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# **In-Person and Online Learning in Communicative Language Teaching Classes: Interaction Levels and Parents' Perspectives**

التعلم عن قرب وعبر الإنترنت في فصول تدريس اللغة التواصلية: مستويات التفاعل  
ووجهات نظر أولياء الأمور

by

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**Dissertation submitted in fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
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## **Abstract**

This study aimed to understand the interaction of students through online classes, provided useful information for curriculum designers, forwarded suggestions on ways in addressing individual student learning needs and generated ideas for the development of training programs for online instructors. The purpose of the present study is two-fold: 1) to explore the interaction levels in CLT in-person classes and online language classes, and 2) to gather more enriching data from parents about their preference to in-person classes, their perspective of what could affect students' interaction levels during online classes and their recommendations for teaching methods to enhance online lessons.

The study sought to answer 4 research questions: How does distance learning versus in-person teaching affect Communicative Language Teaching methods in the interaction levels of ESL elementary students? What are the interaction differences between high level English students and lower-level English students through online learning? What are ESL students' needs in distance learning methods? How can their needs be better met? and What are the parents' needs to assist their children in ESL online teaching? How can their needs be better met?

To answer the research questions data were gathered through interviews and observations in an international private school in Abu Dhabi. Four interviews with parents were administered and analysed using thematic analysis. The following themes emerged from the data: social connectivity increases learning success, online learning provides potential growth for students' learning due to new methods, parents and students struggle and lack focus in online learning, and parents do not know how to interactively teach their children. Moreover, 10 classroom observations were conducted, 5 of which were in an online setting and 5 in in-person ones. The data from observations were transcribed and analysed. The data from observations led to in-depth understanding of students' interaction levels in both settings, which would hopefully aid in breaking down the wall distance learning has built during the pandemic.

The study forwarded a number of recommendations to (the audience: e.g. researchers, practitioners and policy makers).

**Keywords:** COVID-19; Communicative Language Teaching; Distance Learning, Online Learning; Students' Interaction Levels; Teacher Talk Time; Student Talk Time; Teacher-Student Interaction; Student-Student Interaction; IRF.

## خلاصة

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى فهم تفاعل الطلاب من خلال الفصول الدراسية عبر الإنترنت، وقدمت معلومات مفيدة لمصممي المناهج الدراسية، وأحيلت الاقتراحات حول طرق تلبية احتياجات التعلم الفردية للطلاب، وأنتجت أفكارًا لتطوير برامج التدريب للمدربين عبر الإنترنت. الغرض من الدراسة الحالية ذو شقين: (1) لاستكشاف مستويات التفاعل في فصول CLT التعلم عن قرب وفصول اللغة عبر الإنترنت، و (2) لجمع المزيد من البيانات الإثرائية من الآباء حول تفضيلهم لفصول التعلم عن قرب، ومنظورهم لما يمكن أن يؤثر على مستويات تفاعل الطلاب أثناء الفصول الدراسية عبر الإنترنت وتوصياتهم لطرق التدريس لتعزيز الدروس عبر الإنترنت.

سعت الدراسة إلى الإجابة عن أربعة أسئلة بحثية: كيف يؤثر التعلم عن بعد بالمقارنة مع التدريس عن قرب على طرق تدريس اللغة التواصلية في مستويات التفاعل لطلاب المرحلة الابتدائية في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية؟ ما هي اختلافات التفاعل بين الطلاب الذين يتعلمون اللغة الإنجليزية ذوي المستوى العالي والطلاب الذين يتعلمون اللغة الإنجليزية من المستوى الأدنى من خلال التعلم عبر الإنترنت؟ ما هي احتياجات طلاب ESL في طرق التعلم عن بعد؟ كيف يمكن تلبية احتياجاتهم بشكل أفضل؟ وما هي احتياجات أولياء الأمور لمساعدة أطفالهم في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية (ESL) عبر الإنترنت؟ كيف يمكن تلبية احتياجاتهم بشكل أفضل؟

للإجابة عن أسئلة البحث تم جمع البيانات من خلال المقابلات والملاحظات في مدرسة دولية خاصة في أبو ظبي. تم إجراء أربع مقابلات مع أولياء الأمور وتحليلها باستخدام التحليل الموضوعي. ظهرت الموضوعات التالية من البيانات: يزيد الاتصال الاجتماعي من نجاح التعلم، ويوفر التعلم عبر الإنترنت نموًا محتملاً لتعلم الطلاب بسبب الأساليب الجديدة، ويكافح أولياء الأمور والطلاب يفتقرون إلى التركيز في التعلم عبر الإنترنت، ولا يعرف الآباء كيفية تعليم أطفالهم بشكل تفاعلي. علاوة على ذلك، تم إجراء عشر مشاهدات في الفصول الدراسية، خمس منها كانت عبر الإنترنت و خمس داخل الغرف الصفية. تم نسخ البيانات من الملاحظات وتحليلها. أدت البيانات المستمدة من الملاحظات إلى فهم متعمق لمستويات تفاعل الطلاب في كلا الوضعين، والذي نأمل أن يساعد في تحطيم الجدار الذي شيده التعلم عن بعد خلال الوباء.

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## Table of Contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b>   | <b>1</b>  |
| 1.1 Overview   | 1         |
| 1.2 Background of Communicative Language Teaching                              | 2         |
| 1.3 Scope and Context of the Study   | 4         |
| 1.4 Statement of the Problem   | 5         |
| 1.5 Study Purpose  | 5         |
| 1.6 Study Significance   | 6         |
| 1.6.1 Study Significance for Students  | 6         |
| 1.6.2 Study Significance for Teachers and Curriculum Designers                 | 6         |
| 1.6.3. Study Significance for Other Researchers                                | 7         |
| 1.7 Outline of the Dissertation Chapters                                       | 7         |
| <b>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW</b>  | <b>9</b>  |
| 2.1 Conceptual Framework   | 9         |
| 2.1.1 Distance Learning  | 9         |
| 2.1.2 Online Learning  | 9         |
| 2.1.3 Distance and Online Learning- Similar or Different?                      | 10        |
| 2.1.4 Classroom Interaction  | 10        |
| 2.1.5 Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF)                                       | 11        |
| 2.2 Theoretical Framework  | 12        |
| 2.2.1 Communicative Competence and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)       | 12        |
| 2.2.2. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)                                       | 13        |
| 2.3 Related Studies  | 14        |
| 2.3.1 Communicative Language Teaching  | 14        |
| 2.3.2 Online Learning in SLA Context   | 19        |
| 2.3.3 Interaction and Conversation Analysis (CA)                               | 20        |
| 2.3.4 Teacher Talk Time vs Student Talk Time                                   | 22        |
| 2.3.5 Teacher-Student Interaction (T-S) vs. Student- Student Interaction (S-S) | 24        |
| 2.3.6 Initiation Response Feedback (IRF)                                       | 26        |
| 2.4 The Gap  | 27        |
| <b>CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY</b>  | <b>29</b> |
| 3.1 Introduction of Methodology  | 29        |
| 3.2 Sampling and Participants  | 30        |



|   |    |
|---|----|
| 3.2.1 Online Class Participants   | 30 |
| 3.2.2 In-Person Class Participants  | 32 |
| 3.2.3 Parental Interviews   | 33 |
| 3.3 Methods for Data Collection   | 33 |
| 3.3.1 Student Observations  | 34 |
| 3.3.2 Parental Interviews   | 36 |
| 3.4 Analysis  | 38 |
| 3.5 Credibility of Research Instruments                                     | 39 |
| 3.6 Ethics  | 40 |
| 3.7 Research Procedure  | 40 |
| 3.8 Summary   | 41 |
| <b>CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS</b>  | 43 |
| 4.1 Introduction- Online Classes  | 43 |
| 4.1.1 Online Teacher Talk Time (TTT) / Student Talk Time (STT)              | 43 |
| 4.1.2 Teacher-Student Interaction (T-S) / Student-Student Interaction (S-S) | 46 |
| 4.1.3 IRF Pattern and Frequency Occurrences                                 | 49 |
| 4.2 Introduction- In-Person Classes   | 54 |
| 4.2.1 Teacher Talk Time (TTT) / Student Talk Time (STT)                     | 54 |
| 4.2.2 Teacher-Student Interaction (T-S) / Student-Student Interaction (S-S) | 57 |
| 4.2.3 IRF Pattern and Frequency Occurrences                                 | 59 |
| 4.3 Introduction- Parental Interviews                                       | 64 |
| 4.3.1 Interview Themes  | 64 |
| 4.3.2 Other Responses   | 65 |
| <b>CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION</b>  | 67 |
| 5.1 Teacher Talk Time/ Student Talk Time                                    | 67 |
| 5.2 Teacher-Student Interaction / Student-Student Interaction               | 68 |
| 5.3 Initiation-Response-Feedback / Teacher's Questions Initiation           | 70 |
| 5.4 Initiation-Response-Feedback / Student's Question Initiation            | 71 |
| <b>CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION</b>  | 73 |
| 6.1 Overview of Findings  | 73 |
| 6.2 Limitations   | 75 |
| 6.3 Recommendations   | 76 |
| <b>CHAPTER 7: APPENDICES</b>  | 78 |
| 7.1 Diagnostic Test   | 78 |
| 7.2 Interview Questions   | 82 |

|                              |    |
|------------------------------|----|
| 7.3 Parents' Consent Email   | 83 |
| 7.4 Supervisor Consent Email | 83 |
| 7.5 Principal Consent Email  | 84 |
| 7.6 Interview Sample         | 84 |
| References                   | 88 |

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Overview

After months of closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic, teaching methodologies have significantly been impacted in education world-wide. COVID-19 has drastically affected education in various Middle Eastern countries, including the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

In March 2020, the UAE government regulated classes to only be taught online in order to enhance distance learning for the protection of students from COVID-19. This teaching format continued for the remainder of the scholastic year until June 2020. In September 2020, the government mandated education to be taught on both online and in-person settings. In-person settings were optional and essentially students' parents' decision. The students who were permitted to attend in-person classes only attend every other day, and the other days attend online classes.

Teachers find it difficult to engage all distance learners at the same time during online sessions since it is an unusual arrangement caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers in the UAE have witnessed changes in the learning methods and participation from students during online teaching that differs considerably from in-classroom instruction. Some students have been positively impacted and empowered through online teaching practices, while others have been negatively impacted. Understanding these impacts is significant in evaluating the effectiveness of online teaching methods.

The topic of this paper will focus specifically on the interaction levels of students that participate in the new online teaching platforms versus the traditional in-person classroom setting. Interaction levels in this study are based on the amount of participation, communication and initiatives of each student with the teacher through online platforms. The QUALITATIVE: quantitative study focused on better understanding students' interaction levels through observational tools and parental interviews.

## **1.2 Background of Communicative Language Teaching**

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is an approach to second and international language teaching that stresses communication while in the process of acquiring a language, which serves as the primary purpose (Brown 2000). It is also known as the 'Communicative Approach.'

In the 1970s, with the introduction of traditional teaching methods, educators started to doubt whether the aims of language teaching were met (McLelland 2018). They noticed that most students were unable to interact honestly outside classrooms and were only able to pronounce the correct sentences during lessons. It was concluded that the ability to communicate not only requires students to become linguistically competent, but also to become communicatively competent.

Savignon (1987) stated that CLT requires more than commitment to techniques for the presentation of language constructs and functions. It needs, above all, the participation of learners in the dynamic and interactive communication process. A communicative classroom enables learners to experience as well as analyze language.

The term 'communicative competence' has triggered contemplation since its incorporation into discussions of language and language learning in the early 1970s. Fortunately, maybe the word has not lent itself to simplistic reduction, and with it the danger of being just another phrase, for the survival of communicative competence as a useful definition. Instead, it continues to embody a term that attracts researchers and creators of curricula, providing a rigorous structure for combining linguistic theory, science and teaching practice (Savignon 1991).

According to Spada (2007), Savignon (1972) did the only experimental research investigating the contributions of CLT to L2 learning. Other classroom research has shown since Savignon 's study that CLT contributes positively to the fluency and communicative abilities of the L2 learners. In addition, CLT has allowed L2 learners to establish understanding skills that are parallel to those of native speakers in some instances e.g. Canadian French immersion programs (Genesee 1987 as cited in Spada 2007).

In their responses to CLT, educators themselves vary (Savignon 1991). In discussions of communicative capacity, some feel understandable annoyance at the seeming uncertainty. It is well to negotiate meaning, but this view of language actions lacks precision and does not offer a universal scale for individual learners to be evaluated. Rather, ability is seen as variable and highly dependent on context and intent. Other teachers welcome the ability to choose and/or create their own content, offering a variety of communicative activities for learners. And depending on more global, integrative judgments of learner development, they are relaxed.

However, empirical research in CLT classrooms, particularly those in which no (or very little) attention is paid to the form of language, has shown that students frequently fail to attain high levels of development and precision in many aspects of language (Harley & Swain 1984; Spada & Lightbown 1989).

Therefore, a variety of educational paradigms and traditions are drawn from existing CLT theory and practice. There is no unified or accepted set of activities that define current CLT, as it draws on a variety of different sources. Instead, today's teaching of communicative language refers to a collection of commonly understood concepts that can be implemented in various ways, depending on the nature of the teaching, the learners' age, their level, their learning objectives and so on.

CLT is critical in various modes of learning including in-person classroom settings and distance teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. In-person classes serve students' needs as the research states in regards to influencing students' communicative competence. Meanwhile, distance classes also contain elements of CLT, but are not as influential as in-person classes. Teachers continue to use communicative approaches online; however, they are not as effective as in-person due to students facing barriers through distance learning. Therefore, CLT is present in distance teaching, but is highly limited.

Distance learning has directly affected English as a Second Language (ESL) students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Distance learning already impacts students in various ways regardless of the subject matter. Some students exhibit less self-confidence and are more vulnerable to anxiety than others: in the presence of peers in the classroom or when faced with academic assignments, they appear to feel uncomfortable; they are worried about making mistakes and losing face; and

they fear criticism, negative appraisal, judgmental comments and so on. When it comes to second language (L2) learning, the burden is even greater, as current approaches stress the importance of oral communication between students, which is perhaps the most important cause of learner anxiety.

Body language is essential to communication between ESL students and teachers (Gregerse 2007), and that factor can be missing during online classes. The relationship between students and teachers is essentially developed through in-person classes. The necessities in building these relationships through in-person instruction was not realized until health precautions forced teaching to be switched to online instruction. Online teaching for ESL causes there to be a lack of ease and a disconnection between teachers and students.

Differentiation activities are necessary for modern-day ESL students to fulfill the needs of individual students' skills and abilities. Online teaching creates an added challenge to ESL teachers in assigning differentiated activities to students in remote classes where s/he has to evaluate their outcomes with limited supervision. This causes high-performing students to academically be held back and for low-performing students to not meet the necessary academic level.

Studies listed under the Literature Review chapter prove the importance of CLT approaches in classroom settings; however, due to the current pandemic and the increased trend of online learning, no research has been conducted to address CLT approaches in online teaching, especially in regards to ESL students.

### **1.3 Scope and Context of the Study**

The study was conducted in order to gain data and information about students' interaction levels through ESL online teaching, as compared to in-person teaching. The study was completed through observations on elementary students in an international, private school in Abu Dhabi that adopts an American curriculum and interviews with some of their parents. Students participating in this study are in the same grade level, and they are all learning English as a second language. ESL students have varying levels of English speaking, writing, reading and listening skills based on diagnostic testing (Appendix 7.1) and teacher observation. These varying levels affected the

study results showing the impacts of online teaching for high level English students versus the lower-level English students.

#### **1.4 Statement of the Problem**

There is a lack of research conducted on CLT levels within distance learning that needs to be addressed in order to further meet students' learning needs. Further, research must be conducted on CLT levels present within distance learning in order for new methods to be developed by educators to enhance distance teaching. Due to distance learning methods, teachers and parents are unable to understand the differences in the interaction levels of high and low performing students. This may be causing high performing students to not be learning at full capacity and vice versa.

#### **1.5 Study Purpose**

This study aims in understanding the interaction of students through online classes, provides useful information for curriculum designers, develops suggestions on ways in addressing individual student learning needs and generates ideas for the development of training programs for online instructors. The purpose of the present study is two-fold: 1) It aims to explore the interaction levels in CLT in-person classes and online language classes, and 2) It seeks to gather more enriching data from parents.

