



Investigating the Role of Classroom Interaction on Developing Learners' Communicative Competence

(A case study of secondary schools at Omdurman Locality)

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Abstract

This research aims at investigating the role of classroom interaction on improving learners' communicative competence. The researchers adopted the descriptive analytical method. The questionnaire was used primary tool for data collection, it distributed to (40) English teachers of secondary schools at Omdurman locality .This research used the statistically package of social science (SPSS) program to analyze and verify the hypothesis of the research. The results showed that: Interaction is considered as an important strategy in languages learning and help students to improve their communicative competence, it keep learners active in the class room, it also considered as an important strategy in languages learning. The researcher recommended that communicative competence should be developed by teachers' role inside the classroom.

Key words: Communicative Approach, Speaking Skill, Classroom Interaction.

المستخلص

هدف هذا البحث الى تقصى دور التفاعل الصففي في تحسين الكفاءة التواصلية لدي المتعلمين ، تبني الباحثون المنهج الوصفي التحليلي، استخدم الباحثون الإستبانة كأداة أولية لجمع البيانات، حيث تم توزيع الإستبانة على (40) من معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية بمدارس المرحلة الثانوية بمدينة أمدرمان، و لتحليل البيانات استخدم الباحثون



برامج الحزم الإحصائية للعلوم الاجتماعية (SPSS) لتحليل وتحقيق فرضية الدراسة، وأظهرت نتائج هذه الدراسة أن التفاعل يعتبر إستراتيجية مهمة في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية ويساعد الطلاب في تحسين كفاءتهم التواصلية، وأوصى الباحثون بالآتي: ينبغي أن تطور الكفاءة التواصلية دور المعلم داخل الفصل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المنهج الوصفي، مهارة الكلام، التفاعل الصفي.

1- Introduction

In the field of second language a question, interaction has long been considered important in language learning. Interaction is a way of learning in general and developing the language skills in particular. The term interaction is made up of two morphemes namely “inter and action it is a mutual or reciprocal action or influence .In English language teaching interaction is used to indicate the language or action used to maintain conversation, teach or interact with participants involved in teaching and learning in the classroom. English has four skills , listening , speaking , reading and writing skills students believe that English only consist of two main parts ‘Grammar and vocabulary ‘ basically reading and writing , even the educational system supports this notion through dull curricula , teaching methods and exams that only major reading and writing . To this listening and speaking skills must be focus on. The term of communicative competence is comprised of two words, the combination of which means competence to communicate .This simple lexicon semantically analysis uncovers the fact that the central word in the research communicative competence is the word competence. Competence is one of the most controversial term in the field of applied linguistics the theory of syntax viewed as a classic distinction between competence the monolingual speaker – listener's knowledge of language and performance or mutual use of language in real situation.

2- Statement Of The problem

The researchers from their own experiences in teaching English as a foreign language observed that the syllabus designers at secondary schools level does not involve the four English language skills, they focus on reading and writing and neglect listening



and speaking skills .the curriculum does not suitable for the level of students and the vocabulary does not sequence. In addition, the students lack of interaction and motivation in the classroom.

3- Objectives of the Research

To identify how classroom interaction is lead to a better achievement in communicative competence.

4- Question of the Research

To what extent can classroom interaction lead to better achievement in communicative competence?

5- Hypothesis of the Research

The classroom interaction is lead to a better achievement in communicative competence.

6- The Significance of the Research

The benefits of this research for many categories for teachers in order to aware of the problem of communicative competence and find what to do to overcome the problem. For learners can benefit from the findings of this research in order to improve communicative competence. For syllabus designers it should shed light them to involve the four language skills in spine series.

7- Literature Review

The Communicative Approach

With the importance of English on today's world .teachers look for a significant method to meet the demand of learners to use this language for communication. The communicative approach or (C L D) is considered as best approach for such purpose. It is mainly related to the idea that "language learning will take care of itself" (Harmer, 2001, p.70) a deep understanding of CLT theory and its implication for classroom. Practice is very important for both learners and teachers, since it aims at helping learner to use the target language for communication. Lindsay and knight (2006) say that C L T appeared by the end of 1960 and continued to evolve. Today, it is not considered as a method but as an approach learning for teaching based on idea that language learning means learning how to use the language to



achieve a better communication inside the classroom. C L T developed because of limitation of the previous method, it is mainly focuses on the ability to communicate and interact which was absent in other methods. Harmer, (2001) also makes the important point that learners are always in need to be exposed to language and be given opportunities to use this language in order to develop their knowledge and skills The aim of this method is to develop the communicative competence since the learner is regarded as the general part of the learning process. (Hughes, 2002, p.24).

