in an EFL classroom?”, Table 4.3 summarizes the results leading to find out the percentages of the occurrence of the three types of interaction actually happening in an EFL classroom.

Table 4.3

Types of interaction occurrence.

Type of interaction	English & French Program		Language Center	
	Frequency	Relative frequency	Frequency	Relative frequency
Student-student	1	12.5%	1	12.5%
Student-teacher	3	37.5%	4	50%
Teacher-student	4	50%	3	37.5%



Barchart for Types of interaction occurrence

First of all, what it might be observed is that the second type of interaction, student-student, obtained the lowest score of all three which means that in both settings a student has only a few opportunities to share with another student his/her knowledge and to interact by themselves with the target language. What it might be implied is that in the EFL classroom there will be always room for several tasks performed mostly by the teacher who is the one that directs and manages the class almost entirely, and the students rely on what the teacher has prepared for the class, what his/her directions are, and what results he/she might want to achieve.

On the contrary, for types of interaction 1 and 3, student-teacher and teacher-student, there is a considerable difference in occurrence as they received a medium average score which means that, in fact, these two types of interaction rule almost the entire time of the English instruction. Yet, there is a remarkable variation on the results when comparing both settings. Surprisingly, the Language Center conveyed a tendency to employ the type of interaction 1, student-teacher, more frequently than the English and French Program. This probably means that in the Language Center the English instruction offers more

opportunities for students to interact with English and allows students to work almost at the same pace as the teacher leading to a more direct relation with the target language as well.

Interaction Activities

English and French Program

For the second part of the observation, Interaction activities to promote communicative competence, a checklist of class activities which contribute on the promotion of communicative competence was observed. Table 4.4 exhibits the different activities taken into account during the observation process; each activity has a letter meaning a code from A to N for a better understanding of the barchart.

With reference to the activities commonly performed by a teacher, codes A, B, C and D, the outcomes were: for code A, teacher questions, the occurrence of the item scored 5 standing for a high average range, a frequency of always or almost always used with a percentage of 20.8; for code B, teacher feedback, the observation showed that this item scored 4, again a frequency of always or almost always used with a percentage of 16.7, meaning a high average range; towards the code C, teacher explanation, the result demonstrates a low average range, scoring 2 with a 8.3%, a frequency of generally not used; finally, for code D, turn allocation, the observation proved a percentage of 20.8, showing that this item was highly used as well.

Concerning codes E, F, G, H and I, activities performed mostly by students with a continuous guidance from the teacher the results were: for code E, small group talk, the score was 1 with a 4.2%, never or almost never used in the frequency value confirming a low average range; for codes F and H, group work and cued narrative dialogue, the frequency was again never or almost never used indicating a low average range with the same percentage as code E; finally, for codes G and I, role play demonstration and games,

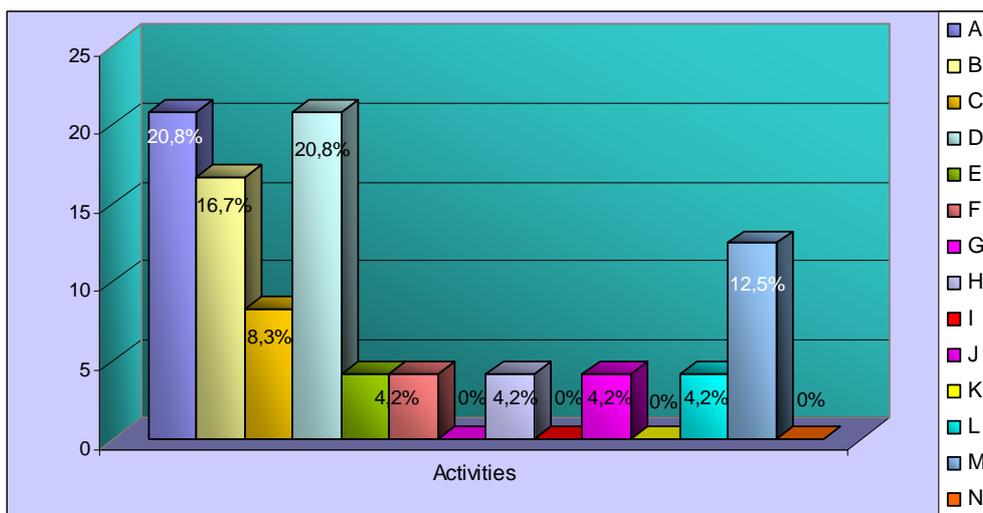
the observation encountered no score which means that these items were not performed during the class.

Regarding codes J, K, L, M and N, activities performed by students with a slightly presence from the teacher the outcomes are displayed as follows: for codes J and L, discussions/debates and jig-saw activities, the score was 1, a low average range with a percentage of 4.2 expressing a frequency of never or almost never used; for codes K and N, interviews and simulations, there was no evidence of tasks performing these items during the process of observation; finally, the code M, problem-solving activities scored 3, showing a frequency value of sometimes used, a medium average range with a 12.5%.

Table 4.4

Interaction Activities – English and French Program

Activity	Code	Frequency	Relative frequency	Cumulative frequency	Cumulative relative frequency
Teacher questions	A	5	20.8%	5	20.8%
Teacher feedback	B	4	16.7%	9	37.5%
Teacher explanation	C	2	8.3%	11	45.8%
Turn allocation	D	5	20.8%	16	66.6%
Small group talk	E	1	4.2%	17	70.8%
Group work	F	1	4.2%	18	75%
Role play demonstr.	G	0	0%	18	75%
Cued narrative dial.	H	1	4.2%	19	79.2%
Games	I	0	0%	19	79.2%
Discussions/debates	J	1	4.2%	20	83.4%
Interviews	K	0	0%	20	83.4%
Jigsaw activities	L	1	4.2%	21	87.6%
Problem-solving actvs.	M	3	12.5%	24	100%
Simulations	N	0	0%	24	100%
Total		24	100%		