Studies listed under the Literature Review chapter prove the importance of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approaches in classroom settings; however, due to the current COVID-19 pandemic and the increased trend of online learning, no research has been conducted to address CLT approaches in online teaching yet, especially in regard to ESL students. Due to distance learning methods, teachers and parents are unable to understand the differences in the interaction levels of high and low performing students. Therefore, the study sought to answer four research questions:

- How does distance learning versus in-person teaching affect Communicative Language Teaching methods in the interaction levels of ESL elementary students?
- What are the interaction differences between high level English students and lower-level English students through online learning?

- What are ESL students' needs in distance learning methods? How can their needs be better met?
- What are the parents' needs to assist their children in ESL online teaching? How can their needs be better met?

## **1.6 Study Significance**

### **1.6.1 Study Significance for Students**

This study is significant for students since it is able to determine which teaching methods are specifically lacking in online teaching that is present in in-person classroom settings. The study evaluates how to make online teaching more similar to classroom settings and provides recommendations for improving teaching methods to better serve students' needs. The mental health of students in their education has been negatively impacted during COVID-19 and caused students to adapt to challenges posed by online teaching in a short period of time. Further, students are continuously pressured to meet the expectations of parents and teachers. This study will be able to assist in reducing the confusion experienced by students. Lastly, both high and low performing students have been negatively affected by online teaching methods.

### **1.6.2 Study Significance for Teachers and Curriculum Designers**

Teachers have also been affected by online teaching that has had negative impacts on their teaching methodologies and interactions with students. Teachers are in need of further training in teaching skills development on how to effectively engage and teach students through online platforms while continuing to excel in their profession. These findings would be useful for teachers in creating curriculum that is taught effectively to elementary students. Specifically, this research would be useful for ESL teachers due the nature of ESL teaching being language and activity based for young students.



### **1.6.3. Study Significance for Other Researchers**

Due to the lack of research conducted on the effects of CLT on online teaching methodologies for elementary students, there is a need for researchers to develop studies and collect data in further understanding students' learning and interaction through online instruction. Therefore, research would be useful towards all educational subjects within elementary schools, but particularly for ESL students and teachers.

## **1.7 Outline of the Dissertation Chapters**

Having justified the purpose of this study and providing background information on its research context, the organisation of this dissertation is presented below:

Chapter 1: Introduction - This chapter highlights the importance of conducting research on evaluating the Communicative Learning Teaching (CLT) approach in ESL online classes and introduces background information about the context of this research project.

Chapter 2: Literature Review - This chapter presents key theories about CLT and specifically looks at research of Education researchers' claims concerning the influence that CLT has on learning. It also discusses students' interaction levels in online lesson and in-person lessons considering Teachers' Talk Time vs Student Talk Time and their interaction with the teacher and with their fellow classmates (Teachers - Student Interaction and Student-Student Interaction). It also sheds the light on Initiation-Response-Feedback model and its importance in developing CLT.

Chapter 3: Methodology - This chapter restates the research questions and describes the research design and procedures used in this study, including information about the participants and data collection/analysis methods employed.

Chapter 4: Findings - This chapter presents the results of the QUALITATIVE: quantitative data collected and an in-depth analysis of the data from the methodology. The analysis highlights the findings made from the study to further understand the effects of students' engagement through online classes. This section answers the research questions based on the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion - Within this chapter, the in-depth analysis of the data is discussed based on the findings from the methodology and results. The analysis highlights the findings made from the study to further understand the effects of students' engagement through online classes. This section examines the literature review, research questions, results and analysis.

Chapter 6: Conclusion - Lastly, a summary of the conducted study is presented in this chapter with a reference to the thesis statement. This chapter also generates suggestions for further development, limitations of this study and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

This part of the study discusses the conceptual framework, the theoretical framework and the relevant studies.

### **2.1 Conceptual Framework**

The main concepts that will be defined in this part are Distance Learning, Online Learning, Classroom Interaction and Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF).

#### **2.1.1 Distance Learning**

Following Keegan (1996), the term 'distance learning' has expanded to define diverse modes of learning, such as online learning, e-learning, technology, mediated learning, collaborative online learning, virtual learning, web-based learning, etc. (Conrad 2006).

As new technology became visible, learning seemed to be the subject of all kinds of teaching, and once again the word 'distance learning' was used to focus on its "distance" related limitations, i.e. time and place (Guilar & Loring 2008; Newby, Stepich, Lehman & Russell 2000).

Due to developments of new technology, Moore, Dickson-Deane and Galyen (2011) later defined distance learning as the attempt to provide access to learning for those that are geographically remote.

#### **2.1.2 Online Learning**

A host of researchers defined online learning as access to learning opportunities through the use of some technologies (Benson 2002; Carliner 2004; Conrad 2002). Benson (2002) and Conrad (2002) considered online learning as a more recent version of distance learning that enhances access for learners identified as both non-traditional and disenfranchised to educational opportunities.

Other scholars explored not only the affordability of online learning, but also its connectivity, versatility and ability to facilitate diverse interactions (Ally 2004; Hiltz & Turoff 2005; Oblinger & Oblinger 2005). In particular, Hiltz and Turoff (2005) not only eluded the correlation of online learning with distance learning and conventional delivery systems, but also, like Benson (2002), made a clear argument that online learning is a newer version or/and enhanced version of distance learning.

### **2.1.3 Distance and Online Learning- Similar or Different?**

Therefore, the commonalities found in the meanings of distance and online learning are similar with both forms of learning taking place between two parties (a student and instructor). Both forms of learning are held at various times and/or locations and use different sources of instructional materials.

Specifically, during the pandemic, online learning methods are being used to achieve distance learning for students. Hence, both terms are used interchangeably through this study to explain students current learning status and to describe the challenges faced.

### **2.1.4 Classroom Interaction**

Mehan (1974) defined interaction as the process of 'accomplishing' lessons. Allwright (1984) shed light on the fact that 'interaction' and 'communication' should not be treated as synonyms although it still seems to be taken for granted by those in the field that 'communication' applies only to individuals speaking to each other. Allwright (1984) went beyond this notion and considered interaction in the classroom not only as an aspect of modern language teaching methods, but as the fundamental reality of classroom pedagogy, the fact that everything that happens in the classroom occurs through a process of live person-to-person interaction.

Classroom interaction in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context is defined as all communication which refers not only to those exchanges involving authentic communication but

also to every oral exchange that occurs in the classroom, including those that arise in the course of formal drilling (Ellis 1990).

Due to distance learning, students and teachers have experienced less interaction in teaching and learning methods. This has negatively impacted students in EFL courses due to the necessary interactions and communication needed in learning a new language, as described by Allwright (1984).

### **2.1.5 Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF)**

IRF is a sequence of debate between the teacher and students. The instructor begins, the student reacts and then the teacher offers input (Sinclair & Coulthard 1975). IRF can be traced along three conversational turns.

The IRF cycle consists of three steps: an initiation refers to a publicly understood teacher's order or informative instruction; a response refers to the reaction of students (focusing essentially on verbal reaction) to demonstrate their comprehension of the teacher's instruction; and a feedback provided by the teacher to demonstrate attitude, remarks or assessment in the light of pedagogical objectives (Hellermann 2003; Sinclair and Coulthard 1975; Wells 1993).

First, initiation (I), which is the movement in which teachers start an interaction. Second, Response (R), which is actually achieved by the students after the initiation that the teacher produced. The last turn is Feedback (F), which aims to provide feedback on the reaction of students. According to Dayag et al. (2008), the feedback completes the loop as it brings the initiation and response to a closure. This ensures that learners get the correction or appraisal for their response immediately.

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

### **2.2.1 Communicative Competence and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)**

To illustrate the difference between a communicative view of language and Chomsky's theory of competence, Hymes (1972) coined the word "communicative competence" (Young 2008).

Communicative competence requires not only the knowledge of a language, but also what message to convey, to whom and how to communicate properly in any specific context, and that also includes socio-cultural knowledge that helps speakers to use and understand various types of speech (Young 2008; Saville-Troike 2003). The wider definition of communicative competence required a re-examination of current language teaching objectives, which eventually contributed to the creation of a communicative approach to language teaching (Thornbury 2006).

CLT is an approach which stresses the importance of communicating while learning a second or international language, which serves as the primary purpose (Brown 2000). It is also known as the 'Communicative Approach'. In the 1970s, CLT was developed by linguists Michael Halliday, who researched how grammar communicates language functions, and Dell Hymes, who introduced the concept of a broader communicative competence instead of the narrower linguistic competence of Chomsky (Kamiya 2006; Young 2008).

CLT contributes in helping learners develop speaking skills when learning a foreign language. Foreign language learning is seen not only as a developmental process that is potentially predictable, but also as the formation of meaning through interpersonal negotiation between learners. In Second Language Acquisition (SLA), communicative competence has become a household word. CLT, with its pedagogical equivalent, still stands as a fitting term to capture many of the most recent research and teaching patterns (Brown 2000).

Michael Canale and Merrill Swain based their version of communicative competence on the work of Hymes, and their structure is helpful in understanding what knowledge and skills a person needs to learn in order to communicate (Young 2011).

### **2.2.2. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)**

Technology directly correlates with online learning and affects the learning abilities of students and teaching capabilities of instructors. According to Marangunić and Granić (2015), with the ever-increasing growth of technology and its incorporation in the private and professional life of users, a decision on its acceptance or rejection remains an open question. The success of the model in the field of technology acceptance is clearly demonstrated by a respectable amount of work dealing with TAM, from its first appearance more than a quarter of a century ago. Marangunić and Granić (2015) stated that originating in the psychological theory of reasoned action and expected behavior theory, TAM has developed to become a central paradigm in the perception of human behavior predictors against future technology adoption or rejection. In regard to this study, students and teachers psychologically accept or reject new technology methods pertaining to distance learning.

When users are faced with a new technology, their decision on how and when they will use it is affected by two main factors: Perceived Usefulness (PU) which is the degree to which a person feels it will increase his or her job efficiency by using a specific method and Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) which is the degree to which an individual feels that it would be free from effort to use a specific method (Davis 1985).

According to Davis (1985), when PU is determined by individuals, their intentions of usage and eventual usage behavior of specific methods increase. PEOU follows the same model that when determined it will increase intentions and usage behavior of specific methods as well. PEOU can further influence PU since users are able to identify the efficiency of a specific method based on the ease they would experience from using this method.

Individual students adapt to new methods of teaching differently; however, when there is an ease of technology usage, then students are able to participate and benefit from distance learning. Although access to the Internet may appear to be ubiquitous, there is a digital divide- some students are Internet savvy, while others are not (Kleinman 2000). When students experience

challenges and technology difficulties, this negatively impacts their learning. Numerous constraints cause students to lack ease of technology usage, such as low-quality home technology devices, devices/programs not being user friendly, and students lacking English language capabilities to perform technological tasks. Therefore, the TAM is dependent on the individual students' technological understanding in distance learning methods; however, many students have shown that technology has negatively impacted their learning due to constraints causing a lack of PEOU, which directly affects PU (Marangunić and Granić 2015).

## **2.3 Related Studies**

### **2.3.1 Communicative Language Teaching**

A very [1] significant feature of teaching communicative language is that it can be modified to accommodate various teaching and learning conditions in all kinds of ways. Fundamental to it is, after all, reverence for and appreciation of people and culture (Nock 2020).

According to Nock (2020), language lessons are not supposed to be governed by educators who use communicative techniques. It is the students who should do most of the talking (often in pairs or groups) and who, not the teachers, need to practice using the target language.

Nhem (2019) found that teachers and students preferred CLT. In CLT classroom, pair/group work has often been used because it can help students generate ideas for communicative purposes. The role of the teacher is to build an engaging learning experience that would increase students' interest and motivation to learn.

According to Alamri (2018), CLT's main objective is to teach people how to communicate effectively. Its approach helps language learners to express themselves during collaborative activities. CLT is rapidly gaining popularity and is being used all over the world. Alamri (2018) added that language learners are more focused on understanding the concepts rather than linguistic concepts and lexical collocations.



CLT is not concerned solely with face-to-face oral communication (Savignon 2018).

Communication principles apply equally to reading and writing activities involving readers and writers in the interpretation, expression and negotiation of meaning; learning objectives depend on learning needs in a given context.

Communicative methods teach vocabulary, grammar and discourse features in practical ways (e.g. how to connect conversation segments or paragraphs together or how to construct cohesive texts) and enable learners to exercise the use of language in meaningful activities, such as knowledge gap activities, in which learners request information from others that they really need to accomplish in an assignment (Nock 2020). In certain ways, tutored language and cultural learning is necessarily artificial. Even so, those who hold to the principles of teaching communicative language strive to keep this artificiality to a minimum. They also try to ensure that students use the target language as often as possible.

Nock (2020) stated that the value of not being overambitious is emphasised by communicative language teaching. Language programs that are too ambitious, programs that are too fast to implement too much new language, do not give learners a real chance to learn. They can also undermine learners' faith and motivation. Thus, the learning of the target language should not only be fun, but also purposeful. It ought to be demanding, but never overwhelming.

According to Savignon (1991), the communication in terms of language skills can be seen as four categories: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Such ability categories explained through manuals describing techniques, materials for learner courses and programs for teacher education. Subsequently, the abilities necessary to participate in speaking and writing activities were defined as productive, while listening and reading abilities were said to be receptive. The interactive essence of meaning making is lost in this active / receptive, message sending / message receiving representation. According to Savignon (1991), CLT places the emphasis on the learner by design. Communicative needs for learners provide a basis for the elaboration of program objectives in terms of functional competence.

According to Savignon (1991), second language acquisition shows that learning is largely unaffected by classroom instruction. However, based on the research study, classroom instructions provide students with various learning methods to be able to develop and grow in their second language learning. Interactive activities and teacher/student interaction further develop students' second language development.

Second language studies were soon followed by the first language cross-linguistic studies of developmental universals initiated in the 1970s. Acquisition oral communicative contexts on the basis of speech, tended to adopt a similar morphosyntactic sequence regardless of learner age or learning background. The systemic practice of the variety of "skill obtaining" was seen to have little impact on self-expression or "skill using." Although they served to illustrate the informal instructor findings, namely that presentation of textbooks and drills do not ensure the use of these same mechanisms by learners in their own spontaneous expression, the results were nevertheless disconcerting. Krashen and Terrell (1983) argued that in the language classroom, such activities do not promote genuine communicative language abilities and challenge their importance. Not all students learn from the same methods, therefore, teachers must be innovative in their teaching methods in order to develop all students' learning. Textbooks and drills may assist in the learning process but differentiated instructions, classroom environments and tasks are necessary in providing the information to all students. The extensive use of drill and controlled practice appear to typify non-communicative language habits (Nunan 1987).

Based on classroom observations, Nunan (1987) found that teachers appeared to be teaching 'communicatively' in each of their lessons studied, and to a certain degree they were, with all lessons ostensibly concentrating on practical aspects of language usage. Through conducting classroom observations in the study, the researcher was able to identify that students interact 'communicatively' with the teacher and other students while concentrating on the aspects of second language learning. However, distance learning caused students to lack 'communicative' interaction with the teacher and other students while learning English as a second language. In the language, according to Nunan (1987), if a poor interpretation of teaching communicative

language is acknowledged, then it is important to acknowledge the value of grammatical clarification, error correction and exercise. However, learners will need the chance to take part in real communicative communication.

According to (Nunan 1987), it is not appropriate to be completely cynical about the ability to make the classroom more communicative. What is necessary is to understand that there are powerful restrictions, as do teachers and learners' conditioned classroom reflexes. In order to assess the degree to which theory is realized by classroom experience, this study demonstrates the value of performing classroom-based research. There is growing evidence that experiences can, in fact, not be very communicative at all in communicative groups. However, when comparing this to distance learning, there is more interaction of students and teachers in communicative groups in classroom settings. Although communicative 'experiences' may be lacking in classrooms, these experiences are non-existent through online teaching. Nevertheless, in-person classroom methods are being built to increase the opportunities for genuine contact.

