

Original Article

Exploring attributes impeding students' classroom oral interactions and participation in EFL classes: Kotebe University of Education in Focus

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Abstract

This study explores the attributes impeding students' classroom oral interaction and participation in EFL classes. Descriptive survey research design was employed to carry out the study. The research included fifty (50) students out of 148 target population, which is 33.8%. It also involved twelve English language instructors out of 34 members using convenient sampling technique. As the student population was grouped into sections, stratified and random systematic sampling techniques were employed to determine the specific representative samples. Data were collected using questionnaire, semi-structured interview and rating scale. The collected data were analyzed using mixed research method (qualitative and quantitative approach). The result reveals that eleven classroom oral interaction and participation impeding attributes are found to be rated by more than 50% of the respondents. Most of the identified attributes are allied to teacher's and students' personal perceptions, lesson delivery styles, learning topics, fear of criticisms, external pressures, classroom social impacts, lack of prior experience, and overuse of mother tongue as a way out of English speaking stress. It was concluded that most impeding classroom attributes were found to be rooted from psychological, social, pedagogical, linguistic and communicative competences.

Key Words: Explore, attributes, impeding, classroom, oral, interactions, participations, EFL

1. Introduction

Scholars, language researchers and experts have emphasized the importance of language learning environment which generates realistic, spontaneous, functional and context-based interactions in the classroom (Johnson, 1995; Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Davison & Dowason, 2003; Days, 1984). Conducive learning environment creates favorable situation that can enhance and enrich students' interactive competency. The classroom students' interactions need to stimulate and sustain learners' interests and motivations to engage in genuine oral interactions. The activities and tasks should have

dynamic effect to move the students from predetermined textbook tasks to a lively interactive, reflective or expressive learning behavior where students get more chance to express and exchange their ideas and thoughts independently of the teacher (Prodromou, 1992; Hedge, 2000).

Participatory classroom oral interaction provides the students with not only the opportunity to practically explore their knowledge of the language to express their own thoughts and intentions, but also it helps them gain better progressive experience of their personal values such as: developing self-confidence, social interactive skills, the sense of risk-taking for their own learning, and the ability to adjust one's speech in accordance with the listener (or audience), the point in focus and the actual context.

Classroom oral interaction helps learners to internalize and enrich their experience of language in use and then produce spontaneous speech (Johnson, 1995; Chaudron, 1988; Littlewood, 1984). More importantly, students efforts to speak in English provides them with authentic and plentiful learning opportunities (Brumfit, 1984; Celec-Murcia, 1991), and better chance to learn from each other's differential experiences (Johnson, 1995).

Likewise, psychological factors and socio-cultural contexts have gained new interest and emphasis in the classroom practices, even if such points may still remain unsure of how best to exploit them effectively. The tradition of being dependent on linguistic theory and/or on an exclusively 'best' teaching method has come to be outdated, and so, most educators and scholars would seem to agree on a common consensus of using eclectic approaches in teaching language. Language textbooks have begun to be designed in a way that they incorporate authentic and genuine topics and texts, (e.g. advertisement texts, 'medical' reports, articles 'from newspapers', etc.) alongside literary texts (literature extracts). The belief of teacher dominant and teacher initiative of learning has become learner and learning focused and cooperative or collaborative learning. It is, therefore, in the context of these multifarious pedagogical evolutions that the role of classroom oral interactions and participations has increasingly received the attention of modern language researchers.

On the other hand, some scholars and educators have suggested that there are different influencing attributes that inhibit students' classroom oral interactions and their participations. To Bygate (1987) one of the most painstaking tasks in foreign language teaching is to provide the learners with better opportunities to be able to use the language interactively. Similarly, scholars like Johnson (1995), Lier, Van (1988) and Byrne (1986) have proposed that language teaching is an interactive process,

primarily involving classroom interactions between teacher and students, and among students. However, since some factors interfere between language learning and students participations, the students may not gain the necessary language skills, and so, they may become less successful in their oral interactive skills (Brown, 1994).

Malamha-Thomas (1987) has had similar, yet, more detailed views. He describes that a teacher often comes to class with planned objectives and activities. He/ She acts in the classroom according to his/ her plan: presents the lesson; asks questions, make the students do activities; elicit responses from them in different ways and techniques. The students react to the lesson following the teacher's instruction sometimes respond correctly, whereas at other times fail to perform or act as expected by the teacher; and still in some cases, they may remain silent, showing no apparent effort to react to the teacher's action. The teacher may not be curious enough to try to search out why are the students silent, or confused, or failed to act as expected or indifferent or even reluctant to participate.