Interaction as Type of C L T Frameworks

Many researchers have investigated about classroom communication that involves interaction; they showed the importance of interactions in building knowledge and improving skills. For All Wright (1984) it is important to keep learner active in the classroom, which means reducing the amount of teacher talk in the classroom and increasing the learner's talk time. Naturally, they will talk to each other through pairs or groups where each learner gets his time to talk. teacher usually seek to move on from getting learners talking to each other to the more complex problems of getting them communicating , and that is result of what is called the communicative approach ,C.L.T relies counters. Teachers and learners then should distinguish between interaction and communication; they should not consider them as synonym, in spite of the fact that many of them consider that communication refers only to people interacting with each other.

Definitions of Interaction

According to Hadfield and Hadfield (2008, P.105) in their book introduction to teaching English, the word interaction involves more than just putting a message together. it involves also responding to other people . this means choosing the language that is appropriate for the person you are talking to (interlocutor) it means also ,responding to what others say , talking in conversation encouraging people to speak , expressing interests ,changing the topic , asking people to repeat or explain what they say and soon in order to facilitate communication among them . In this sense, Nunnan (1991, P51) states that “learning to speak in a second or foreign language will be facilitated when learners actively engaged in



attempting to communicate”. In addition to the previous definitions of interaction All Wright (1984, p.156) has defined of interaction as “that fundamental fact of pedagogy and that successful pedagogy involves the successful management of classroom interaction” as quoted (Ellis, 1977, P173) from that quotation, we can notice that classroom interaction is one of the primary ways in which learners obtain data.

The Role of Classroom Interaction

According to Long (1996) argued that interaction plays a key role in developing second language since primary source of data for learners is taken during a meaning full interaction with a more competent speaker , this mean that interaction is considered as the only source which provides learners with opportunities in order to control the input . In addition, interaction makes the learners be able to test their communicative success through exchanging information with teacher or among the students themselves (as stated in Leyster, Classroom interaction then, contributes to language development by providing target language practice with opportunities through designing classroom interaction activities that makes learners use the target language. this since, little wood (1981, P.16) advocated that there is progression from “pre-communication” to communicative activities which involves many from of interactive language practice .this means that practicing this means that practicing such activities should progressively related to the “real life” language use

Communicative Competence

For many learners, learning a foreign language is a matter of building grammatical sentences. They believe the linguistic competence is the key to develop in foreign language. Chomsky (1957) (quoted in Brumfit, 1984, P.24) provided a definition to language as asset of sentences. Most linguistic conceder it as a valid but they show that we need to look for more practice in language and make a distinction between structure and function. As many scholars, Dell Hymes agreed on the fact that learner a second language is not a matter of knowing how to communicate using these rule.

Sauvignon distinguishes, as does Chomsky, between competence and performance, with competence being defined as “A presumed underling ability and performance as



the overt clarification of that ability” (Savignon, 1997, P.15) in other terms, competence is the speaker hearer’s knowledge of the language and performance is actual use of language.

However, only performance is observable, and it is only through performance that competence can be develop, and evaluated. The notion of communicative competence describes our knowledge of language and how to operate with it.

Sauvignon (1972,P.8) asserted “communicative competence maybe defined as the ability to function in the truly communicative setting that is in a dynamic exchange in which linguistic competence must adapt itself to the total informational input, both linguistic and paralinguistic of one of more interlocutors” (Canale 8 swain 1980, Cazden, john 8 Hymes 1972) they conceived communicative competence in terms of four components : grammatical competence sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence .

Grammatical Competence

Grammatical competence is involves the accurate use of words and structures concentration on grammatical competence only, however, will not provide the learner with the ability to interpret or produce the second language expressions appropriately. (Yule, George .2006.P.169). Brown (2007) stated that the grammatical competence is the ability to produce and understand correct from in a language including the different aspects of the language syntax, phonology and lexicology

Sociolinguistic Competence

This type of competence helps the students to be “contextually appropriate” (Hedge, 2000, P.50). It is the ability to say the appropriate things in certain sociolinguistic competence has to do with “An understanding to social context in which language is used”. The students have to know the appropriate utterance for each situation.

Discourse Competence

According to Brown (2007, P.220) discourse competence is “the ability to connect sentences to from meaningful whole out of series of utterances” in other term,



discourse competence deals with the ability to understand individual messages and to recognize all the discourse feature. Moreover, it is ability to start, enter, contribute to, and end conversation, and the ability to do this a consistent and coherent manner.

Strategic Competence

For Canale & Swain (1980) (cited in hedge, 2007, P.15) strategic competence is: “how to cope an authentic communicative situation and how to keep communicative channel open” thus, it the ability to communicate effectively and repair problems caused by communication arise. It is the set of communicative strategies which help compensate for failures in communication, in respect of linguistic and sociolinguistic competence.