Barchart for Interaction Activities – English and French Program

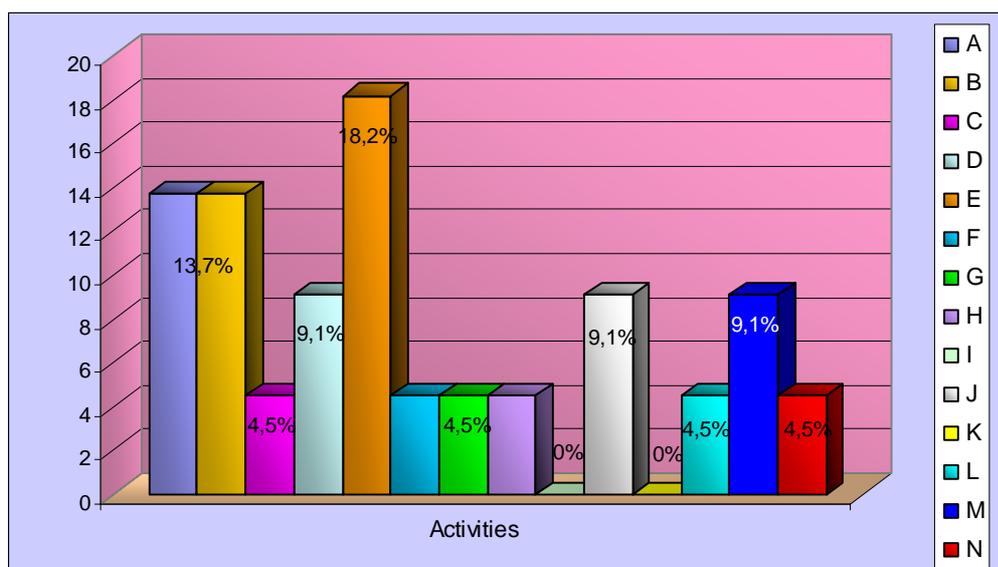
Language Center

During the observation process carried out in the Language Center and according to the checklist of interaction activities displayed in Table 4.5, codes A, B, C, and D, activities performed mostly by the teacher, teacher questions and teacher feedback, received a score of 3 showing a medium average range meaning a frequency of sometimes used; code C, teacher explanation, with a percent of 4.5 in its frequency is never or almost never used and code D with a percent of 9.1 shows these activities involving turn allocation obtained a low use during a class being generally not used; the activities concerning interaction between students with a continuous guidance from the teacher show different averages depending on the number of students participating in the activities since code E, small group talk, got a high range with an average of 4 and code F, group work, is not as used as small group tasks since it obtained a lower frequency with a range of 1. Continuing with activities guided by the teacher, code G, role play demonstrations, and code H, cued narrative dialogue, presented a low percentage of 4.5 considering that these activities are never or almost never used in the classroom. The activities carried out mainly by the students, codes J,

discussions/debates, and code M, problem solving activities, were generally not used with a percent of 9.1; the code L, jigsaw activities, and code N, simulations, with a low range as well was considered never or almost never used in the class, and finally the codes I for games, and K for interviews, were not performed during the instruction scoring 0%.

Table 4.5.
Interaction Activities – Language Center

Activity	Code	Frequency	Relative frequency	Cumulative frequency	Cumulative relative frequency
Teacher questions	A	3	13.7%	3	13.7%
Teacher feedback	B	3	13.7%	6	27.4%
Teacher explanation	C	1	4.5%	7	31.9%
Turn allocation	D	2	9.1%	9	41%
Small group talk	E	4	18.2%	13	59.2%
Group work	F	1	4.5%	14	63.7%
Role play demonstration	G	1	4.5%	15	68.2%
Cued narrative dialogue	H	1	4.5%	16	72.7%
Games	I	0	0	16	72.7%
Discussions/debates	J	2	9.1%	18	81.8%
Interviews	K	0	0	18	81.8%
Jigsaw activities	L	1	4.5%	19	86.3%
Problem-solving activities	M	2	9.1%	21	95.4%
Simulations	N	1	4.5%	22	100%
Total		22	100%		



Barchart for Interaction Activities – Language Center

Interaction Activities

Drawing on the results obtained in the second part of the classroom observation and comparing the English and French Program and the Language Center settings, it was understandable that the interaction activities displayed on a checklist did not have the same presence during the class since both sessions were focused on different language topics and grammar tasks. Nonetheless, the objective of the observation was to come across with similarities as well as differences between the two groups. Table 4.6 exposes the frequency on the use of these activities and might answer the question “Which interaction activities to promote communicative competence are more frequently used in an EFL classroom?”

To begin with, the activities mostly performed by the teacher shared a major distinction in both settings scoring 5 in the English and French Program, always or almost always used, with a high average range and 4 in the Language Center, usually used, with the same average range. Between codes A, B, C and D, the teacher questions received the highest score showing that the teacher tackles the class depending on what he/she asks the students to do. Unexpectedly, code C, teacher explanation, was given the lowest score during the observation period demonstrating a less-centered grammar classroom.

Later, for activities performed mostly by students with a continuous guidance from the teacher, codes E, F, G, H, and I, the observation pinpointed the biggest difference between the two settings: the English and French Program scored 2, a low average range with a frequency of generally not used, meanwhile the Language Center obtained a high average range scoring 4 with a frequency of usually used; this probably means that in the Language Center the English instruction might be more student-centered since these activities allow students to work altogether with the target language as with the teacher. Among the activities, codes E, F and H, small group talk, group work and dialogues

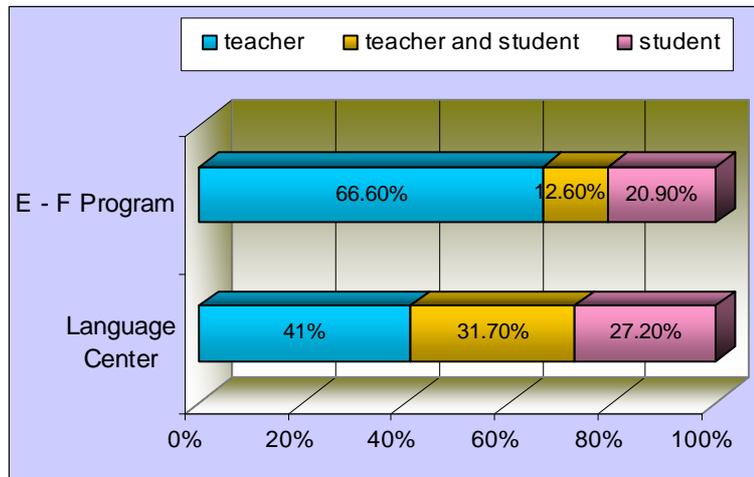
correspondingly, scored a medium average range meaning a frequency of sometimes used and for codes G and I, role play demonstrations and games, the frequency was low, almost non-existing partly due to the time constraints.

As a final point, the activities performed by students with a slightly presence from the teacher obtained a score of 3, a medium average range of sometimes used in the frequency value for both settings, revealing a constant similarity in the use, execution and outcome of the activities. Code L for Jigsaw activities obtained the frequency of sometimes used and was the clearest example of an activity conducted in a similar way not only in the English and French Program but also in the Language Center. Code M, problem-solving activities, also received a medium frequency use during the observation while Interviews, code K, and Simulations, code N, were again almost non-existing.

Table 4.6

Overall frequencies on the use of interaction activities

Interaction activities Performed by	English & French Program		Language Center	
	Frequency	Relative frequency	Frequency	Relative frequency
The teacher Codes A, B, C and D	5	66.60%	4	41%
The students, guided by the teacher Codes E, F, G, and I	2	12.60%	4	31.70%
The students, small presence of the teacher. Codes J, K, L, M and N	3	20.90%	3	27.20%



Barchart for the overall frequencies on the use of interaction activities

Students' Questionnaire

Method

The second data gathering instrument, the students' questionnaire, consisted of four multiple choice questions willing to consider the students' perceptions on interaction as a way to promote communicative competence: the first one "What types of interaction do you think most occur during your English instruction?" looked for the recognition of the types of interaction in the English class, Type 1, 2 or 3; the second question "I think this (these) activity (activities) promotes communicative competence" displayed a list with the interaction activities performed during the English instruction in which students were able to choose from the list one or more activities; the third question "How often does your teacher apply these activities in class?" searched for the frequency on the use of these interaction activities during the English instruction; and finally the fourth question "I think using these activities in the English instruction will promote communicative competence in the oral skill" claimed the students' agreement over this statement.