Rather, he/she may be busy to act in accordance with his/her predetermined plan in spite of the actual classroom reactions. However, 'Interaction is more than this, more than action followed by reaction. Interaction means acting reciprocally, acting up on each other's ideas' (Malamha-Thomas, 1987, p.7). The classroom climate by itself should have the power to initiate a reaction on the teacher's actions and approach in order to influence not only his/ her immediate action, more importantly, to adjust his/ her subsequent plans. Thus, classroom interaction is also the outcome of genuine interactive influences and adjustments of approaches and focuses on the participants (Hedge 2000; Rivers 1987) that can encourage their efforts to exploit the actual learning experiences created during the classroom time (Littlewood 1992; Byrne 1987; Bygate 1987).

An important fact to note is that learning English and using it does not only need mastering its grammatical and semantic rules, but more significantly, the skill of how it operates in the real world, including in varied contexts of interpersonal exchanges, and negotiations of thoughts (Shumin (1997). As a result, unless we are able to identify those major attributes that affect EFL learners' oral proficiency, it is difficult for the learners to speak in English confidently and appropriately in a given situation. Shumin (1997) further argues that it is mainly believed that Oral English skills '...can be developed by assigning students general topics to discuss or by getting them to talk about certain subjects. Evidently, not enough attention is given to the factors that inhibit or facilitate the production of spoken language' (p.8).

In the same way, Allwright & Bailey (1991) do have the view that verbal interaction in the classroom is one of the most challenging things in the practical classroom setting. Students may be unwilling to speak because the teacher's teaching strategy would be at odd with their opinions or expectations of how best to practice oral skills, or because in some cases, students may want to speak out but feel inhibited to get their messages across, or because there may be some other factors that hinder students' oral production abilities. In the words of Allwright & Bailey (1991), it can be stated as:

.... it is a dangerous oversimplification to suggest that verbal interaction in the classroom is just a case of 'the more the merrier'. This topic would bear much more exploration and is certainly an area where language learners could be profitably involved in the search enterprise (p. 145).

In addition, the other problem according to (Byrne, 1986; Tusi, 1995; Hedge, 2000), that students are less motivated to discuss or talk about an activity/task which fails to meet their interests and needs, and which may not be important or related to the actual real-world communicative needs.

Besides, what is most challenging in EFL classes, according to Seedhouse (1996), is that even teachers who call themselves communicative in their approach 'fail to create opportunities for genuine interaction in the language classroom' (p.16). Research findings, for example, Dornyei & Thurrell (1994) show that most language teachers employ a kind of interaction which reflects – *IRF Cycle*: teacher initiation-learner response-teacher follow-up (p.17), which mainly reflects traditional classroom interaction. Here, what has utmost importance to be considered is that 'One of the biggest challenges to current language teaching methodology is to find effective ways of preparing students for spontaneous communication' (Dornyei & Thurrell 1994, p. 40).

Correspondingly, Teshome Tessema (1988) found out that students who came from different parts of Ethiopia have got poor language experience and so they are less active in classroom oral interactions. As a result, it is too challenging to create lively classroom oral discussion for most teachers in the country. To this effect, the focus of this study would be exploring and identifying the major attributes impeding students' classroom oral interactions and participations in English classes at Kotebe University of Education.

2. Importance of the Study

The outcome of this study can give important insights into what and how different influential attributes contribute to various classroom oral interactions and students' participations. It provides up-to-date valuable sources of data about the attributes impeding English classroom oral interactions

and students participation both for teacher educators interested in preparing more effective language teachers, and for classroom teachers interested in examining their own ways of teaching, and perceptions of the nature of classroom interactions and participations.

Sometimes, what is gained from theory may not be exactly observable or applicable in the actual classroom settings. As a result, course designers and language teachers need to be provided with research supported inputs that help them get better awareness on the importance of observing and identifying the major impeding attributes that inhibit students' oral performances.

The study could also add a conceptual framework to classroom pedagogical practices, and so it would hint where adjustments are to be made to create better classroom learning opportunities for the students.

3. Methodology

The target population for this study was third year English major degree students at Kotebe University of Education in 2022. Third year students were selected due to their seniority and years of university experiences in classroom oral interaction experiences. In particular, senior students are not only believed to have developed better language skills and experiences, but also they are assumed to have better awareness on the challenges of classroom oral interactions and participations.