The value of contact experience (practice) in improving communicative competence has been recorded by second-language acquisition studies. A mixture of interactions affecting the learner is most successful both in a physical and psychological context as well as in an analytical context. In other words, second-language interactions should include the entire learner. They should be physical as well as cognitive and effective (Savignon 1987). However, in distance learning the 'entire' student is not present due to physical restrictions placed in the pandemic setting. This limits teachers to only be able to connect and teach students in the psychological context, which can also be lost when students are not fully engaged in the online classroom. Interaction can take several forms, depending on the preferences of the learner and the degree of competence (Savignon 1987).

According to Thompson (1996), CLT is closely correlated with a range of unique types of tasks at the practical end of the classroom, such as problem-solving and pair-work. However, things become less certain in the middle field - the place where theory meets practice. Thompson (1996)

argued the misconceptions about CLT that continue to survive, making it hard for many teachers to see clearly what is happening and to appreciate the beneficial advances that CLT has brought with it.

These misconceptions are not limited to, but include, the following concerns: that CLT does not teach grammar, only focuses on teaching speaking, only involves pair work, and CLT sets high expectations from the teacher. Firstly, the misconception of CLT not teaching grammar was never a mandatory component of CLT. It is definitely understandable that there was a backlash at the cost of natural communication against the strong emphasis on structure (Thompson 1996).

Regarding CLT only teaching speaking, CLT includes encouraging students to engage and focus on communication in as many different ways as possible. Therefore, it is necessary to think about the wider definition of student communication time rather than student talking time (Thompson 1996). Another misconception finds that CLT means learning through pair work, which focuses on the activity of role play. Pair work (and group work) are often more versatile and useful methods, however, the narrowness that pair work only focuses on role play is limited when it expands to various forms. Lastly, misconceptions of CLT set high expectations on teachers that cannot be necessarily met. Non-native English speakers need a higher degree of language proficiency to be able to communicate effectively and to cope with a wider variety of information about language use than they are used to, or rather, a different balance of proficiency skills. This is crucial due to CLT being used as a method built by and for teachers of native speakers.

However, Thompson (1996) concluded in his study that the next 'revolution' in language teaching is, no doubt, already underway somewhere, and CLT is by no means the final response. In fact, there is increasing evidence to suggest just the opposite; that in CLT classes where the attention of the learners is predominantly based on meaning and content, more specific forms of corrective feedback may be needed (Nicholas, Lightbown & Spada 2001). These misconceptions regarding CLT have been addressed through findings providing information on how to continue improving CLT methods in classroom settings, and in the future develop methods for distance learning.

### **2.3.2 Online Learning in SLA Context**

According to Perry and Pilati (2011), any institution or teacher attempting to join the online realm must be fully conscious of obstacles that are emerging. Online teachers, particularly those teaching ESL, should be aware of the need to "know" their students during the course through the use of a number of ways of interaction. Much as face-to-face teachers know their students by sight, by the quality of their work, their writing and their online presence, online instructors should come to know their students as well. One-on-one experiences, written activities and discussion posts all provide teachers with samples of student skills and abilities.

However, even if these efforts are achieved, studies have shown that distance learning has both positive and negative effects on Second Language Learning (Ellis 1994; Frantzen & Magnan 2005; Koch & Terrell 1991; Matsuda & Gobel 2004; Young 1991).

During classroom instruction, some students exhibit less self-confidence and are more vulnerable to anxiety than others: in the presence of peers in the classroom or when faced with academic assignments, they appear to feel uncomfortable; they are worried about making mistakes and losing face; and they fear criticism, negative appraisal, judgmental comments, and so on. When it comes to second language (L2) learning, the burden is even greater, as current approaches stress the importance of oral communication between students, which is perhaps the most important cause of learner anxiety (Ellis 1994; Frantzen & Magnan 2005; Koch & Terrell 1991; Matsuda & Gobel 2004; Young 1991).

Pichette (2009) stated that several reasons for choosing distance learning have been offered by students, the most common being the location where they live, their work schedule, costs, life roles, commuting issues, disability and individual variables. Pichette's study concentrated on one such variable: anxiety in foreign languages and hypothesized that when faced with language learning tasks, the propensity of students to be nervous influences their learning processes and academic performance. Because general foreign language anxiety makes students unable to connect with their peers in the classroom, for that specific reason, one might expect that some

students turn to distance learning and seek protection in anonymity, rather than other factors relevant to their location or work schedule. Thus, the preference of distance learning by students can be explained in part by their anxiety associated with foreign language oral contact, which, as stated earlier, is the key skill addressed by general foreign language anxiety tests.

Due to the pandemic, students were not given the choice to participate in online learning, but rather were forced due to the circumstances. New distance learning in SLA context may serve as beneficial to students who experience these anxieties, but others that do not experience anxiety and flourish in classroom settings were not given a choice to engage in online learning methods. Teachers have not yet been able to adopt solid online teaching methods, causing a potential lack of quality in online education for students.

### **2.3.3 Interaction and Conversation Analysis (CA)**

As summarized by Lee (2017), students use a wide variety of multimodal resources to demonstrate their ability to react and participate in the classroom, including movements, nodding, head turns, facial expression, pointing, audible inbreathing and body gestures. According to Allwright (1984), the learning of language in the classroom is handled through classroom contact with productive teaching techniques.

In order to capture the concept of learning as a means of drawing on mutual experience within a learning environment, such as a classroom, Hall (2018) suggested the term "interactional repertoires": behaviors and activities in the classroom shift from moment to moment, and learners use all the semiotic, multimodal and embodied tools available, i.e. their "repertoires." This learning process is seen in the demonstrations of members' responsibility to each other in the learning settings (Hellermann 2018).

In this sense, Hall (2018) saw learning was an unstable, ever-changing, emerging enactment through interaction; it was seen as pragmatically oriented, dynamic, adaptable and varied semiotic tools, i.e. linguistic, prosodic, interactional, nonverbal, visual, artifactual and other instruments.

Hall (2019) indicated that evidence was then convincing that awareness of the use/interaction shape, but what was still underspecified is how particular linguistic units are "shaped" through the fine details of classroom social contexts.

According to Gardner (2019), there are two wide areas that are based on classroom study using Conversation Analysis (CA): The first is how discourse in the classroom is conducted and second how it varies from daily communication or conversation in other institutions: How talk turns are allocated; how talk sequences are organized; teacher and student activities and actions; how repair and correction are performed; how teachers and learners develop individual turns at talk; extended turns at talk; instructions; management and discipline in the classroom.

In the service of the second wide field of learning, all these activities are carried out. It has been claimed that CA is not appropriate for investigating learning per se, but a number of approaches to researching learning as a social and interactional phenomenon have been developed by CA researchers in classrooms in the last 10 years or so (Gardner 2019).

Kramsch (1986) suggested that students must be given opportunities to communicate with both the teacher and fellow students by turn-taking to obtain input, to ask for clarification and to initiate contact in order to achieve the communicative competence of students. This has successfully been accomplished through classroom settings that create traditional spaces for teacher/student communication and learning activities. It helps students develop their speech skills by giving students the chance to speak up in the classroom.

Mackey (1999) recommended that teachers create engaging learning environments in which students in the target language can engage with each other to generate meaning. In other words, teachers need to orchestrate engagement in the classroom that facilitates the active involvement of students through turn-taking, input and negotiation to generate the target language.

Suryati (2015) proposed to reconfigure current approaches to teacher-student interaction to increase the ability for students to engage in successful classroom interaction and thereby develop their oral communication skills. Practitioners should also suggest the provision and

implementation of classroom interaction techniques that are more facilitative to improve the oral communicative competence of the students (Suryati 2015).

Due to the emphasis of interaction enhancing students' performance, the study conducted research on the interaction levels of ESL students in classroom settings and online learning. This research was conducted to have a fuller understanding of the impact of interaction in the classroom and in online learning.

### **2.3.4 Teacher Talk Time vs Student Talk Time**

A major factor for acquiring L2 depends on listening to the authentic L2 of the teacher in the classroom. Therefore, applicable interactions between teachers and students should be transferred to TTT. Also, the utterances of the teacher need to be explicit and suitable for the students in the classroom (Allwright 1982; Willis 1990; Paul 2003).

Still, the amount of TTT in the classroom may be affected by several variables, for example, the number of students and the students' level. Nevertheless, Richards and Lockhart (1994) concluded that by evaluating and examining TTT in ESL class, teachers can become more aware of it, which in turn will help them determine the efficiency of their teaching methods in general.

Krashen (1985) said that Teacher Talk (TT) defines effective language learning by providing plenty of high-quality feedback. Nunan (1991) also pointed out that TT is important, not only for the organization of the classroom, but also for the acquisition process. It is through language that teachers either succeed in executing their plans or fail. Therefore, TT is critical in terms of acquisition since it is possibly the main source of understandable target language feedback that the learner is likely to obtain in an ESL class.

In a variety of studies, negative effects of teachers speaking for an extended period of time have been observed. Allwright (1982) believed that it was not successful to teach teachers who 'act' too much in the classroom. Ross (1992) also suggested that continuous teacher conversation did not



substantially enhance the listening comprehension and communication skills of students during the lessons.

In the ESL classroom, according to Paul (2003), Teacher Talk Time (TTT) was critically assessed in the course of trying to maximize the practice time of L2 students. A great deal of TTT research has concentrated on its quantity (amount) and/or quality (effectiveness). New insights into the ways ESL teachers teach in the classroom were provided by these studies (Willis 1990).

The fewer students practice L2 in a classroom, the less effective the lesson would be (Paul 2003). To prevent excessive TTT and to maximize the relationship between TTT and STT in EFL classrooms, a variety of teaching strategies and approaches have been suggested, such as error correction management (Willis 1990; Allwright & Bailey 1991; Richards, Jack & Lockhart 1994), elicitation and responses management (Chaudron 1988; Skehan 2001), student pair work and group work (Richards & Lockhart 1994; Paul 2003; Willis 1990), reasonable wait-time after elicitation (Richards & Lockhart 1994; Paul 2003) and the clarification of instructions for the students (Rosenshine & Stevens 1986; Mercer 2001).

The main issue is whether the amount of teacher conversation affects learners' SLA. Many researchers have shown that teachers appear to do much of the talk in the classroom, more than 70% of the overall talk (Cook 2000; Chaudron 1998). In this case, Student Talk (ST) would also be heavily limited as TT occupies the classroom, leaving ESL students only a minor chance to improve their language skills. Therefore, teachers have to optimize STT and minimize TTT in order to prevent the overuse of TT. According to Harmer (2001), the best lessons are those where STT is maximized. Having students to communicate, using the language they are studying, is an integral part of the work of an ESL teacher.

According to Setiawati (2012)'s study, 67% of ESL students believed that the appropriate amount of TT should be less than 25 minutes which shows that students prefer to be given more activities and opportunities to interact in the class. 33% of the students needed their teachers to talk more due to the fact that they weren't confident enough to talk in the target language. Setiawati (2012) concluded after conducting her observations that the more TT used in class, the less motivated the

students were and vice versa. Therefore, more learning can, in fact, take place when TT is minimized.

### **2.3.5 Teacher-Student Interaction (T-S) vs. Student- Student Interaction (S-S)**

According to Suryati (2015), the front-facing interaction of the teacher is an interaction in which the teacher deals with the entire class and communicates with a succession of people, while anticipating the attention of the rest of the class. The teacher, called teacher-student interaction, initiates and controls this interaction (T-S). The second form involves student involvement while they are working in pairs or in a group. This form of contact is labeled as interaction between student and student (S-S). As further clarified by Sharliz and Fauziati (2017), teacher-student interaction is referred to as teacher-student interaction (T-S). It can be said that the teacher participates in the teaching learning process as a role model in the classroom. If there is an interaction to each other, from teacher to student, it can be called teacher-student interaction, and it can be one student or more. The interaction occurs when teachers discuss, praise, encourage, provide feedback, give examples and instructions, demand, ask questions, translate into L1 and/or simply smile.

Past research has examined the connection between teacher and student experiences with student interest, motivation for learning and academic achievement (Araújo, Cardoso & Fidalgo 2016; Gröschner, Seidel, Kiemer & Pehmer 2015). Scholars have also argued through qualitative methods e.g. classroom observations and interviews that what teachers say and do will help the self-regulated learning of young students during complex reading and writing activities, such as planning, observing, problem-solving and evaluating (Perry, VandeKamp, Mercer & Nordby 2002).

The consistency of a teacher's interactions with students in a classroom plays a key role in student learning and development (Pianta 2016). Most researchers have used the approach of classroom observation to explain teacher-student relationships in classrooms (Perry, VandeKamp, Mercer & Nordby 2002), for the quantitative content analysis and delay sequential analysis could produce

the behavioral trends in the interactions by further processing the qualitative data from observations e.g. videotaping the discourses or interactions between teachers and learners (Cheng & Tsai 2016; Kucuk & Sisman 2017). Cheng and Tsai (2016) suggested a structure for the implementation of child-parent shared augmented reality book reading by investigating the learning behavioral trends in child-parent interactions. Kucuk and Sisman (2017) argued that disclosing behavioral patterns allows for a better understanding of teacher-student relationships and offers further insight into curriculum educational growth.

For English learners, the most common issue is that they understand what the English native speaker says, but they have difficulty making suggestions (Gosh 2010). It is because there is no partnership between teachers and students, or between students and students. Since there is no opportunity for them, students cannot develop their speaking skills in class. They are not given the opportunity to practice talking on their own, so there is almost no interaction among students in the classroom (Gosh 2010).

In online lessons, it is helpful for students to engage in the learning process of teaching. It is crucial for teachers to increase the opportunities of students to engage in the classroom and develop the capacity of students to communicate, incorporating some communicative activity to make students speak up in the classroom, such as conversation, debate, peer work and many more engaging activities (Sharliz & Fauziati 2017).

However, based on Jaggars and Xu (2016)'s study, most student respondents appeared disinterested in engaging with their online peers despite the support from their teachers. Most students viewed their online course discussions interactions as forced artificial contact that did not resemble spontaneous personal ties in a face-to-face classroom or lead to active learning.

Some students reported negative experiences with mandatory group work in their online classes, in addition to a general indifference to online peer interactions. They found working within a group online "just much more difficult". Whilst the same students did not mind doing group work in a classroom setting where face-to-face interaction takes place (Jaggars and Xu 2016).

In distance courses, student-student interactions can conflict with student autonomy in the management of their learning time, location, and pace may not inherently benefit students (Ragoonaden & Bordeleau 2000).

Based on Jaggars (2014)'s study, almost all students noticed that online classes were more "distant," less "personal," less "immediate," less "detailed" or less "solid". Also, S-T was the essence of online classes. In fact, they missed the direct guidance they got in face-to-face classes, and many felt like they were "teaching themselves." Students did not want to risk taking difficult courses online and favored the rich atmosphere of face-to-face classrooms -as how they described it when learning about important, interesting subjects.

### **2.3.6 Initiation Response Feedback (IRF)**

The Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) loop, widely used in teacher-fronted classroom experiences, is one area of classroom discourse that has been investigated for decades (Mercer and Dawes 2014; Poole 1990). In classroom debate, whether the IRF cycle is used effectively can influence learning opportunities (Li 2018).

According to Li (2018), the concept of the IRF cycle, in a broad sense, includes not only the basic IRF series, but also the moves formed on the basis of the movements of Initiation (I), Response (R) and Feedback (F). This methodology was used in the study through classroom observation that was video recorded for tracking IRF interactions. IRF was used to measure the interaction levels of students during classroom instructions and identified by the researcher in order to determine final interaction levels between in-person and distance learning. The recent interdisciplinary is of interest in this study as IRF provides a good identification method of interaction between a teacher and a student of the most general, minimum unit of interactional exchange (Mercer & Dawes 2014).

According to Mercer and Dawes (2014), there are four kinds of IRF 'communicative approaches' that can be found in ESL classroom instructions:

- A. Interactive / dialogic: A number of concepts are considered by teachers and students.
- B. Non-interactive / dialogic: various points of view are reviewed by students.
- C. Interactive / authoritative: Instructor focuses on a particular point of view and guides students to define and consolidate that point of view through a question and response routine.
- D. Non-interactive / authoritative: a particular point of view is provided by teachers.

The researcher reflected on these ‘communicative approaches’ when analyzing the video footage of classroom instruction to measure student interaction levels.