The data gathering procedure started out with the presence of both researchers from this paper in the third semester of the English and French Program, presenting beforehand the objectives of the questionnaire and explaining the questionnaire itself to the respondents in order to get things clear. The same procedure was done in two different groups in the third level of the Language Center. Again the results were classified in categories and statistics to analyze them through tables and barcharts to finally compare the two settings looking for similarities and differences.

As a whole, the results of the students' questionnaire might answer the question "What are the students' perceptions regarding interaction types and interaction activities?"

Results

English and French Program

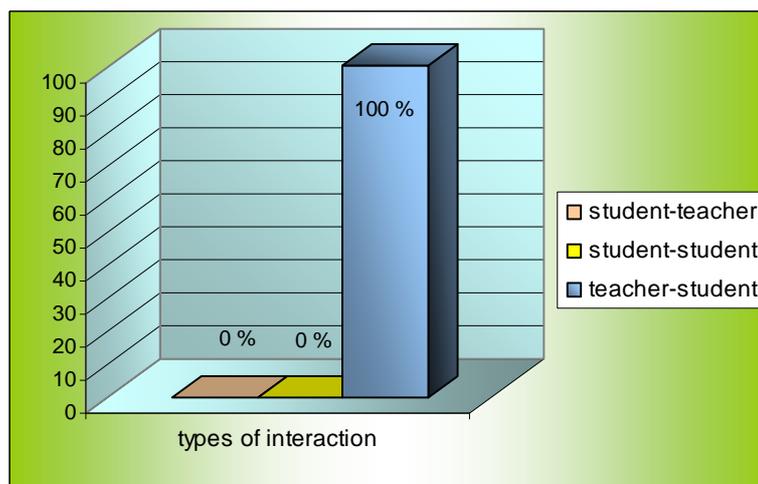
1. *What types of interaction do you think most occur during your English instruction?*

According to the students' response to this question and as it can be seen in Table 4.7, the total sample surveyed considered Interaction 3, teacher-student as the type of interaction most frequently occurred in the English class; neither Interaction 1 nor 2 obtained one single positive response from the students. What it could be inferred is that students rely on the teacher performance during the class, the decisions he/she has made over the lesson planning, and how and when the assessment would take place.

Table 4.7

Types of Interaction

Interaction	Types	Frequency	Relative frequency	Cumulative frequency	Cumulative relative frequency
Student-teacher	1	0	0%	0	0%
Student-student	2	0	0%	0	0%
Teacher-student	3	20	100%	20	100%
Total		20	100%		



Barchart for the Types of Interaction

2. *I think this (these) activity (activities) promotes communicative competence*

Regarding the interaction activities that students consider could promote communicative competence, it is important to notice that all the activities were checked by the students at least one time. As shown in Table 4.8, for codes C, F, I and L, teacher explanation, group work, games and jigsaw activities, obtained the highest percentages from the complete checklist. From these activities, one belongs to the activities mostly performed by the teacher (teacher explanation), two belongs to the activities performed by the student with a continuous guidance from the teacher (group work and games), and one belongs to the activities performed by the student with a slightly presence from the teacher (jigsaw activities).

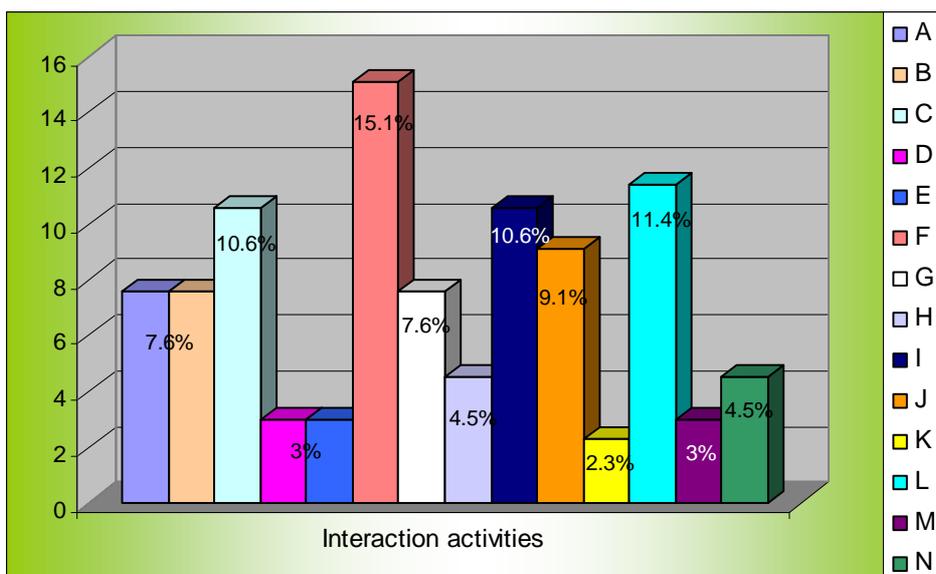
The activities that received a medium average percentage were code A, teacher questions, code B, teacher feedback, code G, role play demonstration, and code J, discussions/debates. The four activities are for a second time divided into the three categories of interaction activities: 2 belong to the activities performed by the teacher, 1 to the activities performed for both students and teacher, and 1 to the activities performed by students.

Finally, the activities that obtained the lowest score according to the students' perceptions were codes D, E, H, K, M, and N, near the half of the activities. As stressed before, the activities lay on the three categories of interaction activities: turn allocation for activities performed by the teacher, small group talk and cued narrative dialogue for activities performed by students with a continuous guidance from the teacher, and interviews, problem-solving activities and simulations for activities performed by the students with a slightly presence from the teacher.

As an overall result, the category of interaction activities which students claimed are the most suitable for the promotion of the communicative competence is the activities performed by the students with a continuous guidance from the teacher with the 40.8%. The remaining percentages are divided into 28.8% for the activities performed mostly by the teacher and 30.3% for the activities performed by the students with a slightly presence from the teacher.