The total population of the study was 148. As the target population was grouped in to three sections- that is, $G_1=49$; $G_2=49$, and $G_3=50$, it was decided to use stratified and systematic random sampling techniques in order to get the representative sample of each group (William Wiersma 1995:290-292). That is, to determine the sample size to be taken from each group, it is determined to apply the formula: $n/N \times N_i$;

Where n = Total number of sample wanted- (fifty students)

N = Total number of target population- (148)

N_i = the number of each stratum size

As the number of students in each group was almost the same, the number of representative samples of the three groups was also the same. It was also decided to round-off every digit to the nearest whole number to avoid fraction numbers. Thus, 17 students from G_1 and G_3 , and 16 students from G_2 were selected. As a result, the total sample when added up the samples of the three groups is 50

students. That is to say, the study has covered **33.8%** of the total target population. In addition, 12 English instructors were selected from 34 staff members using convenient sampling technique. The teachers were identified based on their teaching experiences.

3.1. Data Collection Methods

To obtain information from the participants of the study, three data gathering instruments were used: semi-structured interview, questionnaire and rating scale. Firstly, a structured interview was presented to 12 instructors of English language Department. The responses gathered using structured interview were analyzed and compared with the responses of the students which were collected through open-ended questionnaire. The major purpose of the interview was to triangulate the results of the questionnaire.

To gather the necessary data from the students, open-ended questionnaire of seventeen items were prepared and administrated to the students. The main objective of the questionnaire was to elicit the students' responses to attributes that they think became barriers to classroom oral interaction. Next, close-ended questionnaire based on the students' responses to the first open-ended questionnaire was designed. In this case, the main objective of the questionnaire was to explore the extent to which those influencing attributes, which had been enumerated by the students, impeded the students' attempts of oral interaction and participation in English classes. The major common attributes were identified, organized and re-administrated to the students so as to rate the extent to which each of those factors exerted an influence on their attempts to participate in English classroom oral interactions. Then, their responses were tabulated and analyzed in relation to the responses of the English language instructors and the ideas of those scholars that have already been discussed in the study.

3.2. Data Collection procedures

To elicit adequate information from the participants of the study, first, the purpose and importance of the research was explained to the participants of the study. The questionnaire was administered in a face-to-face situation. Then, depending on the information gathered through the questionnaire, a five point Likert scale rating was organized and administered to the students.

3.3. Data Analysis Techniques

To analyze the responses of the participants of the study, quantitative and qualitative methods were used. To accomplish this, first, the responses of students and teachers at different levels were

organized, tabulated and analyzed. The responses were described in percentage based of tabular frequency distribution. The interview results were analyzed qualitatively. In addition, the responses were discussed in relation to the ideas of the scholars that had been incorporated in the study.

3.4. Ethical Consideration

The researcher consulted teachers and student participants before the study was delivered. The researcher explained the purpose of the study clearly and comprehensibly for all potential participants who were willing to partake in this research. Any communication and discussion with the participants was accomplished on a voluntary basis without threatening the personal and academic well-being of the respondents. In addition, the respondents were guaranteed that all information obtained from them would be secured and kept confidentially.

4. Results, Analysis and Discussions

4.1. Results and Analysis

The collected data of the study consisted of twenty-nine impeding attributes that were reported by the students. These first impeding attributes were taken from the students' responses to the first turn open-ended questionnaire consisting of seventeen items. Elven most frequently repeated attributes were identified and reorganized.

Then, to identify the extent to which each identified attributes which impeded students' oral interactions and classroom participation in EFL classes, the students were requested to indicate the level of frequency by ticking (✓) under each of the eleven items using a five-point likert scale rating:

Very often true of me = 5, Often true of me = 4, Sometimes true of me = 3, Rarely true of me = 2, and Never true of me = 1

To finalize the rated data, in spite of some differences in the degree of frequency between rating 5 and 4-(i.e. very often and often), this two rating, in general, indicates the higher prevalence of the problems. Hence, the total number and percentage of the two rating scales (i.e. 5 and 4) were added up and labeled as 'confirmed' to indicate the number and percentage of respondents who highly agreed in the presence of the impeding attributes during classroom oral discussions and participations. On the other hand, the number and percentage of the students, who rated the alternatives 'rarely' and 'never' were summed up and labeled 'rejected, to show the absence of the problem compared to the frequency of the former two options. Finally, the number and percentage

of those students who rated ‘sometimes’ were indicated separately, and labeled ‘middle’ in order to demonstrate the above two extremes.