To develop communicative skills, the learner has to acquire set of communicative rules which lead him\her to be competent speaker. In the acquisition of communicative rules which make him\her a proficient and competent speaker of English, he\she have to know in addition to the to the basic structural principles of the language how to use the sentence in performing acts of communication for conveying meaning .

In the need for the communicative approach, most research agree on the need for the communicative competence to support learning and the make the classroom interaction successful. Johnson (1995, P .161) claimed that “classroom communicative competence is essential in order for the second language students to participate and learn from their classroom experience.

Speaking Skill

Speaking is skill in producing oral language. It is not only an utterance but also a tool of communication it occurs when two or more people interact with other aiming a maintain social relationship between them. Brown, (1994, P .103).

Thus, speaking is an interactive process of constructive meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information. By speaking with others, we are able to interact with each other inside or outside the classroom. Speaking activity is any interactions between teacher and students to communicate well. Student must have a good capability and self-confidence.



Definition of Speaking

Speaking is a basic skill that language learner should master with the other language skills. It is defined as complex process of sending receiving messages through the use of verbal expressions, but it also involves nonverbal symbols such gestures and facial expressions. Hedge(2000, P.261) defines speaking as “a skill by which they [people] are judged while first impressions are being formed” that is to say speaking skill is an important which deserves more attention in both first and second language because it reflects people’s thoughts and personalities.

Elements of Speaking

To speak the second language fluently and accurately, learners need to be able to know some elements which are very important to develop this skill. Harmer (2001, 269) mentions these elements which refer to the language features that learners should have knowledge about. In addition to the process of the language and information in the same time when interlocutor interacts with them.

Language features

The following features are necessary for an effective speaking. Connected speech: this ability needs from the speaker of English to produce more connected sounds not only separated phonemes, this sound may be modified, omitted, added or weakened in the connected speech. Expressive devices: English native speakers use effectively the phonological rules which refer to the pitch, stress, volume, speed with the use of nonverbal means. These devices help them to convey their intended meaning. Students, then need to have this ability of employing such devices if they want to be effective communication. Lexis and Grammar: when learners produce some language function, they often use the same lexical structures. The teacher’s role, is to provide them with different phrases which carry different functions so that they can use them in the different stages of communication with others Negotiation language: learners benefit a lot from the use of negotiation language, they often ask clarification when they are listening to others talk. So, the teachers have to provide them with the necessary expressions they need when they ask clarification from the other speakers. Learners also need



to well perform their utterances if they can seek to be understood and clear especially did not understand them. Harmer (2001, P.270).

Mental/Social Processing

The necessary processing skills of speaking are the following: Language processing: this refers to the ability of the learners/speakers to the language in their minds through putting it in coherent order so that the order interlocutors can understand it and get the intended messages. Speakers also should be able to retrieve words and phrases from their memories to use them where they are interacting with others.

Interacting with others : most of the speaking situations involve interaction between two or more interlocutors, that is to say an effective speaker need to be able to listen and understand other's talk then reacts through talking turns or keeping the others to do.

Information processing: this related to the ability of processing the information in the mind rapidly, I. e the time speakers get information, they should be ready to response to the other's talk. (Harmer, 2001, 271).

The Importance of Speaking

In the traditional approaches of language learning and teaching, the speaking skill was neglected in many classrooms, where the emphasis was mainly on reading and writing. The grammar translation method is one example, Richards and the Rodgers (2001) mention that "reading and writing are essential skills to be focused on however, little or no attention is paid to the skills of speaking and listing" In the communicative approach, speaking was given more important since oral communication involves speech where learners are expected interact verbally with other. Moreover, the teacher's talk will be reduced. That is to say learners are supported to talk more in the classroom. Speaking can help the students to develop their vocabulary and grammar; the students can express their personal feeling, opinion and ideas

Classroom Speaking Activities.

Role Play



In the role play the teacher asks the students to play different roles in different situations according to Byrne (1986) this activities encourage students to talk in real life and to act different roles as well as experience different situations (p.2).

Discussion

Discussion is the best way to evaluate learners' proficiency in the target language, it would be better if the teacher decides about the topic with his students in the session before the actual debates to give them chance to learn more about the topic. (Harmer, 2001).

Dialogue

Thornbury (2005) maintaining that " practicing dialogue has long history in language teaching since language is essentially dialogic in its use and any grammar structure or lexical area can be worked into dialogue" (p.72).thus dialogue is an important part in language teaching it gives EFL learners to practice the language.