An understanding of the value of the quality of classroom interaction seems to have evolved (Coultras 2006; Dawes 2004), among those who are in close communication with students and who are better placed to note the transformative potential of a talk-focused approach to teaching and learning-teachers. In the classroom observation recorded for the study, the instructor provided a theme-based class that allowed for students to participate in open discussions and share their experiences regarding the theme. The teacher was able to build on students’ responses and experiences through the IRF model.

## **2.4 The Gap**

Having reviewed the literature, it can be stated that the importance of CLT approaches are unquestionable in classroom settings; however, little was found on CLT in an online setting especially in regard to ESL students. Moreover, interaction was found to be a crucial pillar in CLT, yet the literature lacked addressing it in an online setting especially S-S. This study aims to provide information and data to teachers, curriculum designers and researchers on how to improve online curriculum programs to better interact with students and enhance teachers and student relations. By understanding the struggles of students and parents through the study’s observations and interviews, this study aims to fully understand the needs that should be addressed in

improving online teaching methods in order for schools and educators to provide the best academic teaching possible for elementary students in the UAE as well as guidance to parents who had to adapt to the new norm amid the pandemic. Lastly, this study also sheds light on the high and low performing students in both settings to measure their interaction levels alike.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction of Methodology**

After reviewing the literature, certain questions have been raised regarding the interaction levels of ESL students in distance learning. The methodology of the research conducted included observations and interview questions of students and parents. This study was conducted at a private school in Abu Dubai that adopts an American curriculum.

The researcher conducting this study is an experienced ESL teacher that has worked with students of various backgrounds and grade levels. The teacher and students share a subjective relationship. The ESL teacher has taught these specific students used in the study since September 2020. Therefore, the researcher was a participant observer in the classes conducted for the observational studies.

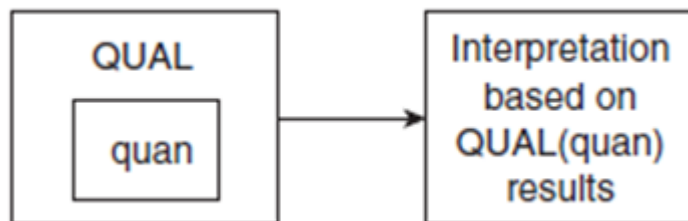
In this study, research was conducted through observing ESL students in an in-person classroom setting through the QUALITATIVE: quantitative research method. The tools mostly used were qualitative through observing classes and conducting parental interviews, yet the data collection generated quantitative data used in Tables. Students were observed by the teacher/researcher during a class and recorded for research purposes. These observations provided qualitative and quantitative data collection for research purposes and analysis. The qualitative and quantitative data collection provided information on students interaction levels in classroom and online settings. Qualitative data has several positive characteristics in conducting classroom research. Firstly, it usually provides natural knowledge that enables psychological researchers to increase their understanding of phenomena taking place in a school. Secondly, qualitative knowledge appears to be gathered in close proximity to the relevant situations, for example by direct observations with the local context's impact is taken into account and not taken into account (Miles & Huberman 1994). Researchers are able to learn from participant observation enabling them to understand data gathered by other techniques, but also to formulate questions for those techniques that will give them the best understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Mack 2005). Therefore, classroom observations provided a further understanding of interaction levels of

students in classroom settings compared to distance learning. The Embedded Design is a design of mixed methods in which one data set offers a supporting, secondary function in a study focused primarily on the other form of data (Creswell et al. 2003). This design is especially useful when a researcher wants to integrate a qualitative aspect into a quantitative design.

In this study, parents of students that opted for their children to attend both in-person classes and distance learning answered interview questions through written form. Questions were focused on better understanding students interaction levels through distance and in-person teaching.

According to Lambert and Loiselle (2007), interviews are widely used in qualitative research as a tool for data collection. They are used as a research strategy to collect data on the perceptions, thoughts and views of participants regarding a particular research topic or phenomenon of interest. In regards to this study, parents were interviewed as the main source of data collection due to their presence during students' online learning sessions. Interviews were able to collect information based on parental observations and based on their personal assessments of their child's learning needs, leading to quantitative data collection in this study as shown in figure 1 (Hanson et. al 2005).

**Figure 1: Embedded Design**



## **3.2 Sampling and Participants**

### **3.2.1 Online Class Participants**

Participants that were observed for the study were six elementary ESL students. Students that were chosen for this study were in the 5th Grade, ranging between 9-10 years old. The researcher



summarized the background information of students attending a private international school in Abu Dhabi that participated in online class observations. Table 1 provides a summary of the students' performance levels, total number of online classes observed, the class topics covered, and student grade level.

**Table 1. Summary of Online Classes Observations at an International Private School in Abu Dhabi**

| <b>Students</b> | <b>Total online<br/>Class observed</b> | <b>Topic</b>                                   | <b>Grade level</b> |
|-----------------|--|--|--------------------|
| 3 HP and 3 LP   | 1                                      | Reading Comprehension<br>skills and strategies | Five               |
| 3 HP and 3 LP   | 1                                      | Text Analysis                                  | Five               |
| 3 HP and 3 LP   | 1                                      | Project Presentation                           | Five               |
| 3 HP and 3 LP   | 1                                      | Grammar  | Five               |
| 3 HP and 3 LP   | 1                                      | Grammar  | Five               |
| Total           | 5                                      |  |                    |

Table 1 demonstrates that half of the students observed were high-performing (HP) (50%) and the other half were low-performing (LP) students (50%). The only observed grade level was Grade 5 (100%). The topics were distributed as follows: Reading Comprehension Skills and Strategies (20%), Text Analysis (20%), Project Presentation (20%) and Grammar (40%).

Low performing students in the English language are determined by their diagnostic test results (Appendix 7.1). All low performing students received less than 50% in their diagnostic test, and

all high performing students received a score of 90% and above in the same test. These students attended both in-person classroom settings and online classes due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### 3.2.2 In-Person Class Participants

The researcher summarized the background information of students attending the same private international school in Abu Dhabi that participated in in-person class observations along with the online class observation. Table 2 provides a summary of the students' performance levels, total number of in-person classes observed, the class topics covered and student grade level.

**Table 2. Summary of In-Person Classes Observations at an International Private School in Abu Dhabi**

| <b>Students</b> | <b>Total in-person<br/>Class observed</b> | <b>Topic</b>                                   | <b>Grade level</b> |
|-----------------|---|--|--------------------|
| 3 HP and 3 LP   | 1   | Reading Comprehension<br>Strategies and Skills | Five               |
| 3 HP and 3 LP   | 1   | Literature Themes                              | Five               |
| 3 HP and 3 LP   | 1   | Vocabulary                                     | Five               |
| 3 HP and 3 LP   | 1   | Literature Overview                            | Five               |
| 3 HP and 3 LP   | 1   | Grammar  | Five               |
| Total           | 5   |  |                    |

Table 2 demonstrates that half of the students observed were high-performing (HP) (50%) and the other half were low-performing (LP) students (50%). The only observed grade level was Grade 5 (100%). The topics were distributed as follows: Reading Comprehension Skills and Strategies

(20%), Literature Themes (20%), Vocabulary (20%), Literature Overview (20%) and Grammar (20%).

### **3.2.3 Parental Interviews**

The other participants selected for this study were four individual parents of these specific students attending both in-person and online classes. These participants volunteered in answering the interview questions to provide in-depth information about their children's interaction within regular classroom settings and distance learning. Two of these participants were parents of high performing students and the other two were parents of low performing students in the English language.

The students and parents selected in this sample were chosen based on Convenience Sampling. According to Dörnyei (2007), Convenience Sampling is a form of non-probability or non-random sampling in which target population participants are included for the purpose of the study to meet certain realistic requirements, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time or willingness to participate. This method of sampling was selected due to the restrictions placed by COVID-19. Students were convenient for the researcher to target since these were the only ESL students participating in both classroom and online settings for learning instruction.

Since the primary aim of convenience sampling is to gather data from participants that are readily available to the researcher, such as hiring providers attending a study participation staff meeting (Palinkas, Green, Wisdom & Hoagwood 2013), the parents selected were also of convenience due to having students participating in both learning methods. These students were geographically available and no additional requirements were needed to obtain data information.

### **3.3 Methods for Data Collection**

The methods used in the data collection were two-fold: student observations and parental interviews. Both methods used qualitative data collection to research the interaction levels of students in classroom and online settings. Through using qualitative data in both methods, quantitative data was generated listing the numerical evidence found in student observations and parental interviews.

Parental interviews were measured through coding specific themes in interview questions and provided quantitative data for the frequency that each theme was mentioned. Student observations were measured through teacher talk time (TTT), student talk time (STT), teacher-student interaction (T-T), student-student interaction (S-T) and Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF). For TTT and STT, all utterances were timed to the nearest second and categorised. For T-S and S-S, all utterances were timed to the nearest second and categorised. IRF was determined by the frequency of questions and responses provided by the teacher and students. These quantitative data can be found in the Tables provided in the Findings.

### **3.3.1 Student Observations**

The researcher used student observations in both classroom and online teaching settings. Both settings were videotaped for observational analysis purposes. Through these student observations, the researcher was able to gather data answering the following research questions:

- How does distance learning versus in-person teaching affect Communicative Language Teaching methods in the interaction levels of ESL elementary students?
- What are the interaction differences between high level English students and lower level English students through online learning?
- What are ESL students' needs in distance learning methods? How can their needs be better met?

The observational study provided data and answered the first three Research Questions. The observational criteria also included the calculation of student-talk time during regular and distance learning classes. The researcher calculated the teacher-talk time during regular and distance learning classes. The researcher also observed students' interaction levels and time spent on discussions during both regular and distance learning classes.

The importance of student observation contributes to QUALITATIVE: quantitative data collection method. Qualitative data served as the source of answering research questions in the study. Qualitative data, often based on the experiences of people, allow researchers in school psychology to study phenomena and try to make sense or interpret them with regard to the meanings that people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln 2005). Quantitative data was embedded within the qualitative data collection. Participant's observation helps researchers to establish a knowledge of the cultural environment that will prove invaluable during the project. It provides them with a nuanced understanding of meaning that can only come from private experience.

Activity with other individuals, with locations, with objects, and with states of being such as age and health status is no substitute for experiencing or engaging in phenomena of human interaction (Mack 2005). Therefore, student observations allowed the researcher to gather data of students' personal experiences developing further knowledge on the effects the teaching environment has on students' learning.

Based on the importance highlighted by academic researchers in participant observational studies, students were observed by the teacher/researcher in five in-person classes and in five online classes in this study. All of the classes in-person and online were video recorded for observational study purposes and evaluated by the researcher following the class. The researcher also evaluated students during the class using the Initiative Response Feedback model (IRF). The researcher evaluated how often these on-site students took initiative in answering questions, asking questions and sharing their thoughts in class. For the response, the researcher evaluated student responses to questions and their responses in open class discussions. In regards to the feedback, the teacher provided positive and/or negative feedback to students based on their responses, which led to more potential initiatives and responses from the students. The researcher compared the amounts of initiative, responses, and feedback between in-person and distance learning classes.

Further, online classes were recorded for research observations to analyze student interaction levels in online learning. The observer interacted with students, provided information via online platforms, and created discussions/group activities for students to interact in. These methods used by the researcher to collect QUALITATIVE: qualitative data were similar to classroom observations. Classroom and online observation methods were similar so the researcher could make adequate comparisons. Through online observations, the researcher was able to gather the needed data and analysis through video footage.

There were limitations faced in both observations that challenged the researcher through the study. Rewatching video footage of classroom and online settings was time consuming and not always clear. Online learning video footage was not always audible making it difficult to understand students' responses. These limitations were addressed by the researcher as to not affect the results of the study.

However, despite these limitations, video footage of observations proved to be beneficial to the researcher. The researcher was able to benefit from rewatching footage to gain a deeper analysis. Filming allowed the researcher to be fully focused when teaching and not to be distracted by note-taking. This allowed for the research to be fully focused on students when teaching rather than on data collection.

The QUALITATIVE: qualitative data collected through observational studies answered through of the research questions of the study. These observations were evaluated through TTT/STT, T-S/S-S and IRF models and measures. The use of qualitative data allowed information to be personalized and have a deeper understanding of the surrounding environment in learning settings. Meanwhile, quantitative data provided numerical information making it comprehensible for the researcher to make conclusions on students' overall performance levels in online and in-person classes. Although there were limitations, the study greatly benefited from video recording the observations due to the focus and time on observational analysis.

### **3.3.2 Parental Interviews**

Parental interviews were conducted to obtain information about students' online learning methods at home that were unknown to the researcher. Interviews were conducted using the Semi-Structured Interview method, which asks questions based on the research questions and allows responses to have a natural flow (Appendix 7.2). This method allows the researcher to obtain in-depth data from interviewees in private settings, such personal experiences and perceptions of these individuals (Ryan, Coughlan & Cronin 2009). This method was used for the study's parental interviews in order to obtain the experience parents face regarding their child's learning interactions online.

Usually, one-on-one interviews are done face to face allowing the researcher the ability to interpret non-verbal signals by examining body language, facial expression, and eye contact, and can thus be seen to strengthen the interpretation of what is being said by the interviewers (Lambert and Loiselle 2007). However, due to the current situation of COVID-19, participants in this study were virtually interviewed by email. Maho (2006 as cited in Lambert and Loiselle 2007) claims that interviewing individuals by email provides a less threatening and more sensitive interviewing approach. By using email interviewing techniques, some possible issues associated

with one-to-one and face-to-face interviewing, such as interviewee self-consciousness and perceived disparities in status between the interviewer/interviewee, can be reduced. In regards to the COVID-19 pandemic, using online platforms to conduct virtual ‘face to face’ interviews cause interviewees to experience less self-consciousness and reduce perceived disparities as well, hence email interviewing techniques were used in the study.

The interview questions designed in this study were thought provoking and well-prepared due to the valuable insights that participant interviews can provide to researchers. Interviews give researchers the ability to learn personal views, understandings and perspectives of people of a given phenomenon and can lead to the collection of in-depth data (Ryan, Coughlan and Cronin 2009).

In this study, only four individual parent’s that opted for their children to participate in online and in-person teaching were selected to answer interview questions. The following questions were designed to acquire information from parents about their children’s teaching needs in distance learning. The questions were also asked to further understand the needs of parents to help them in assisting their children’s distance learning. The questions were designed to be open-ended in order to maintain the qualitative study, while collecting quantitative data.

- A) Why did you select for your child to participate in distance learning and in-person learning?
- B) What benefits do you see in your child participating in a regular classroom setting rather than only participating in online teaching?
- C) Has online learning affected your child's interaction in ESL classes positively or negatively? Why?
- D) What techniques do you use at home to ensure active participation of your child in their online classes?
- E) What challenges does your child face through online teaching?
- F) What challenges do you face as a parent through online teaching?
- G) What different types of communication or teaching methods do you recommend using to improve online lessons?

The Interview Questions were designed to specifically answer the research questions of the study. Interview Question A provides background information in answering Research Question 1. Interview Question B was able to answer both Research Questions 1 and 2. Interview Question C

provided information in answering Research Questions 2 and 3. Interview Question D answers Research Questions 3 and 4. Interview Question E answered Interview Questions 1 and 3. Interview Question F answers Research Question 4. Interview Question G correlates with the Recommendations and Suggestions in improving distance learning methods through parent feedback.

### **3.4 Analysis**

There are various approaches to analyzing qualitative data such as the method of constant comparative or constant comparison analysis (Glaser & Strauss 1967). This is a data analysis process and coding strategy that breaks data down into manageable pieces allowing them to be compared for similarities and differences more (Charmaz 2006). A continuous comparison of underlying themes expressed via the data analysis can be useful if a researcher is involved in distinguishing using an entire dataset.

The method shows how elements of the continual data analysis process build upon each other and how comparisons made during each stage of analysis affect the entire analytic process. In this study, the dataset consists of the observational studies of students in in-person classroom settings and parental interview responses. The constant comparison analysis approach taken in the study consisted of reading, comparing, and then interpreting the data collected to develop connections in answering the research questions. The type of comparison made using the constant comparative method is vital to all analyses when data are reduced to themes. Data was compared and interpreted through a series of codes, which were used to analyze the information gathered in the dataset. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), for assigning units of significance, codes are tags or marks. Usually, codes are attached to chunks of various sizes: words, phrases, sentences or entire paragraphs. To analyse data in this study, patterns or codes that appeared in the qualitative data were identified and then assigned to such codes as intersections of data. The approach was to break up qualitative data, which is very in-depth and comprehensive from interviews and observations. After identifying these codes, the researcher is able to collect the quantitative findings, allowing a comprehensible overview of the study. In contrast to quantitative evaluation of distinct linguistic features, this implies global, qualitative assessment of learner achievement



(Savignon 1991). Through analyzing these codes, themes are developed based on the findings and further analyzed.