4.1.1. Results of the Questionnaire

The main identified impeding attributes and the responses of the students are illustrated in a table and described and analyzed in percentage based on the frequency distribution table.

This section treats the responses to the questionnaires which were rated by 50% and above as influencing attributes during classroom discussions and participations. Note that the impeding attributes are listed in accordance with the frequency with which each influences the students’ attempts to hold interaction through speaking, the corresponding number (N) and the percentage (%) of the respondents.

Table 4.1: Major impeding attributes rated by 50% and above of the Respondents

Impeding attributes		Number and Percentage of the Respondents					
		Confirmed		Middle		Rejected	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Due to lack of feedback on my oral work, I do not know how much I have improved my oral performance	33	66	11	22	5	10
2	I lack enough chances to practice speaking English due to inaccessibility to audio-visuals and language lab.	31	62	10	20	9	18
3	My English teacher does not give me enough time to practice speaking in class.	30	60	16	32	4	8
4	I lack confidence to speak English in class.	29	58	17	34	4	8
5	The way my teacher teaches English does not help me to express my opinions freely.	29	58	11	22	10	20
6	Lack of chances to give oral comments or feedbacks on my classmates’ oral work as this can extend my oral English practice.	28	56	17	34	5	10

7	I feel self-conscious when I speak in English due to fear of making mistakes.	27	54	16	32	7	14
8	When I want to speak in English I face shortage of words.	26	52	17	34	7	14
9	I lack the skills of giving responses in a complete sentence when my teacher asks me a question.	25	50	17	34	8	16
10	I dislike classroom topics for oral discussion because they are not related to our local situation needs.	25	50	16	32	9	18
11	I face shortage of ideas when I want to speak in English.	25	50	16	32	12	24

Table 4.1 reveals the first attribute is found to be the most frequently impeding attributes during classroom oral interaction. As can be seen from Table 3.1, 66% of the respondents confirmed that they are not given feedback on their oral performance, and so they could not know how much they show progress or change in their speaking skills. That is to say, thirty-three out of fifty students reported that lack of feedback on their verbal abilities is often the most influencing attributes in their attempts to speak English in classes. While 22%, that is, eleven out of fifty students rated it as a challenge that sometimes negatively affect their speaking attempts, 12%, that is, only six out of fifty students rejected the influence of not getting feedback on their oral performances.

As illustrated in Table 4.1, the second ranked item is rated by 62% of the respondents. They reported lack of the support of audio-visuals and language lab as the most dominant constraints of their oral interactions skills. In other words, thirty-one out of fifty students confirmed this problem as the most prevailing factor that negatively affects their oral performance during classroom discussions. The table also shows that 20% of the respondents reported they sometimes consider inaccessibility to audio-visuals and language lab as barrier to improving their oral proficiency. As a result, though the extent to which the respondents think that this problem influences their speaking abilities, it would sound reasonable to say that almost 82% of the students indicated lack of enough chance to practice speaking supported by audio-visuals and language lab could impede their oral production abilities.

The third prominent attribute, according to Table 4.1, is lack of enough time to practice speaking in class. While 60% of the students confirmed the negative influence of shortage of practice time during

oral interaction, 32% of the remaining students reported that shortage of practice time to some extent affects their chance to communicate their ideas or opinions orally during classroom interaction. The Table also shows that only 8% of the respondents indicated that they do not consider shortage of time to practice speaking in class as impeding attribute to their verbal skills during classroom interaction. In brief, the result illustrates how much lack of enough practice time in class prevails in the English classes though the degree of occurrence differs.

Fourthly, as is evidenced from Table 4.1, 58%, or twenty-nine students out of fifty, strongly approved that one of the major barriers to speak in English during classroom discussion is lack of confidence in their oral skills. Again, 34% of the remaining students rated this factor as the attribute that they sometimes encounter during discussions. Only 8%, that is to say, four of the fifty respondents ignored the influence of this attribute on their oral abilities. Accordingly, it would appear that 92% of the respondents tended to reflect the existence of such impeding attribute during classroom oral interactions.

In the fifth level, Table 4.1 reveals that 58% of the students indicated that they are not often interested in the way their teacher teaches English because it does not provide them with the opportunity to express their thoughts or feelings freely. That means, twenty-nine of the fifty students responded that they are disappointed in the way their teacher approaches the lesson. While 22% of the students rated this attribute as the problem that sometimes impede their oral interactions, 20% of the remaining students did not recognize this factor as a problem to their oral skills.