Table 4.8
Interaction activities list

Activity	Code	Frequency	Relative frequency	Cumulative frequency	Cumulative relative frequency
Teacher questions	A	10	7.6%	10	7.6%
Teacher feedback	B	10	7.6%	20	15.2%
Teacher explanation	C	14	10.6%	34	25.8%
Turn allocation	D	4	3.0%	38	28.8%
Small group talk	E	4	3.0%	42	31.8%
Group work	F	20	15.1%	62	46.9%
Role play demonstration	G	10	7.6%	72	54.5%
Cued narrative dialogue	H	6	4.5%	78	59%
Games	I	14	10.6%	92	69.6%
Discussions/debates	J	12	9.1%	104	78.7%
Interviews	K	3	2.3%	107	81%
Jigsaw activities	L	15	11.4%	122	92.4%
Problem-solving activities	M	4	3.0%	126	95.4%
Simulations	N	6	4.5%	132	100%
Total		132	100%		



Barchart for Interaction activities

3. How often does your teacher apply these activities in class?

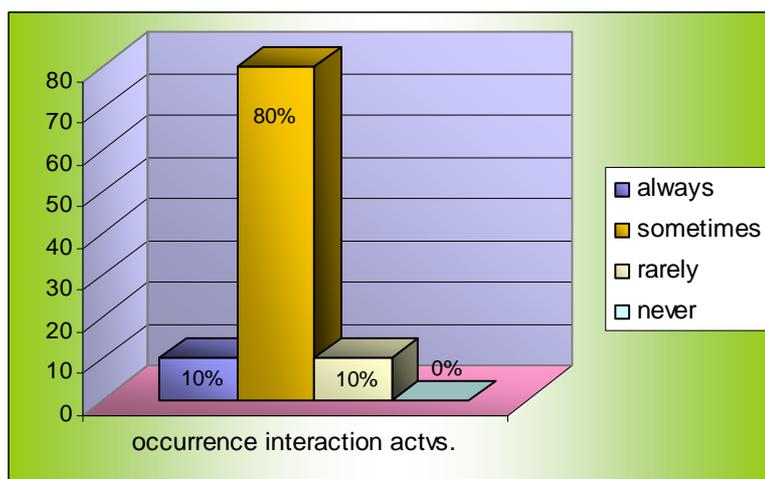
The third question on the students’ questionnaire compiled the frequency on the use of interaction activities in the English and French Program. The occurrence of the activities according to the students’ perceptions was ranked into always, sometimes, rarely, and never as exhibited in Table 4.9. From the sampled population, 80% believed that interaction activities were sometimes used during the class, 10% marked always, and the remaining 10% marked rarely as the frequency on the occurrence of interaction activities.

Finally, none of the students considered that the activities performed during the class were never used.

Table 4.9

Occurrence of interaction activities

Occurrence of interaction activities	Frequency	Relative frequency	Cumulative frequency	Cumulative relative frequency
Always	2	10%	2	10%
Sometimes	16	80%	18	90%
Rarely	2	10%	20	100%
Never	0	0%	20	100%
Total	20	100%		



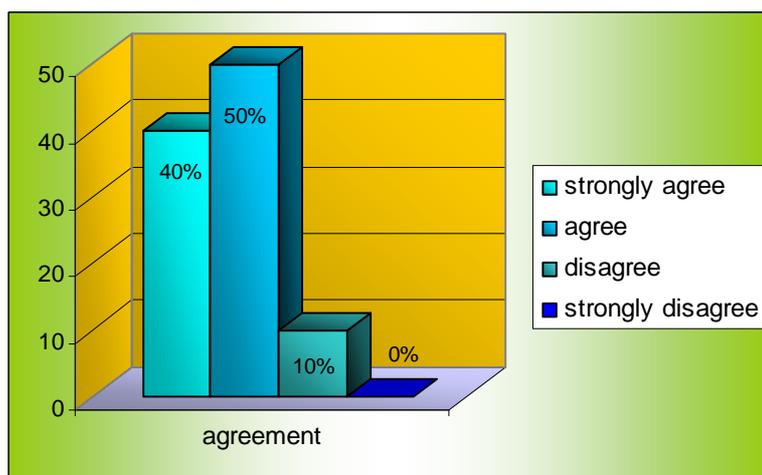
Barchart for Occurrence of interaction activities

4. *I think using these activities in the English instruction will promote communicative competence in the oral skill*

As a final point, the fourth question from the students’ questionnaire aimed to the students’ agreement over the question statement. Table 4.10 displays the extents of agreement from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The results conveyed a low average range of disagreement with only the 10% from the total of the sampled population; on the contrary 90% of the students agreed with the statement as 40% of them responded strongly agree and 50% responded agree, a clear distinction of a positive attitude towards the use of interaction activities as a way to promote communicative competence in the EFL classroom.

Table 4.10
Agreement on the promotion of the communicative competence

Agreement	Frequency	Relative frequency	Cumulative frequency	Cumulative relative frequency
Strongly agree	8	40%	8	40%
Agree	10	50%	18	90%
Disagree	2	10%	20	100%
Strongly disagree	0	0%	20	100%
Total	20	100%		



Barchart for the agreement on the promotion of communicative competence

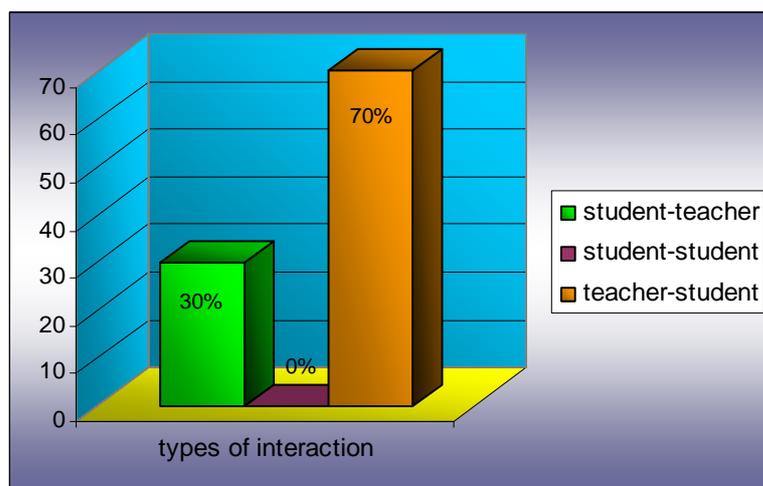
Language Center

1. *What types of interaction do you think most occur during your English instruction?*

Regarding this question students keen on Interaction 3, teacher-student being the type of interaction most frequently occurred during the English instruction as shown in Table 4.11, Interaction 1, student-teacher got a 30% of frequency according to the students opinions meanwhile Interaction 2, student-student is not happening during the instruction. It is possible to say that the activities and techniques most used in the classroom are relied on the teacher performance. This is the one that has a main role in the classroom setting and the role of the student as an autonomous learner is not clear since Interaction 2 student-student got 0% of the frequency described by the students surveyed.

Table 4.11
Types of Interaction

Interaction	Types	Frequency	Relative frequency	Cumulative frequency	Cumulative relative frequency
Student-teacher	1	6	30%	6	30%
Student-student	2	0	0%	6	30%
Teacher-student	3	14	70%	20	100%
Total		20	100%		



Barchart for Types of Interaction

2. I think this (these) activity (activities) promotes communicative competence

Regarding the interaction activities that students consider could promote communicative competence, it is important to notice that all the activities were checked by the students at least one time. As shown in Table 4.12, codes F, Code H and L, obtained the highest percentages from the complete checklist. Code F, group work and Code H, Cued narrative dialogues, belong to the activities performed by the students with a continuous guidance from the teacher and Code L, jigsaw activities, belongs to the activities performed by the students with a slightly presence from the teacher.

Code A, Code B, Code D, Code G and Code J, Teacher questions, Teacher feedback, turn allocation, small group talk and discussion debates, received a medium average percentage. Among these activities 3 belongs to the activities performed by the teacher, 1 to the activities performed for both students and teacher, and 1 to the activities performed by students meaning that the Interaction Type 1 is considered to be important to improve oral skill.