Classroom, online observations and parental interviews were analyzed using the method of Constant Comparative Analysis. The researcher reviewed the data collected in the observational video recordings and the answers submitted by parents regarding the interview questions. The observations were then compared between high and low performing students. Further, observations were compared based on in-person and online classroom settings. The researcher compared parents' answers to other parental responses and developed a series of codes. These responses included interacting with classmates, teacher's facial expressions and student's focus. Based on the responses, codes were developed to decipher the main themes found in parental responses. These themes were the lack of social connectivity in online learning, potential new learning methods, the lack of student and parental focus, and parents not knowing how to interactively teach their children.

After comparing and interpreting the dataset, the final analysis was completed in further understanding the interaction levels of CLT present in in-person classes and online language classes through student observations and parental interviews.

### **3.5 Credibility of Research Instruments**

The research instruments used in the methodology include video filming in classroom settings and online sessions and parental interview questions regarding students' interaction levels at home. The videos were a valid form of measuring the observational aspects needed in this study to analyze classroom and online interactions of students. Further, parental interview questions provided a valid source of measuring data as parents' answers gave insights to the experiences of students learning at home. Measuring interaction levels is challenging; therefore, obtaining video recordings and written interview answers allowed the researcher to review and further analyze the data more than once. Further, the research instruments provided tools for measuring between high and low performing students' interaction levels. Both of these instruments served as reliable tools due to the consistency and stability they provided in sharing data with the researcher.

### **3.6 Ethics**

This study is of low risk as it is a QUALITATIVE: quantitative study where all observations and interviews were granted full permission before being conducted. The participants (students) were observed to collect data. The video recording took place to observe the participants only for researcher's reference. All video footage received the participants' parents' consultation and approval prior to recording (Appendix 7.3).

Further, the study included interviews limited to parents to understand the challenges faced by students and parents in online teaching methods (Appendix 7.3). Students were not interviewed for the study.

Permission from the school principal was granted before recording any classes for the study (Appendices 7.4 & 7.5). Following this approval, the school's social worker contacted each students' parents involved for permission and informed them of the confidentiality of these recordings. The social worker also informed parents about the interviews and four individual parents voluntarily decided to participate.

### **3.7 Research Procedure**

The study was conducted in the following procedure manner. The in-person and online class observations were first completed. Students attended in-person classes at the school every other day, and on the other days attended online classes. All in-person and online classes were recorded until a total of 10 classes were videotaped. The researcher completed evaluations after every two classes; one online class and one in-person class. After the observational recordings and evaluations for the 10 total classes were completed, interviews were conducted with four individual parents in written format by email. Through these questions, the study was able to assess the needed improvements for CLT methods during distance teaching. These interview questions were then evaluated by the researcher for the study purposes. After evaluating the observational criteria and interview answers, the researcher analyzed the findings. The Embedded Design combines the various data sets with one type of data embedded within a methodology framed by the other data type (Caracelli & Greene 1997).

### 3.8 Summary

To sum up, table 3 shows the approach and instruments used for each research question for this study as long as the samples chosen to answer each question.

**Table 3. Method Summary**

| <b>Research Question</b>  | <b>Approach</b> | <b>Instrument</b>         | <b>Samples</b>      |
|---|-----------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| How does distance learning versus in-person teaching affect Communicative Language Teaching methods in the interaction levels of ESL elementary students? | Mixed method    | Observation               | Students            |
| What are the interaction differences between high level English students and lower level English students through online learning?                        | Mixed method    | Observation               | Students            |
| What are ESL students' needs in distance learning methods? How can their needs be better met?   | Mixed method    | Observation<br>Interviews | Students<br>Parents |

|   |             |            |         |
|---|-------------|------------|---------|
| What are the parents' needs to assist their children in ESL online teaching? How can their needs be better met? | Qualitative | Interviews | Parents |
|---|-------------|------------|---------|

## **CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Introduction- Online Classes**

The researcher recorded five online ESL classes focusing on six students' interaction levels during the classes. After completing the final online class observation, the researcher reviewed all class observational recordings and comprehensive video transcriptions. The data from the class transcripts involved teacher-student interactions that were analyzed through teacher and student talk time, teacher-student and student-student interactions, and teacher/student question initiation. This data was collected to compare students' performance in online classes to in-person classes.

The findings initially sought to identify the time devoted to teacher talk time and student talk time observed in online classes. The second part of the findings aimed to identify interaction methods occurring between the teacher-student and student-student. Lastly, the findings aimed to identify the frequency of IRF methods by calculating teacher and student question initiation and student responses. Each part of the findings identified high and low performing students to compare the interaction levels of each in online classes.

#### **4.1.1 Online Teacher Talk Time (TTT) / Student Talk Time (STT)**

TTT and STT were both present in the online class observations and measured by the researcher in each recorded class. Table 4 explains the data organized by class topic, communication types, classroom time and the specific percentage of time spent on TTT and STT.

**Table 4. Teacher Talk Time and Student Talk Time at an international private school in Abu Dhabi**

| <b>Topic</b>          | <b>Types of Communication</b> | <b>Minutes (5 lessons/ 40 min. each)*</b> | <b>%</b> |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|---|----------|
| Reading Comprehension | TTT                           | 32  | 80       |
|                       | STT                           | 8 <sup>1</sup>                            | 20       |
| Text Analysis         | TTT                           | 31  | 77.5     |
|                       | STT                           | 7 <sup>2</sup>                            | 17.5     |
| Project Presentation  | TTT                           | 18  | 45       |
|                       | STT                           | 22 <sup>3</sup>                           | 55       |
| Grammar*              | TTT                           | 56  | 70       |
|                       | STT                           | 24 <sup>4</sup>                           | 30       |
| Total teaching time   |                               | 200                                       |          |
| 1. TTT                |                               | 139                                       | 69.5     |
| 2. STT                |                               | 61 <sup>5</sup>                           | 30.5     |

\* Both Grammar classes were combined and calculated based on 40 minutes per class.

<sup>1</sup> Out of these 8 minutes, high performing student talk time was 3 minutes, low performing student talk time was 0 minutes, and the remaining minutes was the talk time for students who were eliminated from this study since they were only taught online.

<sup>2</sup> Out of these 7 minutes, high performing student talk time was 2 minutes, low performing student talk time was 0 minutes, and the remaining minutes was the talk time for students who were eliminated from this study since they were only taught online.

<sup>3</sup> Out of these 22 minutes, high performing student talk time was 14 minutes, low performing student talk time was 8 minutes, and the remaining minutes was the talk time for students who were eliminated from this study since they were only taught online.

<sup>4</sup> Out of these 24 minutes, high performing student talk time was 11 minutes, low performing student talk time was 2 minutes and the remaining minutes was the talk time for students who were eliminated from this study since they were only taught online.

<sup>5</sup> Out of these 61 minutes, high Performing student talk time was 38 minutes, low performing student talk time was 10 minutes and the remaining minutes was the talk time for students who were eliminated from this study since they were only taught online.

The percentage of time spent specifically on TTT and STT in online classes varies in each topic, but overall, TTT was the dominant communication type in most topics. Table 4 demonstrates that Reading Comprehension Skills and Strategies, Text Analysis and Grammar were similar in the distribution of communication types with TTT being significantly more than STT. Whereas, Project Presentation differed with more percentage of time being spent on STT than TTT. Overall, Table 4 indicates that the dominant type of communication was TTT, which occupied 69.5% of the time while STT only occupied 30.5% of the time. The differences between high performing and low performing students was observed in the data collection, with high performing students providing more talk time than low performing students.

The examples of TTT in online classes can be seen in excerpts 1 and 2.

### **Excerpt 1**

Teacher: In 1861, the North and the South had been quarreling for decades over the future direction of the country. Decades? Every 10 years make a decade. So they had quarreled for so many years till the Civil War started.

### **Excerpt 2**

Teacher: The story tells us that what was scarier than a battle was the night before the battle. when shoulders prepare themselves for the next day wondering whether they can make it or not. Will they survive? Will they see their wives and children again?

The examples of STT in online classes can be seen in excerpt 3, 4 and 5.

### **Excerpt 3**

Student: Miss, I sent an army rank chart in the chat box. I learnt that the more starts a soldier has, the better he is.

### **Excerpt 4**

Student: I read the story last night.

### **Excerpt 5**

Student: My dad was in the army.

## **4.1.2 Teacher-Student Interaction (T-S) / Student-Student Interaction (S-S)**

Based on the online class observations, there appeared to be two main types of classroom interactions: Teacher-Student Interaction (T-S) and Student-Student Interaction (S-S). T-S specifically consists of teachers talking and interacting with students, S-S consists of students only interacting with each other in pairs or in a group. Table 5 explains the data organized by class topic, interaction types, classroom time and the specific percentage of time spent on T-S and S-S.



**Table 5. Time spent on Teacher-Class and Student-Student Interaction at an International private school in Abu Dhabi**

| <b>Topic</b>                                | <b>Time spent on types of interaction</b> | <b>Minutes (5 lessons/ 40 min. each)*</b> |    | <b>%</b> |
|---|---|---|----|----------|
| Reading Comprehension skills and strategies | Time spent on T-S                         | 40  |    | 100      |
|   | Time spent on S-S                         | 0   |    | 0        |
| Text Analysis                               | Time spent on T-S                         | 40  |    | 100      |
|   | Time spent on S-S                         | 0   |    | 0        |
| Project Presentation                        | Time spent on T-S                         | 31  |    | 77.5     |
|   | Time spent on S-S                         | 9 <sup>1</sup>                            |    | 22.5     |
| Grammar*                                    | Time spent on T-S                         | 77  |    | 96       |
|   | Time spent on S-S                         | 3 <sup>2</sup>                            |    | 4        |
| Total teaching time                         |   | 200                                       |    |          |
| 1. Time spent on T-S                        |   | 188                                       | 94 |          |
| 2. Time spent on S-S                        |   | 12 <sup>3</sup>                           | 6  |          |

\* Both Grammar classes were combined and calculated based on 40 minutes per class.

<sup>1</sup> Out of these 9 minutes, time spent on S-S among high performing students was 4 minutes, time spent on S-S among low performing students was 0 minutes and the remaining minutes was the time spent on S-S among students who were eliminated from this study since they were only taught online.

<sup>2</sup> Out of these 3 minutes, time spent on S-S among high performing students was 1 minute, time spent on S-S among low performing students was 0 minutes and the remaining minutes was the time spent on S-S among students who were eliminated from this study since they were only taught online.

<sup>3</sup> Out of these 12 minutes, time spent on S-S among high performing students was 5 minutes, time spent on S-S among low performing students was 0 minutes and the remaining minutes was the time spent on S-S among students who were eliminated from this study since they were only taught online.

The percentage of time spent specifically on T-S and S-S in online classes does not vary significantly in each topic, with T-S being the dominant interaction type in all topics. Table 5 demonstrates that Reading Comprehension Skills and Strategies and Text Analysis only included T-S, with S-S not being present. Project Presentation and Grammar did include low amounts of S-S, whereas T-S had significantly higher amounts present. Overall, Table 5 indicates that T-S was the significantly dominant type of interaction, which occupied 94% of the time, while S-S occupied only 6% of the time. The differences between high performing and low performing students was observed in the data collection, with high performing students spending more time on S-S than low performing students.

The examples of T-S in online classes can be seen in excerpts 6 and 7.

#### **Excerpt 6**

Teacher: Boys, if you are ready, then one of you can share his screen and start presenting.

#### **Excerpt 7**

Teacher: Remember to always include graphic sources, visual aids in your PowerPoint presentations.

The examples of S-S in online classes can be seen in excerpt 8. Students X, Z and Y were presenting a group presentation.

#### **Excerpt 8**

Student X: Y, you have to share your screen because you have the presentation.

Student Y: OK, can you see my screen?

Student Z: Yes, we will have turns. First you, then me, and then X.

### 4.1.3 IRF Pattern and Frequency Occurrences

#### Teacher Question Initiation

Every interaction is usually initiated by the teacher's question and then followed by the student's response by giving an answer or opinion towards the teacher's question. Finally, the teacher gives verbal feedback toward the student's response. The IRF method was used in this study to measure the frequency of questions initiated by the teacher to determine overall interaction levels.

Table 6 demonstrates the frequency of questions initiated by the teacher, student responses and teacher feedback in each class topic. Table 6 organizes the data by class topic, teacher initiation frequency & percentage, student response frequency & percentage, and teacher feedback frequency & percentage.

**Table 6. IRF Pattern and Frequency (#) Occurrences**

#### *Teacher Question Initiation*

| IRF Type           | Reading Comprehension |      | Text Analysis  |    | Project Presentation |      | Grammar*        |      | Total           | %    |
|--------------------|-----------------------|------|----------------|----|----------------------|------|-----------------|------|-----------------|------|
|                    | skills and strategies |      |                |    |                      |      |                 |      |                 |      |
|                    | #                     | %    | #              | %  | #                    | %    | #               | %    | #               | %    |
| Teacher Initiation | 13                    | 43.4 | 13             | 42 | 8                    | 44.5 | 30              | 36.1 | 64              | 39.5 |
| Student Response   | 10 <sup>1</sup>       | 33.3 | 9 <sup>2</sup> | 29 | 6 <sup>3</sup>       | 33.3 | 29 <sup>4</sup> | 34.9 | 54 <sup>5</sup> | 33.3 |
| Teacher Feedback   | 7                     | 23.3 | 9              | 29 | 4                    | 22.2 | 24              | 29   | 44              | 27.2 |

|       |    |       |    |      |    |      |    |      |     |      |
|-------|----|-------|----|------|----|------|----|------|-----|------|
| Total | 30 | 100 % | 31 | 100% | 18 | 100% | 83 | 100% | 162 | 100% |
|-------|----|-------|----|------|----|------|----|------|-----|------|

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\* Both Grammar classes were combined and calculated. The calculations listed are the total number of responses for both Grammar classes.

<sup>1</sup> Out of these 10 responses, high performing students responded 4 times, low performing students responded 1 time and the remaining responses were from students who were eliminated from this study since they were only taught online.

<sup>2</sup> Out of these 9 responses, high performing students responded 4 times, low performing students responded 1 time and the remaining responses were from students who were eliminated from this study since they were only taught online.

<sup>3</sup> Out of these 6 responses, high performing students responded 2 times, low performing students responded 2 times and the remaining responses were from students who were eliminated from this study since they were only taught online.

<sup>4</sup> Out of these 29 responses, high performing students responded 18 times, low performing students responded 4 times and the remaining responses were from students who were eliminated from this study since they were only taught online.

<sup>5</sup> Out of these 54 responses, high performing students responded 24 times, low performing students responded 10 times and the remaining responses were by the rest of the students who were eliminated from this study as they were only taught online.

### **Took initiative to respond vs. teacher asked them to respond**

Table 6 demonstrates that the frequency of teacher question initiation in online classes is higher than student responses and teacher feedback in each topic, but not significantly. The frequency of student responses (33.3%) is less than teacher initiation (39.5%), but only slightly higher than teacher feedback (27.2%). Therefore, the dominant IRF type in online classes is teacher question initiation, but not by a significant amount. The differences between high performing and low performing students was observed in the data collection, with high performing students providing more responses than low performing students.

### **Student Question Initiation**

In addition to teacher question initiation, the questions asked by the students to the teacher in online classes was counted to further measure student interactions. Student interaction can be initiated by a student's question and followed by the teacher's response. Finally, the student gives

verbal feedback toward the teacher's response. The IRF method was used to measure the frequency of questions initiated by the students to determine overall interaction levels.

Table 7 demonstrates the frequency of questions initiated by the student, teacher responses, and student feedback in each topic. Table 7 organizes the data by class topic, student initiation frequency & percentage, teacher response frequency & percentage, and student feedback frequency & percentage.