In the sixth level, the majority of the respondents would seem to claim that oral comments or feedbacks on their classmates' oral work could help them to extend their oral production abilities beyond a limited classroom speaking practices. Accordingly, while 56%, that is twenty-eight out of fifty students confirmed that lack of chances to give oral comments or feedbacks on their classmates' oral work often limited the potential of their oral proficiency, 34%, that is to say, seventeen out of fifty students reported that they sometimes consider this attribute as impeding attribute to their attempts to participate in oral interaction practices. Only 10%; i.e. five students ignored the influence of this factor on their classroom verbal interaction.

As can be seen from Table 4.1, the seventh ranked attribute is linked to fear of making mistakes. The Table depicts that twenty-seven out of fifty respondents confirmed the impeding effect of feeling

self-consciousness due to fear of making mistakes during discussions. Thirty-two out of the fifty students reported that they sometimes consider feeling self-consciousness due to fear of making mistakes as their oral communication barriers during classroom discussion. In other words, while 54% of the respondents rated this item as their most often impending attribute, 32% of the participants of the study identified this factor as the problem that they sometimes face during discussion. Only seven students or 14% of the respondents attempted to neglect the influence of being conscious of one's language use while discussion.

As can be referred from Table 4.1, the eighth ranked attribute related to classroom verbal interaction is vocabulary potential. As can be evidenced from the table, 52% of the respondents highly approved that their major impeding attribute during classroom discussion is shortage of vocabulary. While, 34% of the students reported the influence of this attribute though they do not frequently encounter it, 14% of the students rejected the existence of such problem while expressing their ideas.

The ninth ranked attribute is confirmed by 50% of the respondents. The respondents stated that inability to give responses in a complete sentence is one of their major problems during classroom oral discussions. Still, 34% of the student respondents indicated that they sometimes face this problem during oral interaction. However, 16%, that is to say, eight out of fifty students did not recognize such case as an important determining attribute during discussion.

The tenth impeding attributes rated by a considerable number of respondents is related to mismatch between classroom topics for oral interaction and their local situation needs. As shown in the Table, above, 50%, that is twenty-five out of fifty students accepted this attribute as their most frequently constraining problem during oral classroom discussion. Of the remaining students, 34%, i.e. seventeen out of fifty, students reported the existence of the problem, though they appeared that they did not often confront it during discussion. On the other hand, the table also shows only 18%, i.e. nine out of fifty students rejected the attribute as their oral barrier during classroom oral discussion.

The last impeding attributes rated by 50% of the respondents is shortage of ideas to speak English during classroom discussions. On the other hand, 32% reported that they sometimes confront this problem during classroom oral interaction. Put another way, while twenty-five of the fifty students stated that they often suffer from lack of ideas to partake in classroom oral discussion, thirteen out of the fifty students specified that they face such oral barrier only sometimes during oral discussion.

The remaining 24%, that means, twelve students rated that they never face shortage of ideas during classroom verbal interactions.

4.1.2. Results of the interview

Twelve English instructors working at Kotebe University of Education, Faculty of Languages and Humanities were interviewed to express their perceptions about EFL students' oral interactions and participations based on their own practical classroom experience. Accordingly, the following are the frequently reflected impeding attributes intervening students' attempts to interact and participate during classroom discussions. These attributes are listed in accordance with their degree of importance.

1. *Poor background exposure to oral English interaction.*
2. *Lack of confidence to express their opinions orally.*
3. *Reluctance or unwillingness to speak in English in classes.*
4. *Shyness or fear of stages to speak in front of others.*
5. *Frequent shift from English to their mother tongue during classroom verbal interaction.*
6. *Fear of peer comments or criticisms.*
7. *Teachers' lack of commitment to create participatory classroom verbal interaction.*
8. *Fear of making mistakes during speaking in English.*
9. *Influence of language policy at junior and high school levels.*
10. *Frequent interruption of speech due to shortage of words during oral presentations.*
11. *Code shifting or tendency to use their mother tongues during English classes.*
12. *Tendency group themselves according to their LI.*

Overall, the result of the interview shows that of some of the attributes related to the students own problems, inability to give oral responses in long or complete sentences, producing the same phrases (or ideas), which lack the content or message intended to be addressed, and fear of being laughed at are intermittently observed. In addition, results reveal that there found inconsistency between classroom verbal activities and the daily-life communicative needs, and mismatch between topics for discussion and students' prior experiences. Some teachers' difficulty to create

conducive classroom environment for oral production practice, and teachers' use of the students' common language during English classes are also suggested as impeding attributes to generate active classroom verbal interaction.