Communication Games

This kind of games designed for the sake of provoke communication between the students, so that one student has to talk to other student in order to solve a puzzle (game) .the teacher here can bring these activities from radio and T.V games in to the classroom . For example, "In describe and draw" one student is asked to describe a picture and the other students should draw it. In "describe and arrange" one student describes a structure which is made for some objects and the other student organizes it and puts it in its right order without seeing the original picture. In contrast "in find the difference" two students have the same picture but one picture is slightly different from the other, and the students must find the difference between them without looking to each other's picture (Harmer, (2001, P.272).

Information Gap Activities

Information gap activities is a type of speaking task that is used where two speakers have different parts of information that make a whole image when relating them one part to another .this activity requires the students ability to fill gaps when there is missing of information and also the student's vocabulary and information in order to exchange it with other student because in most foreign language classes, the teacher



uses this kind of activities aiming at sharing information between students during a classroom oral course (Harmer, 1998, P.88).

Listening Skill

Listening as we know is the skill of understanding language. Listening is an essential skill, it is one of receptive skills, it involves students in capturing and understanding the input of English, reading the other receptive skills, listening is probably more difficult than reading because the students often recognize the written word more easily than recognize the spoken word. (Pollard, L, 2008, P.39). according to Kenneth , C.(1999) define listening as a key to conveying clear meaning , it is skill which we all need to better develop .listening is communication process and to be successful ,is an active process.

Types of Listening Skill

The sub skills associated with listening are:-

Listening for a Gist

This is where somebody listens in order to get the main idea of what is being said without hesitating over unknown words. For example, a native English speaker “would you like to join us for dinner one evening? In this instance, it is important that the listener to understand every word. If the words “join us” are new to the listener, we would hope that she/he can still recognize the statement as invitation. i. e s/he is listening for gist.

Students are often reluctant to practice listening for gist, many of them think it is essential to understand every word that is said. Many would argue that this is so, but it is essential for students to master the skill of listening for gist, if not, they will find it very difficult to converse with native speakers of English. Gist listening prepares students for real life situations. Gist listening activities include: asking students to listen to a recording and to tell you whether the speakers are generally in agreement or not or to tell you whether the speaker’s opinion is negative or positive. Students can merely listen to recording and tell the teacher what the main topic is.



Extensive Listening

This involves students listening for long periods and usually for pleasure. If student chooses to watch a film in English or to listen a recording of novel being read, this would be extensive listening. This type of listening is rarely practiced in the classroom. The teaching goal of this extensive listening practice is to provide students with a number of exercises to help them develop their listening skills as natural as possible.

Intensive listening Intensive listening invites the learner's to meet difficult characters especially when real people are talking in real life situations, interact speakers, interrupt them and why not asking for clarification this is what is named "live listening". "Live listening" is among the good way to carry out intensive listening. It can take many forms: such as teacher's reading aloud to classroom. Students dealing with this task listen to a natural spoken language of written passage. In addition to other enjoyable activities like storytelling, conversations and interviews .Harmer (1994).

Listening for Specific Information

This is where we listen to specific information and disregard the rest. It is one of the most common listening exercises. Students should see the questions or tasks they are going to answer before listening to the text. This process focusing on specific information that learners are looking for pollard, L, (2008, P .40).

Listening for Detailed Information

This is the type of listening students engage in when listening to a noncoms' in a real way station or when listening to directions in a street. Students are listening intensively in order to understand all information given.

Predicting

When we are listening in our mother tongue, we are constantly predicting what is going to come next. This action of predicting help us understand the thread of the discourse. Start encouraging your students to practice. You can even do this at low



levels. For example, if you are about to listen to recording of Richard Branson talking about his life, before listening you can ask students what things they think he'll mention. Possibilities include: sports, ballooning, virgin, etc. students can listen to check whether their predictions are correct. Pollard, L (2008, P.40).

Previous Studies

The first study Jihan Abbas Mohammed Osman¹ and Mahmoud Ali Ahmed in their study: **Investigating the Effect of EFL Cultural Expressions on Reinforcing FL Learners' Communicative Competence**. Published research. Sudan University of Science and Technology, the data were collected from a random sample of teachers of English working in both public and private schools in Omdurman. A questionnaire was used in order to collect the data. Descriptive analytical method was conducted so as to analyze the data. The analysis of the questionnaire has shown the following results: English language Cultural expressions play essential roles in reinforcing communicative competence among students at secondary schools. English language Cultural expressions provide excellent opportunities for the learners to express their personal opinions. Some activities like role-play are important for motivating students to practice speaking fluently.