The examples of IRF in online classes where the teacher initiates the question can be seen in excerpts 9 and 10.

#### **Excerpt 9**

Teacher: What is a complex sentence? (Initiation)

Student: A complex sentence is a sentence that has a dependent and independent. (Response)

Teacher: Excellent! you mean a dependent clause and an independent clause. (Feedback)

#### **Excerpt 10**

Teacher: What do I use to join these two clauses together? (Initiation)

Student: A conjunction. (Response)

Teacher: Bravo! Well, not any conjunction, it has to be a subordinate conjunction. (Feedback)

**Table 7. IRF Pattern and Frequency Occurrences***Students' Question Initiation*

| IRF Type           | Reading Comprehension |      | Text Analysis  |      | Project Presentation |      | Grammar*        |      | Total           | %    |
|--------------------|-----------------------|------|----------------|------|----------------------|------|-----------------|------|-----------------|------|
|                    | skills and strategies |      |                |      |                      |      |                 |      |                 |      |
|                    | #                     | %    | #              | %    | #                    | %    | #               | %    | #               | %    |
| Student Initiation | 3 <sup>1</sup>        | 42.8 | 3 <sup>2</sup> | 42.8 | 2 <sup>3</sup>       | 40   | 16 <sup>4</sup> | 47   | 24 <sup>5</sup> | 45.2 |
| Teacher Response   | 3                     | 42.8 | 3              | 42.8 | 2                    | 40   | 16              | 47   | 24              | 45.2 |
| Student Feedback   | 1                     | 14.4 | 1              | 14.4 | 1                    | 20   | 2               | 6    | 5               | 9.6  |
| Total              | 7                     | 100% | 7              | 100% | 5                    | 100% | 34              | 100% | 53              | 100% |

\* Both Grammar classes were combined and calculated. The calculations listed are the total number of responses for both Grammar classes

<sup>1</sup> Out of these 3 questions, high performing students initiated 1 question, low performing students initiated 0 questions and the remaining questions were initiated by the students eliminated from this study since they were only taught online.

<sup>2</sup> Out of these 3 questions, high performing students initiated 2 questions, low performing students initiated 0 questions and the remaining questions were initiated by the students eliminated from this study since they were only taught online.

<sup>3</sup> Out of these 2 questions, high performing students initiated 2 questions, low performing students initiated 0 questions and the remaining questions were initiated by the students eliminated from this study since they were only taught online.

<sup>4</sup> Out of these 16 questions, high performing students initiated 6 questions, low performing students initiated 2 questions and the remaining questions were initiated by the students eliminated from this study since they were only taught online.

<sup>5</sup> Out of these 24 questions, high performing students initiated 11 questions, low performing students initiated 2 questions and the remaining questions were initiated by the students eliminated from this study since they were only taught online.

Table 7 demonstrates that the frequency of student question initiation (45.2%) in online classes is the same as the teacher response (45.2%), while student feedback is the least significant IRF type (9.6%). Therefore, student initiation and teacher response are both dominant in online classes whereas student feedback is not. Student feedback is significantly less than both student question initiation and teacher response, demonstrating that in online classes student feedback is almost non-existent. Again, differences between high performing and low performing students was observed in the data collection, with high performing students providing more questions than low performing students.

The examples of IRF in online classes where students initiate the question can be seen in excerpts 11 and 12.

#### **Excerpt 11**

Student        If we use a coordinate conjunction at the beginning of a sentence, do we still need a comma in the middle? (Initiation)

Teacher:       Very good question! Actually we barely ever see coordinate conjunctions at the beginning of sentences, and I hope you avoid starting your sentences with FANBOYS. (Response)

Student:       OK. (Feedback)

#### **Excerpt 12**

Student:       I want to show you my favourite character, can I? (Initiation)

Teacher:       OK, we can have a look at that. (Response)

-                No feedback was given. Student didn't share the screen.

## **4.2 Introduction- In-Person Classes**

The researcher recorded five in-person ESL classes focusing on six students interaction levels during the classes. After completing the final in-person class observation, the researcher reviewed all class observational recordings and comprehensive video transcriptions. The data from the class transcripts involved teacher-student interactions that were analyzed through teacher and student talk time, teacher-student and student-student interactions, and teacher/student question initiation. This data was collected to compare students' performance in in-person classes to online classes.

The findings initially sought to identify the time devoted to teacher talk time and student talk time observed in face-to-face classes. The second part of the findings aimed to identify interaction methods occurring between the teacher-student and student-student. Lastly, the findings aimed to identify the frequency of IRF methods by calculating teacher and student question initiation and student responses. Each part of the findings identified high and low performing students to compare the interaction levels of each in face-to-face classes.

### **4.2.1 Teacher Talk Time (TTT) / Student Talk Time (STT)**

TTT and STT were both present in the in-person class observations and measured by the researcher in each recorded class. Table 8 explains the data organized by class topic, communication types, classroom time and the specific percentage of time spent on TTT and STT.



**Table 8. Teacher Talk Time and Student Talk Time at an international private school in Abu Dhabi**

| Topic                 | Types of Communication | Minutes (5 lessons/ 40 min. each)* | %               |
|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Reading Comprehension | TTT                    | 22                                 | 55              |
|                       | skills and strategies  | STT                                | 18 <sup>1</sup> |
| Literature Themes     | TTT                    | 19                                 | 47.5            |
|                       | STT                    | 21 <sup>2</sup>                    | 52.5            |
| Vocabulary            | TTT                    | 24                                 | 60              |
|                       | STT                    | 20 <sup>3</sup>                    | 40              |
| Literature Overview   | TTT                    | 26                                 | 65              |
|                       | STT                    | 14 <sup>4</sup>                    | 35              |
| Grammar               | TTT                    | 21                                 | 52.5            |
|                       | STT                    | 19 <sup>5</sup>                    | 47.5            |
| Total teaching time   |                        | 200                                |                 |
| 1. TTT                |                        | 112                                | 56              |
| 2. STT                |                        | 88 <sup>6</sup>                    | 44              |

<sup>1</sup> Out of these 18 minutes, high performing student-talk time was 13 minutes and low performing student-talk time was 5 minutes.

<sup>2</sup> Out of these 21 minutes, high performing student talk-time was 15 minutes and low performing student talk-time was 6 minutes.

<sup>3</sup> Out of these 20 minutes, high performing student-talk time was 14 minutes, low performing student talk-time was 6 minutes.

<sup>4</sup> Out of these 14 minutes, high performing student-talk time was 10 minutes, low performing student-talk time was 4 minutes.

<sup>5</sup> Out of these 21 minutes, high performing student-talk time was 13 minutes and low performing student talk-time was 8 minutes.

<sup>6</sup> Out of these 88 minutes, high performing student-talk time was 65 minutes and low performing student talk-time was 29 minutes.

The percentage of time spent specifically on TTT and STT in face to face classes varies in each topic, but overall, TTT was the dominant communication type in most topics. Table 8 demonstrates that Reading Comprehension Skills and Strategies, Vocabulary, and Literature Overview were similar in the distribution of communication types with TTT being more than STT in each category. Whereas, in Grammar, TTT (52.5%) was only slightly higher than STT (47.5%). Literature Themes differed from the other categories since more percentage of time was spent on STT (52.5%) than TTT (47.5%). Overall, Table 8 indicates that the dominant type of communication was TTT, which occupied 56% of the time while STT only occupied 44% of the time. The differences between high performing and low performing students was observed in the data collection, with high performing students providing more talk time than low performing students.

The examples of TTT in face to face classes can be seen in excerpts 13 and 14.

### **Excerpt 13**

Teacher: Unit 2 talks about ‘Doing the Right Thing’. Before we read the lesson, we will build a background knowledge about it. We will brainstorm ideas together to answer the unit’s essential question: ‘What makes people want to do The Right Thing?’ We will also relate to the value of the month: Pride and Loyalty.

### **Excerpt 14**

Teacher: The video shows that some people do ‘The Right Thing’ because it is simply their job. Police officers, doctors, teachers...

The examples of STT in face to face classes can be seen in excerpts 15, 16, 17 and 18.

**Excerpt 15**

Student: Doing 'The Right Thing' makes us feel good.

**Excerpt 16**

Student: Doing 'The Right Thing' makes us feel proud.

**Excerpt 17**

Student: People who work in the ambulance do the right thing.

**Excerpt 18**

Student: Miss, here it is! (Pointing to a picture in the book that matches the one displayed on the board.)

**4.2.2 Teacher-Student Interaction (T-S) / Student-Student Interaction (S-S)**

Based on the in-person class observations, there appeared to be two main types of classroom interactions: Teacher-Student Interaction (T-S) and Student-Student Interaction (S-S). T-S specifically consists of teachers talking and interacting with students, S-S consists of students only interacting with each other in pairs or in a group. Table 9 explains the data organized by class topic, interaction types, classroom time and the specific percentage of time spent on T-S and S-S.

**Table 9. Time spent on Teacher-Class and Student-Student Interaction at an International private school in Abu Dhabi**

| <b>Topic</b>                                   | <b>Time spent on<br/>types of interaction</b> | <b>Minutes (5 lessons/ 40 min. each)*</b> | <b>%</b> |
|--|---|---|----------|
| Reading Comprehension<br>skills and strategies | Time spent on T-S                             | 34  | 85       |
|  | Time spent on S-S                             | 6*  | 15       |
| Literature Themes                              | Time spent on T-S                             | 31  | 77.5     |
|  | Time spent on S-S                             | 9*  | 22.5     |
| Vocabulary                                     | Time spent on T-S                             | 30  | 75       |
|  | Time spent on S-S                             | 10*                                       | 25       |
| Literature Overview                            | Time spent on T-S                             | 36  | 90       |
|  | Time spent on S-S                             | 4*  | 10       |
| Grammar  | Time spent on T-S                             | 32  | 80       |
|  | Time spent on S-S                             | 8*  | 20       |
| Total teaching time                            |   | 200                                       |          |
| 1. Time spent on T-S                           |   | 163                                       | 81.5     |
| 2. Time spent on S-S                           |   | 37*                                       | 18.5     |

\*High performing and low performing students were interacting together in asking questions and having open discussions.

The percentage of time spent specifically on T-S and S-S in face to face classes varies slightly in each topic, but overall, T-S was the dominant interaction type in all topics. T-S occupied 81.5% of

class time, while S-S occupied only 18.5% of class time. The difference in time spent interacting amongst high performing and low performing students could not be calculated since both interacted with each other by asking questions and having open discussions at the same time.

The examples of T-S in face to face classes can be seen in excerpt 19 and 20.

#### **Excerpt 19**

Teacher: Open page 120 and answer the questions.

#### **Excerpt 20**

Teacher: Try to sequence the events on your own. 7 minutes.

The examples of S-S in face to face classes can be seen in excerpt 21. Students X and Y were working individually.

#### **Excerpt 21**

Student X: Which page is it?

Student Y: 120.

Student X (showing the page to Y): Is it this one?

Student Y: Yes.

### **4.2.3 IRF Pattern and Frequency Occurrences**

#### **Teacher Question Initiation**

Every interaction is usually initiated by the teacher's question and then followed by the student's response by giving an answer or opinion towards the teacher's question. In-person teacher question initiation follows traditional classroom teaching methods and enhances student learning. In the classroom, the teacher gives verbal or non-verbal feedback toward the student's response. The IRF method was used in this study to measure the frequency of questions initiated by the teacher to determine overall interaction levels.

Table 10 demonstrates the frequency of questions initiated by the teacher, student responses and teacher feedback in each class topic. Table 10 organizes the data by class topic, teacher initiation frequency & percentage, student response frequency & percentage and teacher feedback frequency & percentage.

**Table 10. IRF Pattern and Frequency (#) Occurrences**

*Teacher Question Initiation*

| IRF Type           | Reading Comprehension |       | Literature      |      | Vocabulary      |      | Literature      |      | Grammar         |      | Total            |      | % |   |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-------|-----------------|------|-----------------|------|-----------------|------|-----------------|------|------------------|------|---|---|
|                    | skills and strategies |       | Themes          |      |                 |      | Overview        |      |                 |      |                  |      |   |   |
|                    | #                     | %     | #               | %    | #               | %    | #               | %    | #               | %    | #                | %    | # | % |
| Teacher Initiation | 36                    | 35    | 42              | 34.2 | 35              | 33.3 | 33              | 36   | 30              | 35   | 176              | 34.5 |   |   |
| Student Response   | 34 <sup>1</sup>       | 33    | 41 <sup>2</sup> | 33.3 | 35 <sup>3</sup> | 33.3 | 30 <sup>4</sup> | 32   | 28 <sup>5</sup> | 32.5 | 168 <sup>6</sup> | 33   |   |   |
| Teacher Feedback   | 33                    | 32    | 40              | 32.5 | 35              | 33.3 | 30              | 32   | 28              | 32.5 | 166              | 32.5 |   |   |
| Total              | 103                   | 100 % | 123             | 100% | 105             | 100% | 93              | 100% | 86              | 100% | 510              | 100% |   |   |

<sup>1</sup> Out of these 34 responses, high performing students responded 24 times and low performing students responded 10 times.

<sup>2</sup> Out of these 41 responses, high performing students responded 25 times and low performing students responded 16 times.

<sup>3</sup> Out of these 35 responses, high performing students responded 16 times and low performing students responded 19 times.

<sup>4</sup> Out of these 30 responses, high performing students responded 22 times and low performing students responded 7 times.

<sup>5</sup> Out of these 28 responses, high performing students responded 17 times and low performing students responded 11 times.

<sup>6</sup> Out of these 168 responses, high performing students responded 104 and low performing students responded 64 times.

Table 10 demonstrates that the frequency of teacher question initiation in face to face classes is almost similar to student responses and teacher feedback in each topic. The frequency of student responses (33%) is less than teacher initiation (34.5%), but only slightly higher than teacher feedback (32.5%). Student responses occurred when the student took initiative to answer questions or when the teacher asked them to respond. In most of the student responses, high performing students responded more than low performing students, except in the Vocabulary lesson where low performing students responded more. In face to face classes, the teacher gives verbal and non-verbal feedback to students (i.e. thumbs up, body language). Overall, the dominant IRF type in face to face classes is teacher question initiation, but not by a significant amount.

The examples of IRF in face to face classes where the teacher initiates the question can be seen in excerpts 22 and 23.

#### **Excerpt 22**

Teacher: What other genres do you remember from previous lessons?  
(Initiation)

Student: Realistic fiction. (Response)

Teacher: Excellent! (With thumbs up) (Feedback)

#### **Excerpt 23**

Teacher: What is a biography? (Initiation)

Student: Someone's life. (Response)

Teacher: Thank you! And these people are real! Not imaginative. (Feedback)

## Student Question Initiation

In addition to teacher question initiation, the questions asked by the students to the teacher in in-person classes was counted to further measure student interactions. Student interaction can be initiated by a student's question and followed by the teacher's response, which can be verbal or nonverbal. Finally the student gives verbal or non-verbal feedback toward the teacher's response. The IRF method was used to measure the frequency of questions initiated by the students to determine overall interaction levels.

Table 11 demonstrates the frequency of questions initiated by the student, teacher responses and student feedback in each topic. Table 11 organizes the data by class topic, student initiation frequency & percentage, teacher response frequency & percentage and student feedback frequency & percentage.

**Table 11. IRF Pattern and Frequency Occurrences**

### *Students' Question Initiation*

| IRF Type           | Reading Comprehension |      | Theme of a Story |      | Vocabulary     |      | Genre          |      | Grammar         |      | Total           | %    |
|--------------------|-----------------------|------|------------------|------|----------------|------|----------------|------|-----------------|------|-----------------|------|
|                    | skills and strategies |      |                  |      |                |      |                |      |                 |      |                 |      |
|                    | #                     | %    | #                | %    | #              | %    | #              | %    | #               | %    | #               | %    |
| Student Initiation | 8 <sup>1</sup>        | 33.3 | 11 <sup>2</sup>  | 33.3 | 9 <sup>3</sup> | 33.3 | 6 <sup>4</sup> | 33.3 | 17 <sup>5</sup> | 33.3 | 51 <sup>6</sup> | 33.3 |
| Teacher Response   | 8                     | 33.3 | 11               | 33.3 | 9              | 33.3 | 6              | 33.3 | 17              | 33.3 | 51              | 33.3 |
| Student Feedback   | 8                     | 33.3 | 11               | 33.3 | 9              | 33.3 | 6              | 33.3 | 17              | 33.3 | 51              | 33.3 |



|       |    |      |    |      |    |      |    |      |    |      |     |      |
|-------|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|-----|------|
| Total | 24 | 100% | 33 | 100% | 27 | 100% | 18 | 100% | 51 | 33.3 | 153 | 100% |
|-------|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|-----|------|

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<sup>1</sup> Out of these 8 questions, high performing students initiated 3 questions and low performing students initiated 5 questions.