4.2. Discussion

Based on the data analysis, the first three responses, (i.e. *Due to lack of feedback on my oral work, I do not know how much I have improved my oral performance; I lack enough chances to practice speaking English due to inaccessibility to audio-visuals and language lab, and my English teacher does not give me enough time to practice speaking in class*), are rated by more than 60% of the respondents. The first attribute, for example, is rated by the highest percentage of the respondents – i.e. 66%.

Correspondingly, Gower, et al (1995) has remarked that in a language class, particularly, where the provision of oral feedback prevails, students show better attempts to improve their production skills. However, unless teachers provide progressive and constructive feedbacks that can encourage more oral production attempts, students may be disappointed by the feedback and restrain their involvement. Likewise, Prodromou (1992) has described that providing feedback to students serves the students as a mirror to look at themselves, but only if it is addressed in a way it motivates the students to produce more ideas. It should be noted that unless students get feedback on their work, and feel that they are achieving their learning goal, they may show little apparent efforts to participate and contribute to the classroom interaction.

The attributes four, five and six are reported by more than 55% of the students as their dominant inhibitive attributes during classroom verbal interaction. Attributes five and six-(i.e. *'the way my teacher teaches English does not help me to express my opinions freely and I lack chances to give oral comments or feedbacks on my classmates' oral work as this can extend my oral English practice'*) seem that they are interdependent and perhaps, connected to the teacher's pedagogical perspective and/or the perception of the nature of the classroom working behaviours.

Correspondingly, scholars including (Littlewood, 1992; Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Hopokins, 2002, Shumin, 1997) have remarked that whatever pedagogic approach is applied, it is the actual dynamic classroom interaction, the expectations and rate of engagement of the classroom participants that can generate and maximize interactive classroom teaching and learning practices.

A teacher's main objective needs to be creating a positive working classroom condition not only for the purpose of enabling the students to exchange and express their ideas or opinions in an anxiety-reduced, if not anxiety free environment, but also for the purpose of helping students experience how to cope with and overcome constraints that account to their unproductive interactions in the target language. One way to achieve this goal is to expose students to various participatory teaching strategies that appeal to their interests and varied background experiences. Lesson topics need to have the power to activate students' reactions and engage them in the actual classroom practices.

However, according to Prodromou (1992, p. 49), "Most students ignore most classrooms because most classrooms ignore most students." It would seem highly likely that some teachers fail to value and exploit their students' varied experience as the potential sources of classroom oral interaction. The crux of the matter, as Prodromou argues, is that this oral potential resources 'has been largely ignored by course designers and teachers due to the influence of language teaching theories....'

What is really indispensable is that teachers should be in a better position to make sense of the actual classroom reality. That means, if students become unwilling or reluctant to interact or react, teachers should ask themselves: *How can I initiate participatory oral interaction? Is it important to start from what they know and gradually move to the pedagogic needs? Do students have prior exposure in any way to the point they are asked to discuss? What are the underlying causes of students' apparent lack of motivation to speak? etc.*

In the case of giving feedback and comments, some scholars remark that learners' feedback and comments on their peers' work can generate more hotly interactive classroom discussion (Gower, et al., 1995; Tusi, 1995). Even more to the point, such opportunity can help students not only to learn from their mistakes, but also to initiate genuine communication or negotiation of ideas, (Wood 1990). Through this discussion, students may trace their discussion to their prior knowledge or experience, and exchange ideas or opinions spontaneously.

Prodromou (1992) has a similar, though much more detailed, views of the role of students' feedback or comments during classroom discussions. The more the students engage in exchanging feedbacks or comments, the more they become willing to take risks, test new ideas or experience including new opinions, strategies or styles. Thereby, students may experience how to challenge criticisms or comments of others, and how to be more reasonable or logical to catch others' attention and concern to their opinions. Moreover, the situation may involve them in spontaneous use of language as they

mainly concentrate on the idea or meaning they try to get across. Equally important is that a classroom discussion, which uses students' reactions or reflections, could inspire others' feelings and motivation for more talk and discussion, perhaps, by citing their own academic or social experiences (Richards & Lockhart 1994). For Collins (1986), students often accept feedbacks or comments more willingly and readily from their peers in the natural give and take process than from their teachers. Thus, it would be reasonable to say that encouraging and exposing students to involve in giving and taking constructive comments or feedbacks to each other's oral work could be more advantageous to extend and generate lively classroom interactions among the students.