The second study Alsadig Braima Saleem in his study: **Investigating the Use of Communication Strategies and Oral Competence among the Under Graduates**. Published research. Sudan University of Science and Technology. The researcher has adopted the descriptive analytical method as well as quantitative method. The questionnaire has been used as a primary tool for data collection. The sample of research comprises (30) teachers of English language from Sudan University of Science and Technology. The research has arrived at the following results, students are unable to use fluency oriented strategy to develop their oral communication competence, and moreover they are not engaged in negotiation with their interlocutors in oral communication competence. Teachers do not adopt lively topics for discussion to motivate students. In the light of results the researcher has come up



with the following recommendations, teachers should raise students' awareness about the importance of communications strategies to develop their oral competence.

8- Method of the Research

The researcher used the descriptive analytical method to conduct this research, questionnaire used as the primary tool from collecting the information of the research, the sample of this research consists of (40) teachers of English which was given open-ended questionnaire. The population of this research was drawn from some of Sudanese secondary schools English teachers at Omdurman locality.

9- Results and Discussion

Statement No (1) Class room interaction is an effective strategy for developing communicative competence.

Table No (1) Effective strategy for developing communication.

Valid	Frequency	%Percent
strongly agree	10	25%
Agree	20	50%
Neutral	6	15%
Disagree	3	7.5%
strongly disagree	1	2.5%
Total	40	100%

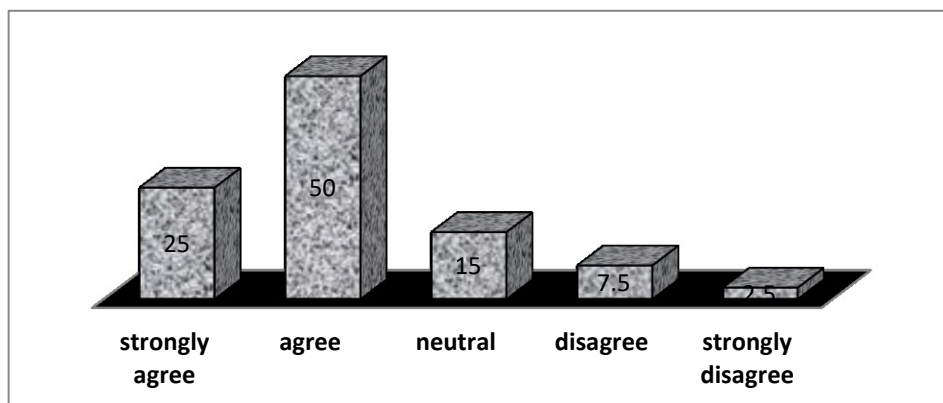




Figure No (1) Effective strategy for developing communication.

It is clear from the above table and figure No. (2) There are (10) persons in the research's sample with percentage (25.0%) strongly agreed with "class room interaction is an effective strategy for developing communicative competence ". There are (20) persons with percentage (50.0%) agreed with that, and (6) persons with percentage (15.0%) were not sure that, and (3) persons with percentage (7.5%) disagreed. and (1) persons with 2.5% are strongly disagree.

Statement No (2) Communicative Competence supports teaching and make classroom interaction successful.

Table No (2) Supporting teaching.

Valid	Frequency	%Percent
strongly agree	16	40%
Agree	17	42.5%
Neutral	6	15%
Disagree	1	2.5%
strongly disagree	0	0%
Total	40	100%

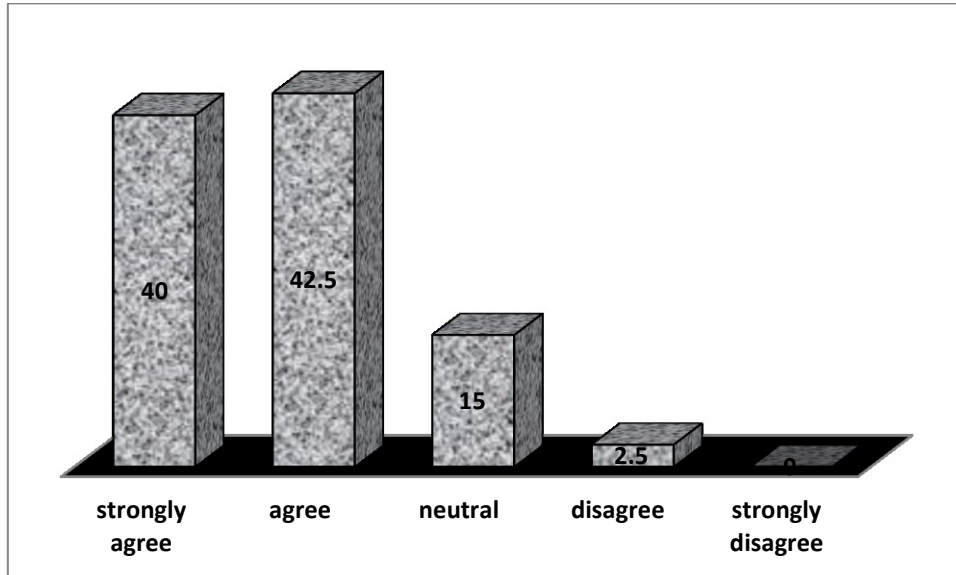


Figure No (2) Supporting teaching.