It could be said that students considered that the three types of interaction should take place in an English instruction in order to promote communicative competence in the Language Center, even in a medium average.

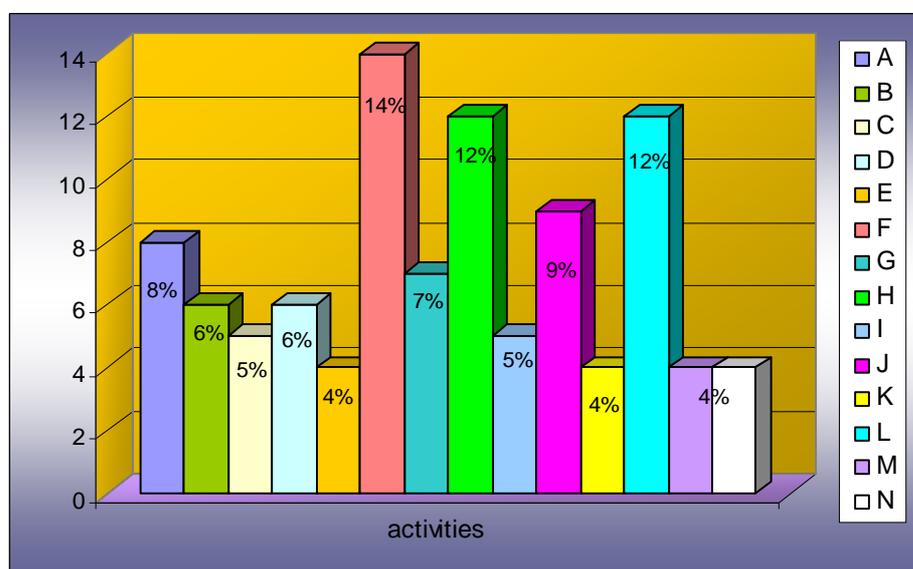
According to the students' perceptions about the activities that promote communicative competence, the codes C, E, I, K, M, and N, teacher explanation, small group talk, games, interviews, problem-solving activities and simulations, obtained the lowest score. As done before, the activities are considered taking into account the three relations in interaction having 2 activities performed by the teacher, 1 performed by the students with a continuous guidance from the teacher and 3 activities performed by the students with a with a slightly presence from the teacher.

As a result, it would be important to notice that the category of interaction activities which students considered are the most suitable for the promotion of the communicative competence is the activities performed by the students with a continuous guidance from the teacher with the 42%. The remaining percentages are divided into 25% for the activities performed mostly by the teacher and 33% for the activities performed by the students with a slightly presence from the teacher.

Table 4.12
Interaction activities list

Activity	Code	Frequency	Relative frequency	Cumulative frequency	Cumulative relative frequency
Teacher questions	A	8	8%	8	8%
Teacher feedback	B	6	6%	14	14%
Teacher explanation	C	5	5%	19	19%
Turn allocation	D	6	6%	25	25%
Small group talk	E	4	4%	29	29%
Group work	F	14	14%	43	43%
Role play	G	7	7%	50	50%

demonstration					
Cued narrative dialogue	H	12	12%	62	62%
Games	I	5	5%	67	67%
Discussions/debates	J	9	9%	76	76%
Interviews	K	4	4%	80	80%
Jigsaw activities	L	12	12%	92	92%
Problem-solving activities	M	4	4%	96	96%
Simulations	N	4	4%	100	100%
Total		100	100%		



Bar chart for interaction activities

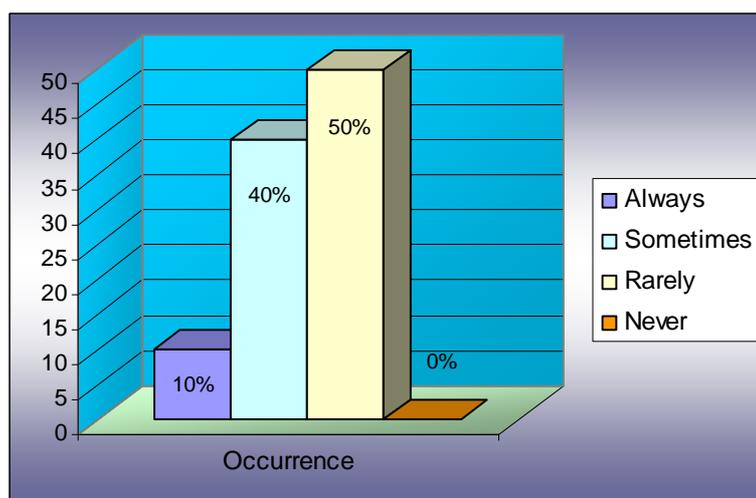
3. How often does your teacher apply these activities in class?

Concerning the frequency on the use of interaction activities in the classroom selected by the teacher and as it can be seen on Table 4.13, half of the students consider that these activities are rarely used. It is clear the existence of the interaction activities since none of the students consider the activities are never used. Besides, less than the half of the students said interaction activities or techniques are sometimes used which could be considered positive and finally only the 2% of the students considered these types of

interaction activities are always used in the classroom during an English instruction being this a really low percentage.

Table 4.13
Occurrence of interaction activities

Occurrence of interaction activities	Frequency	Relative frequency	Cumulative frequency	Cumulative relative frequency
Always	2	10%	2	10%
Sometimes	8	40%	10	50%
Rarely	10	50%	20	100%
Never	0	0%	20	100%
Total	20	100%		



Barchart for interaction activities

4. *I think using these activities in the English instruction will promote communicative competence in the oral skill*

Table 4.14 exhibits the results concerning the effectiveness in the use of interaction activities to promote communicative competence in the oral skill. Most of the students tend to agree strongly with the statement, being the 70% of the total responses. The 20 percentage of the students' surveyed show to disagree with the statement and only a low

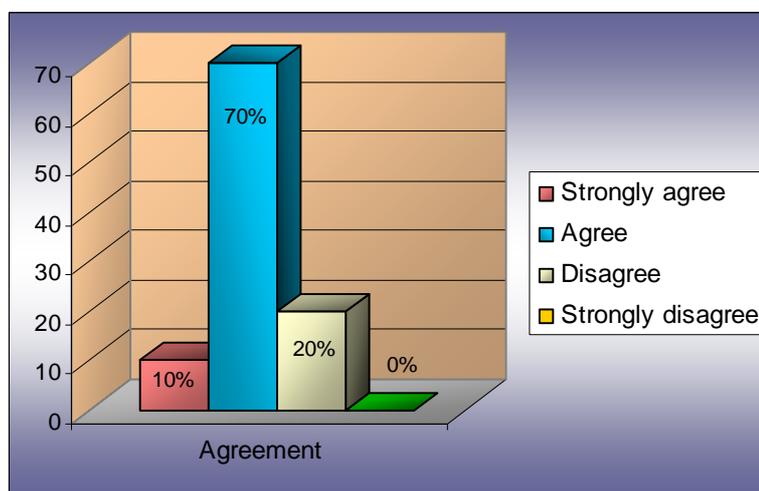
percentage (2%) do not agree with the effectiveness when using interaction activities to promote communicative competence.