Attributes seven and eight are approved by more than 50% of the respondents as major determinant attributes of their oral skills during classroom discussions. If we look into these attributes, that means, (*I feel self-conscious when I speak in English due to fear of making mistakes; and when I want to speak in English I face shortage of words*), in relation to attribute four, (i.e. *I lack confidence to speak English in class*), they would appear that they are interrelated, and one could stimulate the other. Moreover, lack of confidence, self-consciousness, and shortage of words could be linked to students own self-esteem and perception.

In much the same way, a study by Seime Kebede (1988), for example, has pointed out that if students have developed poor perception of their oral ability, they will tend to restrain their speech. That is to say, when students lack confidence in their oral production skills, they are less likely to speak out or express their ideas or feelings in front of others. They usually hesitate or withdraw themselves from conversations or discussions, or perhaps, become passive listeners.

Similarly, if students worry about their language use, or fluency and their position in the eyes of others, and if they pay more attention to form rather than the meaning they intend to communicate, they may be worried about making mistakes rather than about what to say and how to address their ideas effectively. This can put them on the defensive, and so become unwilling or reluctant to express themselves orally, particularly in front of their classmates.

In line with this, Shumin (1997) and Tusi (1995) have indicated that students feel extreme anxiety or become tongue-tied when they either feel worried about their own ability or when they face shortage of words in unexpected situation. This may discourage their attempts to speak more, and enforce them to lose confidence in their speech, and become suddenly silent in the middle of a classroom oral interaction.

Correspondingly, the interview result reflects that some students tend to prefer silence, or be unwilling or reluctant to involve in a group oral discussion. As for as the result of the interview is concerned, when they are forced to speak, they start speaking, but soon end with fragments of unrelated ideas or shift the target language to their L1 or become silent without convey their ideas or opinions.

A study carried out by Tusi (1995) has shown that a student may fear making mistakes in front of his/her peers; perhaps because he/she becomes a timid person by nature; or perhaps because he/she gets upset or nervous easily, which may lead to a general sense of failure as he/she may not be in a position to control or manage his/her speech. As a result, students may withdraw or restrain themselves from participating in classroom oral interaction.

In this sense, Charles (1989:136) argues that lack of confidence in one's skill or ability can affect not only one's success but also behaviour. Accordingly, to build up students' self-confidence or concept, three things worth due attention: (1) regular personal attention from the teacher; (2) experiencing genuine success: and (3) recognition for that success. Hence, if teachers value every attempts students show to express their opinions or thoughts, and if students feel that they are really enjoying a lesson and showing progress in their performances, and if they are acknowledged for their efforts or changes revealed in their oral performances, students could improve their rate of participation and interaction during discussions.

It would sound that students may lack self-confidence if they think that they may face shortage of words, or they may feel self-conscious; partly because they are not confident in their oral abilities or party because they feel uneasy during discussion in class. Additionally, attributes, four and seven which may be related to the students' knowledge of the subject matter, would likely to have something to do with the students' personal and/or psychological perspectives rather than their English oral proficiency.

Attributes nine, ten and eleven are rated by 50% of the respondents as most frequently impeding causes during classroom discussions. Attribute nine- (i.e. *I lack the skills of giving responses in a complete sentence when my teacher asks me a question*), could be linked to factors four, seven and eight, which, perhaps, emerge from lack of enough knowledge of the language or linguistic competence. The results of the interview also show that a considerable number of students have the problem of expressing their ideas in complete and connected sentence or speech.

Unlike attributes four and seven, attributes eight and nine may not be resulted from an individual's self-concept or competence of verbal abilities. But it seems that such problems are resulted from more of lack of sufficient speaking practice and exposure to knowledge of the language.

However, unlike attributes eight and nine, attributes eleven may be related to personal behaviors. Some individuals are interactive and so show more tendency and willingness to exchange ideas or communicate with others, while some others may show tendency or unwillingness to exchange ideas with others and so, perhaps face shortage of ideas or information during discussions. In other words, unlike individuals with extrovert behaviours, those who reflect introvert behavior may face deficiency of ideas while interaction. Attributes ten appears that it might happen owing to the fact that the topics or activities given in the students' textbook might not be selected and devised in line with the immediate real-life communicative needs of the students, or perhaps, the topics may not enable the students to draw on their prior knowledge or experience, or may not help them to link the messages to the reality existing in their environment.