<sup>2</sup> Out of these 11 questions, high performing students initiated 7 questions and low performing students initiated 4 questions.

<sup>3</sup> Out of these 9 questions, high performing students initiated 4 and low performing students initiated 5 questions.

<sup>4</sup> Out of these 6 questions, high performer students initiated 4 questions and low performing students initiated 2 questions.

<sup>5</sup> Out of these 17 questions, high performing students initiated 13 questions and low performing students initiated 4 questions.

<sup>6</sup> Out of 51 questions, high performing students initiated 31 questions and low performing students initiated 20 questions.

Table 11 demonstrates that the frequency of student question initiation(33.3%) in online classes is the same as the teacher response(33.3%) and student feedback (33.3%). The questions initiated by students for the teacher are categorized by high performing and low performing students. In most classes, the high performing students initiated more questions for the teacher, but in Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary classes, low performing students initiated more questions than high performing students. In face to face classes, students are able to give verbal and nonverbal feedback (i.e. nodding, shaking heads) to the teacher. Overall, student initiation, teacher response, and student feedback are equally distributed in face to face classes.

The examples of IRF in face to face classes where students initiate the question can be seen in excerpts 24 and 25.

#### **Excerpt 24**

Student: Can I start reading? (Initiation)

Teacher: I'll give you a chance to read after we listen to the audio. (Response)

Student: (Squints impatiently). (Feedback)

#### **Excerpt 25**

Student: Is this story nonfiction? (Initiation)

Teacher: We will see now. (Response)

Student: I think it's nonfiction! (Feedback)

### 4.3 Introduction- Parental Interviews

The researcher conducted interviews with four parents to learn about student's online learning and their experience with their children studying at home. Two interview participants were parents to high performing students and the remaining were parents to low performing students. The researcher summarized parental responses and information collected from the semi-structured interviews (Appendix 7.2) by developing themes using Constant Comparison Analysis where the researcher creates codes to categorize responses for analysis (Ryan & Bernard 2000).

#### 4.3.1 Interview Themes

Table 12 provides a summary of the interview themes, the number of times this theme was mentioned and how many of the participants mentioned the theme.

**Table 12. Parental Interview Themes**

| <b>Theme</b>                                      | <b>How many times it was mentioned</b> | <b>How many participants mentioned it</b> |
|---|--|---|
| A) Social connectivity increases learning success | 16                                     | 4   |

|  |    |   |
|--|----|---|
| B) Online learning provides potential growth for students' learning due to new methods | 2  | 2 |
| C) Parents and students struggle and lack focus in online learning                     | 11 | 4 |
| D) Parents do not know how to interactively teach their children                       | 8  | 4 |

Table 12 demonstrates that Themes A & C were dominant in the parental responses to the interview questions, whereas, Themes B & D are non-dominant due to parents having differing responses to specific questions. Theme A demonstrates the highest number of responses (16) with Theme C having less responses (11). Meanwhile, Theme B has the lowest number of responses (2). In most themes, all four participants mentioned the theme, except for Theme B where only two participants mentioned the theme.

#### **4.3.2 Other Responses**

Other responses to the interview questions were only mentioned one time by a participant (Appendix 7.6) and, therefore, were not included in the overall themes in Table 12. However,

certain interview questions did draw a diverse range of responses causing Themes B & D to be less dominant than themes A & C. Other responses to questions included that the pace of remote learning can be rapid, extended exposure to computer screens can be harmful for student's health, and parents want their students practicing handwriting rather than just typing. Overall, Themes A & C were dominant demonstrating that the main concerns of parents were the lack of social connectivity and lack of focus for their children in online learning.

The examples of parents' answers can be seen in excerpt 26.

#### **Excerpt 26**

Q: What benefits do you see in your child participating in a regular classroom setting rather than only participating in online teaching?

A: Participating in a regular classroom will firstly, give him the chance to go through the whole normal "going to school" experience as all children should live it, whereas he has to prepare his school materials , his lunch box, wear his uniform , and feel that he is really a student going to school to acquire and develop knowledge .

It will give him the chance to better know his teachers and interact if possible, with his classmates. Teacher's facial expressions are very important for a 10 year-old child, wanting reassurance that he is on the right track, by seeing his teacher's nod, thumbs -up or smile of encouragement. It will motivate and open up his abilities as he follows closely the facial expressions and body language of his teachers. (using gestures, mimics, sounding out words...)

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION**

### **5.1 Teacher Talk Time/ Student Talk Time**

According to (Mercer and Dawes 2014)'s study, there would be times when students should sit quietly and listen to an authoritative explanation for learning effectively, but they are likely to develop a deeper understanding of a topic if they also have opportunities to express their own ideas, theories, hear their fellow students' opinions, disagree, reason and receive input from their instructor when 'thinking aloud'. In the study, the teacher provided opportunities for students to participate in classroom discussions by providing authoritative explanations, but also by allowing students to express their thoughts and opinions through questions. Question/Answer management is needed to maximize the balance between TTT and STT (Chaudron 1988; Skehan 2001).

The fewer students practice L2, the less effective the lesson is (Paul 2003), so students participation is key in enhancing their learning, which can be measured by the Student Talk Time (STT) during a specific period of time. The Findings calculated the amount of STT and Teacher Talk Time (TTT) to measure students' participation in online and in-person classes.

Table 4 presents TTT and STT in online classes, whereas Table 8 presents TTT and STT for in-person classes. Both charts demonstrate that TTT is dominant in both classroom types, whereas STT takes up less percentage of time. However, in online classes there is a significant difference between TTT (69.5%) and STT (30.5%), whereas in face-to-face classes the TTT (56%) and STT (44%) are more equally distributed. This shows that students participated less in online classes, which could potentially affect their learning negatively. Whilst Setiawati (2012); Harmer (2001); Nunan (1991) argued the importance of maximize TTT in ELS classes and its importance for SLA, it is shown in practice that students' engagement in an ESL class i.e STT is a sign for SLA.

Low performing students participated in STT significantly more (33%) in face-to-face classes, compared to online classes (21%). However, in both class settings, high performing students participated in STT more than low performing students. This directly connects with the research question pertaining to differences in low and high performing students interaction levels in online and in-person classes.

To increase STT in online classes and provide new learning methods to address student needs, future coursework could be presentation based since the only topic where STT was higher than TTT was for the project presentations. Presentation based classes would have students gather in groups and pairs to discuss the material and activities enhancing STT. This could address the concerns of parents who responded to interview questions stating that their children did not interact and speak with other classmates and the teacher enough (Theme A). By having students interact through presentation based classes, this could meet parents' needs in helping their students socially connect in online learning. There is more Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) from the teacher than there is from the students in both online and in-person classes, but CLT from the teacher is more dominant in online learning.

According to (Nunan 1987), it is not appropriate to be completely cynical about the ability to make the classroom more communicative. What is necessary is to understand that there are powerful restrictions, as do teachers and learners' conditioned classroom reflexes. In order to assess the degree to which theory is realized by classroom experience, this study demonstrates the value of performing classroom-based research. There is growing evidence that experiences can, in fact, not be very communicative at all in communicative groups. However, when comparing this to distance learning, there is more interaction of students and teachers in communicative groups in classroom settings. Although communicative 'experiences' may be lacking in classrooms, these experiences are non-existent through online teaching. Nevertheless, in-person classroom methods are being built to increase the opportunities for genuine contact.

## **5.2 Teacher-Student Interaction / Student-Student Interaction**

Further, the Findings calculated the interaction between teachers and students (T-S) and between students with other students (S-S). Student interaction with their peers and teacher are an important element in enhancing learning material and classroom topics. To generate the target language, teachers need to direct engagement in ESL classrooms (Mackey 1999). Table 5 presents the percentage of time spent on T-S and S-S interactions for online classes and Table 9 presents the percentage of time spent on T-S and S-S in face to face classes. In both classroom types, T-S is dominant with S-S percentages being significantly less. This leads back to Gosh (2010) concluding that the lack of student talk (ST) and S-S is the reason why ESL students usually

understand L2 yet face difficulty speaking it. However, Table 5 demonstrates that S-S (6%) is barely present, whereas in Table 9, it shows that S-S (18.5%) is more present. This demonstrates that students engage more with their fellow classmates in face to face classes, but in online classes essentially do not interact with each other. According to Allwright (1984), to learn a language, students need face to face contact and apparent body language. In online classes, the project presentation had more S-S (22.5%) than any other topic. Therefore, in online classes students should work in pairs and groups in order to increase S-S interaction with each other. This would provide new learning methods to address student needs in distance learning. Presentation based classes would enhance S-S by having students gather in groups and pairs to discuss the material and activities. This agrees with the findings of (Richards and Lockhart 1994; Paul 2003; Willis 1990) where pair work or/ teamwork is essential in a classroom. Also, Sharliz and Fauziati (2017) highlights the importance of S-S and conversations occurring during peer work for SLA.

In face to face settings, some students have less self-confidence and are more resistant to anxiety than others in the midst of their peers in the classroom and they are more concerned about making mistakes and losing face (Ellis 1994; Frantzen & Magnan 2005; Koch & Terrell 1991; Matsuda & Gobel 2004; Young 1991). Therefore, one would expect online settings to be more appropriate for such students where they would feel more comfortable for oral communication in L2, yet the Findings demonstrate low performing students participate in more S-S during in-person classes due to students of all levels being able to assist one another. However, with S-S being significantly less in online classes, low performing students are most likely put at a further disadvantage than high performing students. This skewed with Pichette (2009) generalizing that ESL students' preference of distance learning lies in the fact that they tend to be nervous and unable to connect with their peers in a face to face setting.

Students who do not experience such anxiety and flourish in classroom settings, were not given a choice to engage in online learning methods, but rather were forced due to the circumstances. Teachers have not yet been able to follow sound online teaching methods, including in the ESL, leading to a possible lack of consistency of online education for students. By not offering students the option to engage in online learning, this could have a significant negative effect on the potential learning of students. This directly connects with the research question pertaining to

differences in low and high performing students interaction levels in online and in-person classes. The significant difference in percentages of T-T and S-T prove parents' concerns about the lack of social connectivity for students to be true since students are interacting with one another far less in online classes (Theme A), which is also aligned with Kramsch (1986) recommending communication with teacher and fellow students to achieve communicative competence. By having students interact through presentation-based classes, this could meet parents' needs in helping their students socially connect in online learning, which aligned with (Cheng & Tsai 2016). CLT is present in the interactions amongst students and teachers, but S-S in ESL classrooms is found to be an important aspect of learning a second language. S-S is less present in online classes, therefore the benefits of CLT in ESL are decreased.

Interaction may take various forms, depending on the interests of the student and the degree of competence (Savignon 1987). However, due to physical constraints imposed in the pandemic, students are not physically available during online settings which limits teachers to being able to communicate with students only in such psychological context. Such interaction can be lost when students are not fully engaged in the online classroom.

### **5.3 Initiation-Response-Feedback / Teacher's Questions Initiation**

Student responses to questions asked by the teacher are an indicator of student understanding and participation. The Findings calculated student's response to teacher question initiation in online and in-person classroom settings. Table 6 presents the percentage distribution between teacher initiation, student response, and teacher feedback for online classes, whereas Table 10 presents this percentage distribution for in-person classes. In both classroom types, the percentages amongst IRF types is almost evenly distributed, with teacher feedback being slightly less in online classes. This may be due to the lack of body language present in online classes, which is an important aspect of teacher feedback. According to Krashen (1985), providing plenty of high-quality feedback defines effective language learning.

Overall, this shows that teacher question initiation does not differ between online and in-person classes. Low performing students responded less than high performing students, except in the in-person Vocabulary topic. In online classes, low performing students responded less (29%) than in



in-person classes (38%). This shows that low performing students respond more to teacher questions initiation in in-person classes due to lack of physical barriers between the student and teacher. This directly connects with the research question pertaining to differences in low and high performing students' interaction levels in online and in-person classes. This connects with parents voicing their concerns about the lack of focus their children face in online classes since questions require the focus of students (Theme C & D). This highlights the needs and struggles that parents face in assisting their child in online learning. IRF can be used to measure CLT in a classroom, which in this case is done through student responses to teacher question initiation. Through this process, CLT is present in students' participation in class activities and discussions.

#### **5.4 Initiation-Response-Feedback / Student's Question Initiation**

Lastly, student's participation and focus in a topic can be calculated through student question initiation to the teacher. IRF provides a good identification method of interaction between a teacher and a student of the most general, minimum unit of interactional exchange (Mercer & Dawes 2014). In the classroom observation recorded for the study, the instructor provided a theme-based class that allowed for students to participate in open discussions and share their experiences regarding the theme. The teacher was able to build on students' responses and experiences through the IRF model.

The researcher reflected on (Mercer and Dawes 2014)'s communicative approaches when analyzing the video footage of classroom instruction to measure student interaction levels. The Findings calculated student question initiation in both online and in-person classroom settings. Table 7 presents the percentage distribution between student initiation, teacher response, and student feedback for online classes, whereas Table 11 presents this percentage distribution for in-person classes. In Table 11, the percentage distribution is completely even amongst the IRF types showing that in-person classroom student question initiation is balanced. However, there is a significant difference in the percentage distribution in Table 7 for online classes. Student feedback (9.6%) is barely present, whereas student initiation and teacher response are evenly distributed. Students tend to not give verbal feedback in both online or in-person classroom settings, but students do give nonverbal feedback in face to face classes through facial expressions and body language. The lack of body language and facial expressions in online classes make student

feedback almost non-present in online classes. This is skewed to Lee (2017) where students' feedback can be simply demonstrated through their body gestures.

Overall, this shows that student question initiation differs significantly between online and in-person classes, yet it is evenly distributed when looking specifically at student initiation and teacher response in online classes. Low performing students-initiated questions less than high performing students. In online classes, low performing students initiated less questions (15%) than in face to face classes (40%). This shows that low performing students initiate significantly less questions in online classes, which could be due to distractions at home, lack of interest in topics when studying at home and no physical presence of the teacher, which usually enforces students to focus leading them to ask more questions. This directly connects with the research question pertaining to differences in low and high performing students interaction levels in online and in-person classes. This connects with parents and students lacking focus in online learning and parents not knowing to teach their children interactively (Theme C). This highlights the needs and struggles that parents face in assisting their child in online learning. IRF can be used to measure CLT in a classroom, which in this case is done through teacher responses to student question initiation. Through this process, CLT is present in students' participation in class activities and discussions.

## **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION**

### **6.1 Overview of Findings**

The purpose of the present study is two-fold: 1) to explore the interaction levels in CLT in-person classes and online language classes, and 2) to gather more enriching data from parents about their preference to in-person classes, their perspective of what could affect students' interaction levels during online classes and their recommendations for teaching methods to enhance online lessons. After analysing the data from classroom observation and parental interviews, the researcher concluded that although students' anxiety was somehow minimized in online learning, their interaction levels, especially student-student interaction, did not maximize or showed more improvement when compared to in-person settings. On the contrary, some students, especially low performing ones, struggled further due to technology challenges that they needed to adapt side by side to the already existing barrier they had to deal with: language skills. The study also shows that parental supervision and follow up for elementary ESL students is essential to achieve communicative language during online settings. When ESL students are being taught in distance from their teacher, they need to receive physical guidance from their parents, especially low performing students. They struggle to keep up with technology familiarity which online learning forces upon them. The data collected from the findings showed that students perform significantly higher in face-to-face classes compared to online classes. The lack of social connectivity and interaction levels makes it difficult for students and parents to focus causing there to be negative effects on students learning. Online classes particularly have negative effects on low performing students who already struggle in traditional classroom settings. Therefore, online learning is disproportionately harmful to low performing students compared to high performing students.