It could be said that students consider the use of these strategies involving interaction as an important tool for improving oral skills and communicative competence since none of them disagree strongly.

Table 4.14

Agreement on the promotion of the communicative competence

Agreement	Frequency	Relative frequency	Cumulative frequency	Cumulative relative frequency
Strongly agree	2	10%	2	10%
Agree	14	70%	16	80%
Disagree	4	20%	20	100%
Strongly disagree	0	0%	20	100%
Total	20	100%		



Barchart for the agreement on the promotion of the communicative competence

Students’ Questionnaire

Taking into account the information compiled into the different tables and barcharts about the 4 questions from both settings, English and French Program and Language Center, it is possible to notice that according to the students’ perceptions and exemplified in Table 4.15, the type of interaction 3, Teacher-student, is the type with the highest percentage between the respondents and that type 2 of interaction, student-student, did not received one single check among the students.

Besides, for question 2, “I think this (these) activity (activities) promotes communicative competence”, it is likely to say that both settings received similar responses for the three contexts in which the activities were classified, activities performed mostly by the teacher, activities performed by the students with a continuous guidance from the teacher, and activities performed by the students with a slightly presence from the teacher. Students considered all the activities are in some extent, present during the language instruction.

Table 4.15

Overall results for the students’ questionnaire

Question		English & French Program		Language Center	
		Frequency	Relative frequency	Frequency	Relative frequency
Question 1	Type 1	0	0%	6	30%
	Type 2	0	0%	0	0%
	Type 3	20	100%	14	70%
Question 2	Teacher	38	28.8%	25	25%
	Ts/Ss	54	40.8%	42	42%
	Student	40	30.3%	33	33%
Question 3	Always	2	10%	2	10%
	Sometimes	16	80%	8	40%
	Rarely	2	10%	10	50%
Question 4	Strongly agree	8	40%	2	10%
	Agree	10	50%	14	70%
	Disagree	2	10%	4	20%

Another important aspect regarding the questionnaire is that respondents from the English and French Program scored the use of these activities in the classroom in a higher fashion than the Language Center students, for instance, the university enrollees obtained a high average range of 90% against a medium average range of 50% from the other setting.

To end with, the level of agreement over the statement “I think using these activities in the English instruction will promote communicative competence in the oral skill” showed a similar percentage in the two settings being the English and French Program the one which presented a higher average range with the 90% of the respondents placing the statement in a high frequency value alongside the 80% of the Language Center students placing the statement in the same frequency value.

Strategy Inventory for Language Learning – SILL

Method

The final data gathering instrument called the SILL – Strategy Inventory for Language Learning - Rebecca Oxford's classification of language learning strategies, Part F for Social Strategies was also implemented as a resource to find out relevant data in this research project. The structured survey consisted of 6 social strategies [1) If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again; 2) I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk; 3) I practice English with other students; 4) I ask for help from English speakers; 5) I ask questions in English; and 6) I try to learn about the culture of English speakers], and 5 different frequencies from never or almost never true of me to always or almost always true of me. The researchers surveyed students from the third semester of the English and French Program and the third level of the Language Center.

The objective of this instrument was to describe the use of Social Strategies as a tool for improving the communicative competence in the oral skill as well as the frequency in the use of these strategies. As a starting point, the results were organized in categories and statistics that were lately analyzed through tables and barcharts for a better understanding of the information, then a comparison between the two settings was carried out to finally describe which social strategy is the most used among the population surveyed which might answer the question “*Do learners use social learning strategies as a tool for improving the communicative competence in the EFL classroom?*?”. For doing this and as Figure 2 shows, a scale displaying the frequency on the students' use of strategies was taken into account as follows: never or almost never used, generally not used, sometimes used, usually used and

always or almost always used. Once more, the frequency value was interpreted as low, medium and high averages.

Figure 4.2.

Chart for the frequency value interpretation

Score	Frequency value	Average
1.0 to 1.4	Never or almost never used	LOW
1.5 to 2.4	Generally not used	
2.5 to 3.4	Sometimes used	MEDIUM
3.5 to 4.4	Usually used	HIGH
4.5 to 5.0	Always or almost always used	

Results

English and French Program

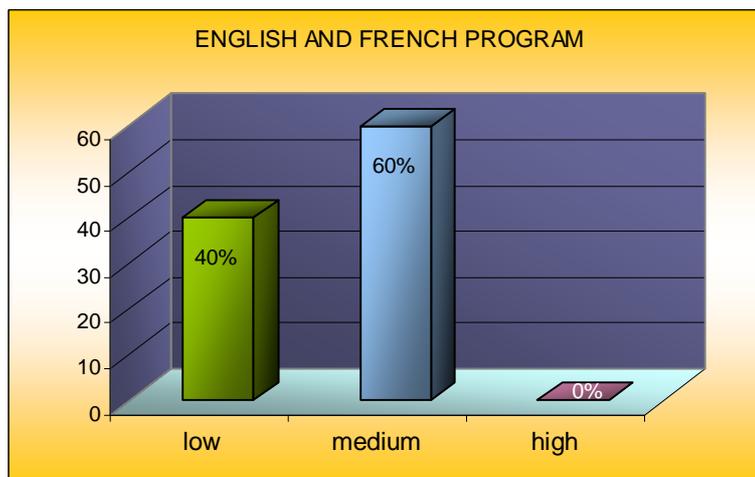
Regarding the results from the English and French students’ responses on the use of social strategies, it is likely to say that more than half of the population surveyed (60%) indicated a medium average range with a frequency of sometimes used; the results also revealed that 40% of the students scored a low average range, this is, 10% with a frequency of never or almost never used and 30% for generally not used; finally, none of the students marked a high average range in the use of these strategies during the English instruction.

Table 4.16 sums up the information in this way:

Table 4.16

Use of Social Strategies

Average	Value	Frequency	Relative frequency	Cumulative frequency	Cumulative relat. freq.
LOW	Never or almost never used	2	10%	2	10%
	Generally not used	6	30%	8	40%
MEDIUM	Sometimes used	12	60%	20	100%
HIGH	Usually used	0	0%	20	100%
	Always or almost always used	0	0%	20	100%
Total		20	100%		



Barchart for the use of Social Strategies

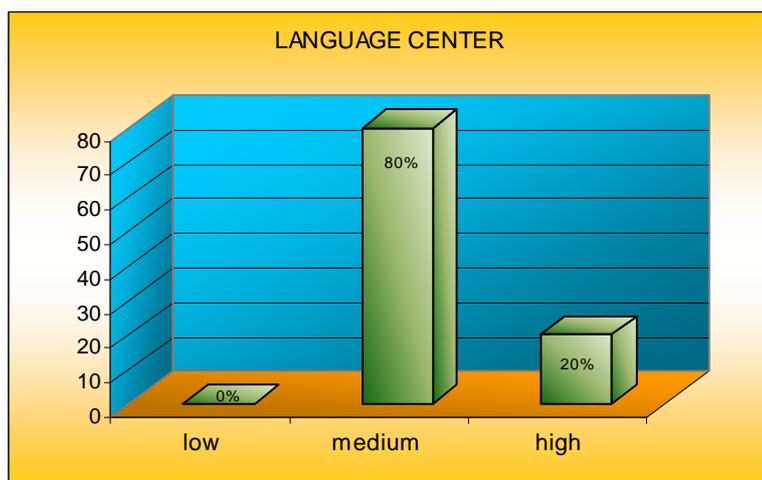
Language Center

Table 4.17 expresses the information exhibited by the Language Center students' responses: a percentage of 20 in the use of social strategies, a high average range divided into 10% for usually used and 10% for always or almost always used. It is important to notice that none of the students scored a low average range which means that the remaining population, 80% of the respondents scored a medium average range with a frequency of sometimes used.