It is clear from the above table and figure No (2) there are (16) persons in the research's sample with percentage (40.0%) strongly agreed with "communicative competence supports teaching and make classroom interaction successful ". There are (17) persons with percentage (42.5%) agreed with that, and (6) persons with percentage (15.0%) were not sure that, and (1) persons with percentage (2.5%) disagreed. and (0) persons with 0.0% are strongly disagree.

Statement No (3) Interaction is considered as an important strategy in languages learning.

Table No (3) Important strategy in language learning.

Valid	Frequency	%Percent
strongly agree	10	25.0
Agree	26	65.0
Neutral	2	5.0
Disagree	0	0



strongly disagree	2	5.0
Total	40	100.0

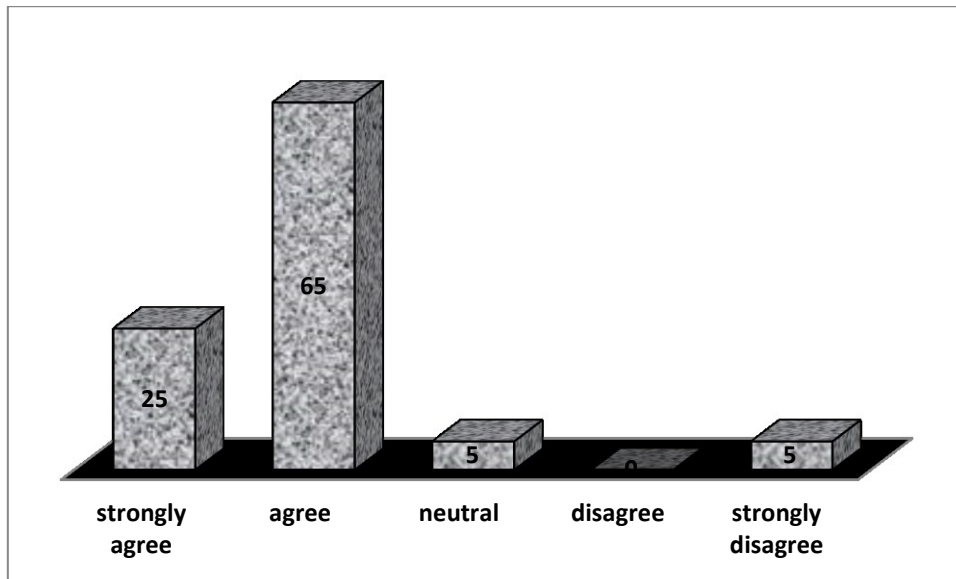


Figure No (3) Important strategy in language learning.

It is clear from the above table and figure No (3) there are (10) persons in the research's sample with percentage (25.0%) strongly agreed with "interaction is considered as an important strategy in languages learning ". There are (26) persons with percentage (65.0%) agreed with that, and (2) persons with percentage (5.0%) were not sure that, and (0) persons with percentage (0.0%) disagreed. and (1) persons with 2.5% are strongly disagree.

Statement No (4) Interaction keep learners active in the class room.

Table No (4) keep learning active.