Consistently, the results of the interview also exemplify that there is a problem connected to topics for discussion due to lack of chains with the students' immediate local situations. Thus, unless the classroom topics reflect the outside situation, students may not be interested and motivated to talk about (Jiang Xia, 1998). More importantly, Xia has underlined that the students potential of oral production could be improved efficiently by providing them with topics which they have had a better acquaintance and exposure in their immediate environment.

This would not mean providing students with topics, which are only related to their local and cultural situations. But rather, exposing students to familiar and reasonable topics, in which students gain a sense of reason and confidence to justify, dialogue or refute the issue under discussion, and which can further promote their interactive skills as well as their focus on communicating thoughts, feelings and experience.

In a nut shell, it seems that there is intermarriage between the results of the questionnaire and interview in spite of some differences in certain cases, and so the results of the study reveal the prevalence of some common impeding attributes that influence the students' speaking abilities during English classroom oral discussions. On the other hand, some scholars and researchers, (example, Bygate, 1987; Harmer, 1991; Hedge, 2000), argue that it is possible to generate active and meaningful classroom oral interactions. To do so, firstly, classroom activities should be plausible

enough to reflect the reality of the actual environment. Secondly, there should be appropriate match and alignment between authentic and pedagogical or contrived classroom learning tasks. Thirdly, we should, first, encourage students to brainstorm and talk about their own related information or experience. Fourthly, we need to encourage students to actively participate, react or comment on others' ideas or opinions most often spontaneously.

Finally, we should inspire students to extend the classroom talk to the outside classroom realities. That means, what teachers and students do in the classroom is just a beginning, but not a beginning to ending of a learning lesson or topic. So, we should extend the classroom oral discussion points to the outside world. Students need to be inspired to take out classroom discussions to their home or outside situation and invited to provide short speech on their outside class discussion every beginning of the next classes.

5. Conclusion

This study has tried to explore and identify the major impeding attributes of classroom oral interaction and their effects on the students' participation in EFL classes. The questionnaire, interview and rating scale results reveal that there are a number of impeding attributes identified as barriers to students' speaking practices during classroom discussions.

The results of the study indicates that there exists interactive interdependence among the personal reality of the students' perceptions, interests, needs, expectations and the social classroom atmosphere and the teacher's personality, philosophy and views of language teaching, academic experience, students' roles, norms of classroom working behaviours, and the external reality of language functions. This implies that successful oral interaction requires the ability to understand teachers and students perspectives of oral interactions and classroom discussions.

It could be concluded that teachers should be aware of that students do have varied classroom oral interaction and participation impeding attributes including background experiences, personal perspectives, interests, expectations as well as teacher, topic and pedagogic related attributes that may create barriers to their oral production practices.

Thus, English language pedagogy needs to involve more of interactive and participatory teaching strategies that empower students to actively participate during classroom discussions: These include: (1) creating suitable condition to entertain students interests and expectations, (2)

establishing good rapport, particularly with those who tend to be reluctant or unwilling to participate in the classroom, (3) linking the daily lesson to students' background knowledge and immediate life experiences, (4) inviting students to summarize or comment during the rounding-up of a lesson, (5) promoting the culture or habit of giving and taking information, especially, constructive comments and feedbacks during discussions, (6) enriching students' English oral proficiency and vocabulary skills by providing digital and/ or language lab supports, and (7) assigning specific roles to each member in a group and facilitating and monitoring the result through consistent follow-up.

Language teaching should be based on the idea of collaborative and learning from differential experience by providing students with the opportunities to exercise their knowledge of the language through oral discussions. Besides, teachers should create conducive classroom condition for the students to reflect their own opinions and understandings of a topic most often in group discussions. They should create anxiety 'free' classroom condition in which students practise giving and taking peer comments and feedbacks. Further, teachers had better promote interactive classroom verbal behaviors that favor more of students' involvement and genuine exchange of ideas and experiences.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following ideas are given as key recommendations:

1. There is a need for language experts, teacher educators, course designers and other concerned bodies and officials to work together in order to assess student's interests, needs and expectations of the nature and patterns of classroom oral discussions.
2. It is suggested that there should be rooms in the English syllabus or textbooks for extra oral practices such as English language speaking days, in which students could participate in playing dramas, presenting news or newsletters, dialogues, short creative plays and/or debates on some current or sensitive issues or topics.

Declaration of competing interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest in this study.

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