Moreover, CLT is a crucial pillar in various modes of learning including in-person classroom settings and distance teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. In-person classes serve students' needs as the research states in regard to influencing students' communicative competence. Meanwhile, distance classes also contain elements of CLT, but are not as influential as in-person classes. Teachers continue to use communicative approaches online; however, they are not as

effective as in-person due to students facing barriers through distance learning. Therefore, CLT is present in distance teaching, but is highly limited.

Since online teaching creates an added challenge to ESL teachers in assigning differentiated activities to students in remote classes where s/he has to evaluate their outcomes with limited supervision, this causes high-performing students to academically be held back and for low-performing students to not meet the necessary academic level.

On the other hand, teachers in the UAE witnessed changes in the learning methods they must undertake to engage all students during online sessions since it is an unusual arrangement and differs considerably from in-classroom instruction caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Some students have been positively impacted and empowered through online teaching practices, while others have been negatively impacted. Understanding these impacts is significant in evaluating the effectiveness of online teaching methods.

CLT is critical in various modes of learning including in-person classroom settings and distance teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. In-person classes serve students' needs as the research states in regards to influencing students' communicative competence. Meanwhile, distance classes also contain elements of CLT, but are not as influential as in-person classes. Teachers continue to use communicative approaches online; however, they are not as effective as in-person due to students facing barriers through distance learning. Therefore, CLT is present in distance teaching, but is highly limited.

Since online teaching creates an added challenge to ESL teachers in assigning differentiated activities to students in remote classes where s/he has to evaluate their outcomes with limited supervision, this causes high-performing students to academically be held back and for low-performing students to not meet the necessary academic level.

## 6.2 Limitations

Throughout the course of this study, the researcher faced limitations in various phases due to COVID-19, but also recognized other reasons for students' interaction levels differing from traditional classroom settings. The research did not include all limitations in the study due to this study specifically focusing on one ESL classrooms in-person versus online instruction.

The study was limited due to COVID-19 safety measures adopted by the school, making it difficult to interact face-to-face with parents in order to collect interview responses and data on students' interaction at home through online learning. This led the researcher to be limited to communicating and gathering data from parents virtually, leaving room for potential bias. Further, due to school safety measures, students had to social distance (2-meter distance) while in class, causing for there to be a decrease in interaction levels since classroom interactions revolve around group activities and projects to enhance learning. This caused for less student interaction than is normally present in classroom learning settings.

Further, the research did not cover other issues students may face causing a decrease in interaction levels in education, such as social issues. Examples of social issues impacting students learning include, but not limited to, familial issues (e.g. parental divorce/separation, parents' death), students with special needs (SEN), autism, ADHD, anxiety, or students that recently moved to a new school. Students can also be negatively impacted by parents' lack of involvement, which may be caused by parents' work schedules. These social issues faced by students were not covered in this study, but the researcher recommends future studies to note these issues as potential variables.

Curriculum can also be a potential variable affecting interaction levels amongst students as well. It can be noticed that the topics presented in each lesson affected students' interaction levels more than the observation settings did. The researcher put more emphasis on the effect of the lesson settings more than the topic presented in that lesson which can actually be a vital factor for students' interaction which further discussed in the recommendations.

This study focused more on ESL students and their parents rather than teachers. It is worth mentioning how negatively the pandemic affected teachers' well-being and mental being. Teachers had to adapt and familiarize themselves with the new norm of online learning keeping the same level of effective teaching that includes differentiated approaches to address different students' needs. Teachers' teaching strategies and their well being during the pandemic can fundamentally affect their interaction with their students.

Lastly, this study was based on qualitative data rather than quantitative data. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the researcher was unable to collect data from 30 participants or more (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000) and resorted to solely using embedded qualitative data. Future studies should conduct research using quantitative data to analyze information regarding interaction levels of students. Furthermore, in the observations, teacher-caused lost time and student-caused lost time was not clearly distinguished in the current study; neither was short-video time during classes calculated which may have affected the accuracy in the total time of the lessons presented in the study.

Curriculum can be a potential variable affecting interaction levels amongst students as well. It can be noticed that the topics presented in each lesson affected students' interaction levels more than the observation settings did. The researcher put more emphasis on the effect of the lesson settings more than the topic presented in that lesson which can actually be a vital factor for students' interaction which further discussed in the recommendations.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

What are effective ways to improve teacher's skills in online communicative language teaching? Many further questions arose when this study was conducted such as how having a background knowledge of the students can improve teacher-student interaction. When teachers are aware of students' background, they can better address their needs and therefore integrate their interaction levels in a face to face classroom setting or online classes.

The curriculum can be a possible element that influences students' interaction levels. It is apparent the study how what type of a topic is presented can either encourage students to interact with their teacher or/and with their classmates in both settings. It is very important to take into consideration what type of topics teachers choose to present in an online setting and type of topics to present in face to face lessons. as students tend to be more passive in an online setting, then it is highly recommended to create lesson plans that focus on pair work/group work in an online setting to give students fair opportunities to brainstorm ideas together. It is also vital to create lesson plans that integer open discussions and/or presentations in an online setting where students can share their thoughts with their teacher as well.

It is proposed to reconfigure existing approaches to teacher-student interaction to maximize the opportunity for students to participate in effective classroom interaction and thus enhance their oral communication skills. Providing and adopting more facilitative classroom interaction strategies to improve the oral communication skills of students (Gong, Hu & Lai 2018). This sheds the light on the importance of ICLT and its relationship to various contextual factors in language education. ESL teachers must have different degrees of familiarity with culture knowledge as well.

Due to distance learning methods, teachers might be unable to understand the differences in the interaction levels of high and low performing students. This may be causing high performing students to not be learning at full capacity and vice versa. Therefore, teachers must always use differentiated activities during ESL online sessions to fulfill the needs of individual students' skills and abilities. This can be achieved through teachers' training to engage ESL students and guarantee active interaction in online settings, also through following a curriculum or a framework that is specifically designed to address this issue.

Lastly, since this study is more student focused, teacher focused studies are recommended to further acknowledge their needs in distance learning as well. Comparative studies that are teacher focused can better address where interaction level among students is better met.

## **CHAPTER 7: APPENDICES**

### **7.1 Diagnostic Test**

**This test is conducted to evaluate students' strengths, weaknesses, knowledge and skills before their instruction. With this form of assessment, teachers can plan meaningful and efficient instruction and can provide students with an individualized learning experience.**

**\* Required**

**\* This form will record your name, please fill your name.**

### **READING COMPREHENSION**

**Directions: Read the passage and answer the questions.**

#### **Sharks**

There are more than 500 different species of sharks, including the great white shark, grey reef shark, hammerhead shark, and tiger sharks.

Where do they live?

Sharks can be found in every ocean. The most shark attacks have been in Australia, South Africa, Brazil, and America.

What do they eat?

Some types of sharks can be deadly, but only about 12 species have ever attacked humans. What sharks eat depends on their species and where they are. Most sharks are meat-eaters, so they like to eat fish and other sharks. Some larger sharks eat dolphins, sea lions, and small whales. Smaller sharks eat small aquatic life like clams and crabs.

Big Facts!

A group of sharks is called a shoal, school or quiver. Sharks have a skeleton of cartilage but no bones! A baby shark is called a pup.

What are they good at?



Sharks can smell a drop of blood in the water from 400 meters away. They can hear fish moving from 500 meters away. Great white sharks can swim up to 18 mph.

Amazing Fact!

Most shark species would die if they stopped moving. As long as they keep swimming, water keeps moving over their gills, which keeps them alive.

1 Name four types of sharks. \*

2 What is a group of sharks called? \*

3 What is a baby shark called? \*

4 How many species of sharks have attacked humans? \*

5 What causes sharks to die? \*

6 The genre of the text "Sharks" is:

- a) Drama
- b) Informative text
- c) Imaginative story

7 The purpose of the author is: \*

- a) to entertain
- b) to inform
- c) to persuade

8 The text Sharks contains mostly.....: \*

- a) opinions
- b) facts

9 Find a word in the fourth paragraph: "Big Facts!" that means: "flexible connective tissue that covers and protects the ends of long bones". \*

- a) skeleton

- b) cartilage
- c) quiver

10 What does the pronoun “they” in the third paragraph line 2 refer to? \*

*"Most sharks are meat- eaters, so they like to eat fish and other sharks."*

## ORAL READING

**Directions: Read the passage.\***

**Rubric:**

| Criteria Description                  | Score /5 |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| Words were pronounced distinctly.     | _____ /1 |
| Words could be heard clearly.         | _____ /1 |
| Volume was used effectively.          | _____ /1 |
| Punctuation was interrupted correctly | _____ /1 |
| Pitch was used effectively            | _____ /1 |

## SPEAKING

**Directions: Talk about the best gift you have ever received.\***

**Rubric**

| Criteria | Description                               | Score/5          |
|----------|---|------------------|
| Fluency  | Talks non-stop on his own with confidence | _____<br>____ /1 |

|               |   |         |
|---------------|---|---------|
| Voice tone    | Student's voice is clear and shows variation                | ____ /1 |
| Body Language | Student maintains eye contact with audience showing respect | ____ /1 |
| Language      | The student uses correct words and tenses                   | ____ /1 |

## WRITING

**Directions: Write a well-organised paragraph (about 10-12 sentences) in which you tell how you lost something precious (valuable) during your summer holiday. \***

### Rubric

| Criteria Description | Score /10 |
|----------------------|-----------|
| Purpose and Audience | ____ /1   |
| Layout               | ____ /1   |
| Content              | ____ /2   |
| Text Structure       | ____ /2   |
| Sentence Structure   | ____ /2   |
| Spelling             | ____ /1   |
| Punctuation          | ____ /1   |

## **7.2 Interview Questions**

### **In-Person and Online Learning in Communicative Language Teaching Classes: Interaction Levels and Parents' Perspectives**

**The purpose of this study is to evaluate ESL students' interaction with education through online & in- person classes.**

**The following questions were designed to acquire information from parents about their children's teaching needs in distance learning. The questions were also asked to further understand the needs of parents to help them in assisting their children's distance learning.**

#### **\* Required**

1. Kindly type your child's name. \*
2. Why did you select for your child to participate in distance learning and in-person learning? \*
3. What benefits do you see in your child participating in a regular classroom setting rather than only participating in online teaching? \*
4. Has online learning affected your child's interaction in ESL classes positively or negatively? Why? \*
5. What techniques do you use at home to ensure active participation of your child in their online classes? \*
6. What challenges does your child face through online teaching? \*
7. What challenges do you face as a parent through online teaching? \*
8. What different types of communication or teaching methods do you recommend using to improve online lessons? \*

### **7.3 Parents' Consent Email**

Dear Parents,

I hope this email finds you well and safe.

First of all, I'd like to express my gratitude and appreciation for granting me the opportunity to record the English sessions of your children which would aid my qualitative research paper. Be rest assured, as how Ms ..... informed you earlier, these records will be kept strictly confidential and for my own reference only.

For better understanding students' interaction levels through distance and in-person teaching, I'd highly appreciate it if you answer the attached questions honestly and fully.

Your completion of the interview is assumed to grant permission to use your answers for this study. If you have any questions about my study or the interview, please feel free to contact me. Be rest assured that your names and your children's names will be kept anonymous.

I would like to thank you in advance for your cooperation and for sharing your valuable time for my dissertation.

Warmest,  
Lara Jbarah

### **7.4 Supervisor Consent Email**

To whom it may concern,

This is to certify that Ms. Lara Jbara with ID number 20199929 is a registered student on the Masters of Education program in the British University in Dubai.

Under my supervision, Ms. Jbara is currently working on her research that seeks to explore the differences in students' interaction in online and face-to-face classrooms, and the perspectives of parents and students on the two forms of learning. She is required to gather data through surveys/interviews and lesson observations. Your permission to conduct her research in your school is hereby requested and would be much appreciated. All the names of the participants and the school

will remain anonymous. With regard to the recordings, they will only be shared with me as her supervisor if approved.

This letter is issued on Ms. Jbara's request.

Yours sincerely

Dr. Emad A. S. Abu-Ayyash

Date: October 29<sup>th</sup> , 2020

### **7.5 Principal Consent Email**

Dear School Principal,

I hope this email finds you well.

As I'm towards finishing my MA in Education soon, I'm currently working on my dissertation. For my research study, I'm required to observe 5 Face to Face English classes and 5 Distance Learning English classes. To collect data, I'm afraid I will need to videotape the Face to Face classes and record the Distance Learning ones. Saying that, I'm kindly requesting your permission to allow me do so.

Be rest assured that all data collected will be for my own and my professor's reference only. They will not be added to the study appendices, and students' names will be kept anonymous. I will also call each of the 6 participating students' parents to take permission as well.

Thank you for your continuous support.

Best regards,  
Lara Jbarah

### **7.6 Interview Sample**

## **In-Person and Online Learning in Communicative Language Teaching Classes: Interaction Levels and Parents' Perspectives**

**The purpose of this study is to evaluate ESL students' interaction with education through online & in- person classes.**

**The following questions were designed to acquire information from parents about their children's teaching needs in distance learning. The questions were also asked to further understand the needs of parents to help them in assisting their children's distance learning.**

**\* Required**

**1. Kindly type your child's name. \***

S. H.

**2. Why did you select for your child to participate in distance learning and in-person learning? \***

Distance learning to get acquired with this system in case the situation worsens and requires total remote learning at home. This way my son will have an idea as to what to expect and how to access required apps and tools to interact with his teachers and friends.

In-person will allow him to interact and follow up hands on activities with required teachers. In-person, will also develop his social skills and widen his horizons on matters discussed and seek new experiences .

**3. What benefits do you see in your child participating in a regular classroom setting rather than only participating in online teaching? \***

Participating in a regular classroom will firstly, give him the chance to go through the whole normal “going to school” experience as all children should live it, whereas he has to prepare his school materials , his lunch box, wear his uniform , and feel that he is really a student going to school to acquire and develop knowledge .

It will give him the chance to better know his teachers and interact if possible, with his classmates. Teachers’ facial expressions are very important for a 10 year-old child , wanting reassurance that he is on the right track , by seeing his teacher’s nod , thumbs –up or smile of encouragement . It will motivate and open up his abilities as he follows closely the facial expressions and body language of his teachers. ( using gestures, mimics, sounding out words...)

**4. Has online learning affected your child's interaction in ESL classes positively or negatively? Why? \***

My child likes to follow a certain pattern or routine, hence he fell into the habit of going online , listening to the teachers instructions and doing his tasks as much as he possibly can , but without real enthusiasm , just like an automated person. Even though teachers try their best and they try to engage the students, but with some children the pace of remote learning can be very rapid with lots of materials to assess and process in a short time. So it has not affected him positively , not to mention the drawbacks of on screen time for students eyes and health.

**5. What techniques do you use at home to ensure active participation of your child in their online classes? \***

The most important thing is the setting and creating an effective learning atmosphere at home. Books required handy, materials and supplies displayed , quiet space ( if possible) . It is important to note as well that it is not always easy if we have more than one child doing distance learning , so creating a learning ambience at home paves the way for better motivation and learning commitment.

**6. What challenges does your child face through online teaching? \***



My child mainly suffers from boredom and keeps his eye on the clock as if willing it to speed up so that he finishes his sessions.

He also has problems focusing if the lesson is totally abstract in concept meaning ,and he doesn't grasp the notions discussed.

He knows that he dares not inform the teachers that he doesn't understand thinking that all the others have grasped the lesson and he's the only one not to, or that he's too shy to come forth and voice out his questions about the lesson.

**7. What challenges do you face as a parent through online teaching? \***

As a working mom , it is very hard to keep track of my son's work at home. He sometimes struggles with accessing required pages or following certain instructions, not knowing how to get to the right part required by teachers, therefore he misses submitting tasks or answering questions.

**8. What different types of communication or teaching methods do you recommend using to improve online lessons? \***

To improve lessons given , I recommend recorded explanations with the teachers voice , to reinforce lessons given. I also recommend more interaction of the students together, talking and asking each others questions.

I also recommend it to be more "fun" !

Students retain more information while learning in an engaging manner because the process in learning has been enjoyable and memorable .

Some suggestions: Riddles , leading questions, test your knowledge, quote of the day, show and tell .....

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