Valid	Frequency	%Percent
strongly agree	18	45%
Agree	19	47.5%



Neutral	2	5%
Disagree	1	2.5%
strongly disagree	0	0%
Total	40	100%

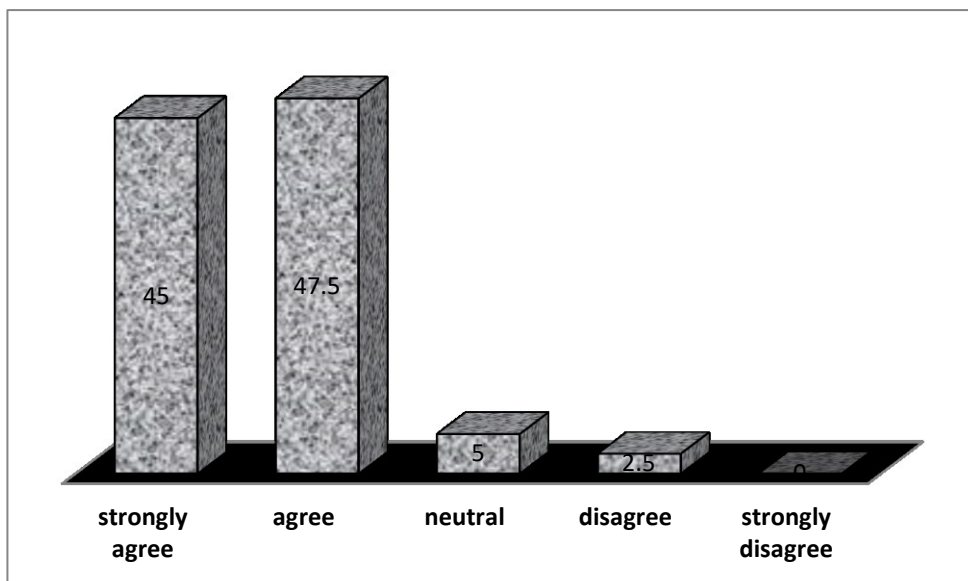


Figure No (4) keep learning active.

It is clear from the above table and figure No (4) there are (18) persons in the research's sample with percentage (45.0%) strongly agreed with "interaction keep learners active in the class room". There are (19) persons with percentage (47.5%) agreed with that, and (2) persons with percentage (5%) were not sure that, and (1) persons with percentage (2.5%) disagreed. and (0) persons with 5% are strongly disagree.

Statement No (5) Interaction can help student to improve their communicative competence.

Table No (5) Improving communicative competence.



Valid	Frequency	%Percent
strongly agree	16	40%
Agree	17	42.5%
Neutral	3	7.5%
Disagree	2	5%
strongly disagree	2	5%
Total	40	100%

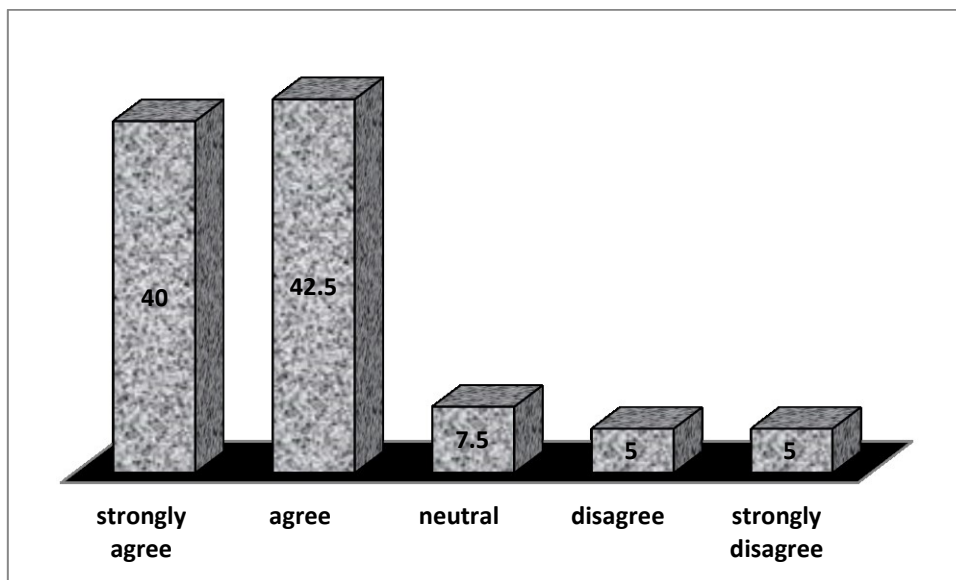


Figure No (5) Improving communicative competence.

It is clear from the above table and figure No. (.5) there are (16) persons in the research's sample with percentage (40.0%) strongly agreed with "interaction can help student to improve their communicative competence ". There are (17) persons with percentage (42.5%) agreed with that, and (3) persons with percentage (7.5%) were not sure that, and (2) persons with percentage (5.0%) disagreed. and (2) persons with 5% are strongly disagree

Statement No (6) Group work develops students' oral languages proficiency.



Table No (6) Developing students' oral language.

Valid	Frequency	%Percent
strongly agree	13	32.5%
Agree	23	57.5%
Neutral	0	0%
Disagree	2	5%
strongly disagree	2	5%
Total	40	100%