Table 4.17

Use of Social Strategies

Average	Value	Frequency	Relative frequency	Cumulative frequency	Cumulative relative frequency
LOW	Never or almost never used	0	0%	0	0%
	Generally not used	0	0%	0	0%
MEDIUM	Sometimes used	16	80%	16	80%
HIGH	Usually used	2	10%	18	90%
	Always or almost always used	2	10%	20	100%
Total		20	100%		



Barchart for the use of Social Strategies

Use of Social Strategies

According to the percentages showed in the results and in Table 4.18 from both settings, English and French Program and Language Center, the social strategies are more commonly used in the instruction given in the Language Center since there was not a low average range meanwhile the English and French Program fell back on the low average range with almost the half of the examinees.

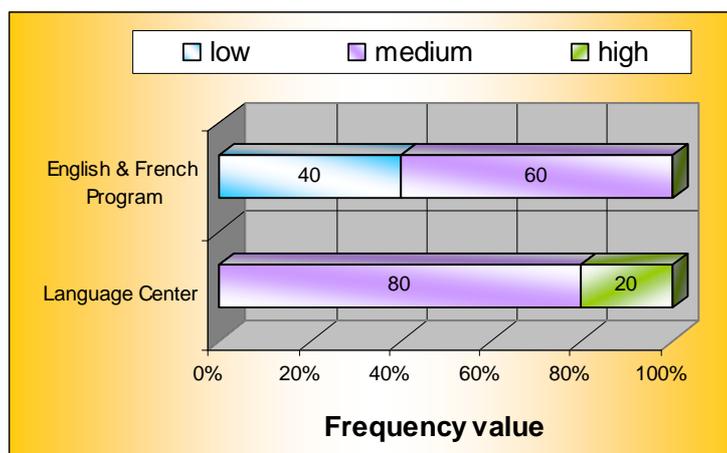
On the contrary, the English and French Program did not exhibit a high average range representing the use of social strategies, being the Language Center the only setting that showed this average.

In addition, it is clear that students in both settings know and use the social strategies at least in a medium average.

Table 4.19

Overall frequency values for the use of Social Strategies

Frequency value	English & French Program		Language Center	
	Frequency	Relative frequency	Frequency	Relative frequency
LOW	8	40%	0	0%
MEDIUM	12	60%	16	80%
HIGH	0	0%	4	20%



Barchart with the overall frequency values for the use of Social Strategies

In order to clarify the outcomes regarding the use of social strategies, it is important to mention the frequency on the use of each strategy.

Tables 4.19 and 4.20 illustrate the information obtained as follows: for the English and French Program the strategies usually used by students are concerned with the practice of English with their fellow classmates and the reliability on English speakers when it comes to ask for clarification or information. For students, the fact of knowing something about the culture of English speakers and asking the other speaker to slow down the quickness of their speech when there is not a clear understanding of the message given or to paraphrase it, represented a frequency of sometimes used; the strategies related to the expectancy from the

other speaker to correct them during the language exchange and the action of asking questions in English obtained a frequency of generally not used.

Table 4.19
Social Strategies performed by English and French Students

ENGLISH AND FRENCH STUDENTS		
1	I practice English with other students	USUALLY USED
2	I ask for help from English speakers	
3	I try to learn about the culture of English speakers	SOMETIMES USED
4	If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again	
5	I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk	GENERALLY NOT USED
6	I ask questions in English	

Surprisingly, the Language Center obtained a slightly different outcome being the expectancy of correction from the English speaker and the action of asking questions in the foreign language the strategies usually used by students; even though the strategies of knowing something about the target language culture and the action of asking the other to slow down the pace on his/her utterances got, as the English and French Program, a frequency of sometimes used, the strategies concerning the practice of English with other students and the confidence of asking for help from English speakers received a frequency of generally not used.

Table 4.20
Social Strategies performed by Language Center Students

LANGUAGE CENTER STUDENTS		
1	I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk	USUALLY USED
2	I ask questions in English	
3	I try to learn about the culture of English speakers	SOMETIMES USED
4	If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again	
5	I practice English with other students	GENERALLY NOT USED
6	I ask for help from English speakers	

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

During the research process, a problematic situation was analyzed in order to highlight the importance of Interaction in the EFL classroom as a way to promote the communicative competence in the oral skill; this analysis was conducted through the implementation of various data collection techniques, the background information, the researchers own findings, and the elements which compound a descriptive research study. Consequently, this final chapter aims to conclude the information collected and to give the appropriate suggestions or recommendations for pedagogical purposes.

Conclusions

Interaction is a way to help students to develop not only their language oral skills but also their social skills since they express their knowledge, feelings and thoughts through the context and the culture around them; the language is just a tool to do this. Therefore, the cognoscitive theory loses its importance against the social cognoscitive theory. In this sense, the learning conditions surrounding the student play an important role in the foreign language teaching-learning process. (Schunk, 1997)

Through the research process it was possible to state the existence of three types of interaction (student-teacher, student-student, and teacher-student), a remarkable difference with other researches which only considered the interactions between teacher-student and student-teacher. Student-student interaction promotes autonomous learning among students and improves the communicative competence, the ultimate goal attached to the foreign language teaching-learning process.

Concerning interaction activities, the activities which represent the type of interaction explained above (discussions/debates, interviews, jigsaw activities, problem-solving activities and simulations) make the students to use social learning strategies in

order to ease the communication with their peers. However, these activities and this type of interaction have few opportunities during the language instruction hindering the autonomous and cooperative learning among students who could not share the same level of language but actually share the same social and cultural characteristics.

Regarding the types of interaction student-teacher and teacher-student it is possible to state that students and teachers recognize its importance and usefulness inside the English class but understand that those interactions do not appear spontaneously most of the time; it is the teacher who pulls the trigger in every language activity or task leaving the students behind his/her initiative role and making the development of the communicative competence a difficult process.

As a result, the more a student uses interaction activities in the English class, the more familiarized with the target language he/she will be.

On the one hand, it is also possible to state that the type of interaction mostly used inside the EFL classroom is the interaction type 3, teacher-student. What it could be inferred is that teachers are continuously seen as the axis of the English instruction; students rely on the teachers' preparation, planning and execution of the subject, they expect the teacher to make the proper decisions according to his/her knowledge and ability to teach the foreign language. On the other hand, for the university and Language Center students it is common to accept the teacher-centered instruction though they might consider autonomy as a remarkable aspect when learning a language. But despite of the role of autonomy, it is also possible to assert that in our specific context it is very difficult for a student to work on his/her own learning except for those tasks, activities, or evaluations that actually receive a score. That might be the reason why types 1 and 2 of interaction, student-teacher and student-student, received the lowest occurrence in the use during the research process.