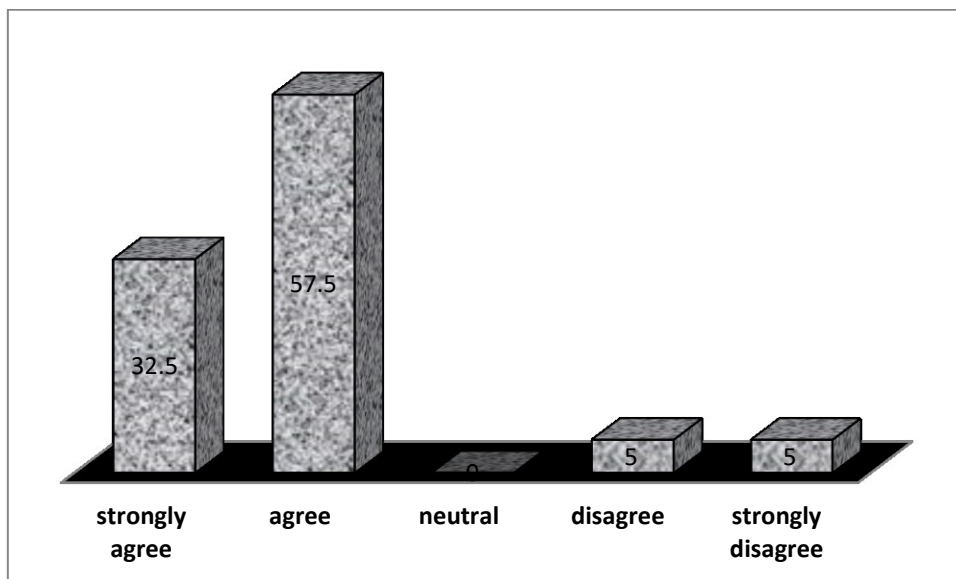


Figure No (6) Developing students' oral language.

It is clear from the above table and figure No. (6) There are (13) persons in the research's sample with percentage (32.5%) strongly agreed with “group work develops students' oral languages proficiency “. There are (23) persons with percentage (57.5%) agreed with that, and (0) persons with percentage (0.0%) were not sure that, and (2) persons with percentage (5%) disagreed. and (2) persons with 5% are strongly disagree.



Statement No. (7) Teachers can participate in developing communicative competence through interaction in the classroom.

Table No (7) Participating is developing communicative competence.

Valid	Frequency	%Percent
strongly agree	13	32.5%
Agree	20	50%
Neutral	2	5%
Disagree	2	5%
strongly disagree	3	7.5%
Total	40	100%

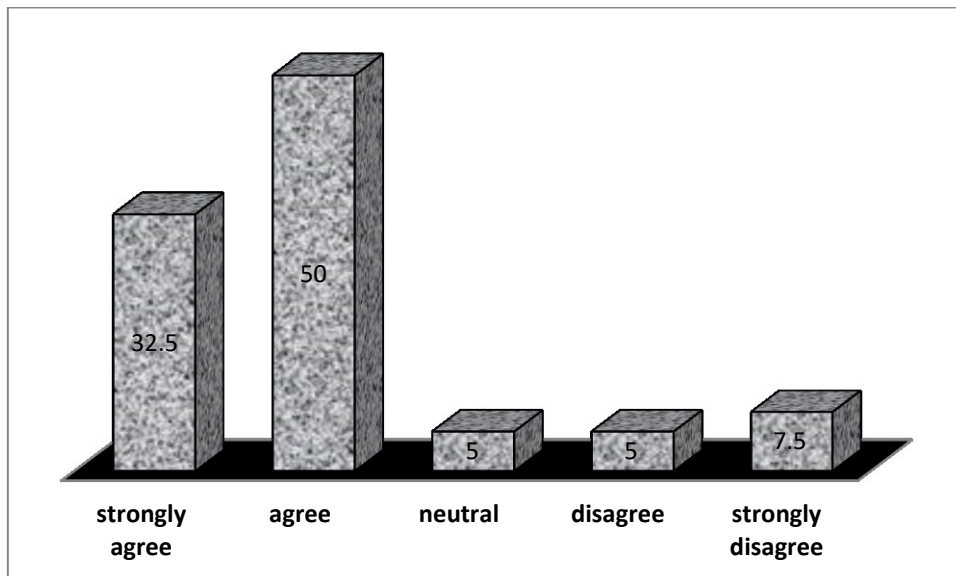


Figure No. (7) Participating is developing communicative competence.

It is clear from the above table and figure No (7) there are (13) persons in the research's sample with percentage (32.5%) strongly agreed with teachers can participate in developing communicative competence through interaction in the classroom ". There are (20) persons with percentage (50.0%) agreed with that, and (2)



persons with percentage (5.0%) were not sure that, and (2) persons with percentage (5%) disagreed. and (3) persons with 7.5% are strongly disagree.

10- Conclusion

The respondents, on whom the questionnaire was applied, were (40) respondents. The finding indicated that EFL interaction is considered as an important strategy in languages learning and help students to improve their communicative competence, group work develops students' oral languages proficiency, interaction keep learners active in the class room and interaction is considered as an important strategy in languages learning. The relation between the current research and pervious research both of them are used the descriptive approach in order to increases communicative competence of the students. There some differences between the current research and previous studies, this research was conducted for high school students, while the previous studies were at the university level. The researchers recommended that: Communicative competence should be developed by teachers' role inside the classroom.

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