In the communicative process between the teacher and the student, many factors, activities and mechanisms are used to facilitate this teaching-learning dynamic. Therefore, the student needs to support this dynamic through the implementation of learning strategies; concerning interaction, social strategies are seen as the tools which help the student to a self-improvement when coping with an oral task. Thus, it is likely to affirm as proven in the research findings that the students know and use the social strategies at some extent even though they have not been taught about them.

Looking at the overall results when comparing the two settings involved in the research process, it is also remarkable to avow some differences amid them.

Firstly, it is possible to state according to the students' perceptions in both settings that in the English and French Program the interaction activities are more frequently used than in the Language Center. Secondly, in the Language Center the Social Learning Strategies are more frequently used than in the English and French Program. Finally, what it might be concluded is that students seem to need more social strategies when there is a lack of interaction activities in order to promote their communicative competence.

Recommendations

The main pedagogical purpose of this descriptive study regarding interaction was to compel both university students and teachers to become aware of the importance of using interaction activities and social learning strategies inside the English instruction in the EFL classroom.

As a starting point, the use of interaction activities is a reality actually happening in the classroom; teachers implement these activities to encourage students speak in the target language in order to check the understanding of a given explanation about certain language

topic, but lack on promoting a continuous language learning progress over time, mainly because the activities tend to fill some spaces during the two hours class; after this, the activity itself is probably forgotten. Then, university teachers should promote the communicative competence in every step of the language instruction and giving interaction activities a more remarkable role is a good start.

Besides, the role of a teacher inside the classroom is seen as the axis of the teaching-learning process, but students need to become aware of the implications of being more active participants in their own learning. Teachers should foster students to get involved in this process and to give them more opportunities for doing so. It is not possible to expect the teacher to be the only responsible when coping with the learning of a language; both students and teachers should be familiarized with the background of student-teacher and student-student interactions and should integrate these concepts to the language classroom.

Finally, it is important to pinpoint the use of social learning strategies before, during, and after the English teaching. As proven in the research findings, students know and use the strategies but need a more adequate instruction about them in order to become more independent learners of the target language. Therefore, teachers should carry out some strategy training guidelines inside the language classroom and students should implement them aiming to a better knowledge of their learning preferences, attitudes, aptitudes, and self-motivation regarding the teaching and learning of a foreign language.

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APPENDIX

ANNEX 1: OBSERVATION FORMAT

UNIVERSITY OF NARIÑO

LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGES DEPARTMENT

ENGLISH AND FRENCH PROGRAM

INTERACTION IN THE EFL CLASSROOM TO PROMOTE COMMUNICATIVE

COMPETENCE IN THE ORAL SKILL

OBSERVATION FORMAT

This observation will be developed to know what types of interaction occur inside the EFL classroom, how frequently these interactions occur and what activities are used in class to promote the communicative competence in the oral skill by using checklists in a common, natural and unstructured setting.

Teacher: _____ Semester: _____

INTERACTION TYPES	OCCURRENCE	TOTAL
TYPE 1: TEACHER-STUDENT		
TYPE 2: STUDENT-STUDENT		
TYPE 3: STUDENT-TEACHER		

INTERACTION ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

(ORAL SKILL)

ACTIVITY	OCCURRENCE	TOTAL
Teacher questions		
Teacher feedback		
Teacher explanation		
Turn allocation		
Small group talk		
Group work		
Role play demonstration		
Cued narrative dialogue		
Games		
Discussions/debates		
Interviews		
Jigsaw activities		
Problem-solving activities		
Simulations		

Based on Tsui's studies on classroom interaction in *Introducing Classroom Interaction* (1995, p. 13, 14, 16, 19) and on Klippel's Practical Resource Book, cited in Brown's *Teaching by Principles* (2007, p. 339)

ANNEX 2: STUDENT'S QUESTIONNAIRE

UNIVERSITY OF NARIÑO

LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGES DEPARTMENT

ENGLISH AND FRENCH PROGRAM

INTERACTION IN THE EFL CLASSROOM TO PROMOTE COMMUNICATIVE

COMPETENCE IN THE ORAL SKILL

STUDENT'S QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire has been only created for research purposes. It is anonymous and it has the objective of finding out information related to the interaction in the EFL classroom to promote communicative competence in the oral skill. Your answers will be very valuable in reaching this objective.

I. OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

1. What is your personal definition of interaction?

2. What types of interaction occur in your English instruction?

3. Are you familiar with the concept of communicative competence? YES _____ NO _____

If so, do you think interaction and the effective use of the types of interaction could promote communicative competence in the oral skill? Why?

4. Which interaction activities does your teacher tend to use in class to promote communicative competence?

II. MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Mark with and "X" the choice that best completes the idea depending on your preference

QUESTION	Type 1: teacher-student	Type 2: student- student	Type 3: student- teacher	
1. What types of interaction do you think most occur during your English instruction?				
2. I think this (these) activity (activities) promotes communicative competence	Teacher questions			
	Teacher feedback			
	Teacher explanation			
	Turn allocation			
	Small group talk			
	Group work			
	Role play			
	Cued narrative dialogue			
	Games			
	Discussions/debates			
	Interviews			
	Jigsaw activities			
Problem-solving activities				
Simulations				
3. How often does your teacher apply these activities in class?	always	sometimes	rarely	never
4. I think using these activities in the English instruction will promote communicative competence in the oral skill	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!!!

ANNEX 3: STUDENTS' SURVEY

UNIVERSITY OF NARIÑO

LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGES DEPARTMENT

ENGLISH AND FRENCH PROGRAM

INTERACTION IN THE EFL CLASSROOM TO PROMOTE COMMUNICATIVE
COMPETENCE IN THE ORAL SKILL

STUDENTS' SURVEY

This survey is a validate tool made in 1990 by Rebecca Oxford, a structured questionnaire called the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) that has been systematically designed based on Oxford's learning strategy classification; the SILL Version 7.0 consists of 50 multiple choice questions classified into types of strategies, Part A for Memory strategies, Part B for Cognitive strategies, Part C for Compensation strategies, Part d for Metacognitive strategies, Part E for Affective strategies and Part F for Social strategies. For this research paper the Part F of the SILL will be taken into account as a validate tool for gathering relevant information regarding social interaction in the EFL classroom.

Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)

Version 7.0 (ESL/EFL)

© R. Oxford, 1989.

Directions

This form of the STRATEGY INVENTORY FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING (SILL) is for students of English as a second or foreign language. Please read each statement and write the response (a, b, c, d, or e) on the blank.

- a. Never or almost never true of me
- b. Usually not true of me
- c. Somewhat true of me
- d. Usually true of me
- e. Always or almost always true of me

Part F

- 1. If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.
- 2. I ask English speakers to correct me when I talk.
- 3. I practice English with other students.
- 4. I ask for help from English speakers.
- 5. I ask questions in English.
- 6. I try to learn about the culture of English speakers.

Part F

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 6. _____ |

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!!!

Source: *Language Learning strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know.*
Oxford, R. (1990)