

CLASSROOM INTERACTION AND ITS EFFECT ON ORAL PRODUCTION  
THROUGH THE DIFFERENT QUESTIONS TYPES

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*DEDICATED TO:*

I thank God, all my family and friends  
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my grandfather, my brother  
and my girlfriend  
for their invaluable support.

Oscar J.

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for their precious help and support.

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## RESUMEN

La forma cómo una persona adquiere un idioma esta muy relacionada con la forma como una clase se la lleva a cabo a través de la interacción.

La interacción de clases abarca unos modelos, los cuales a la vez están relacionados con los tipos de preguntas que se hacen para interactuar y así poder incrementar el ambiente de enseñanza y aprendizaje. A estos tipos de preguntas se suman otros subtemas como modificación de la interacción, del lenguaje por parte del profesor para ser entendido y por parte del estudiante para hacerse entender. Algunos estudios sobre interacción sostienen que la modificación de ésta, entre el profesor y estudiantes es más crucial para que el aprendizaje se genere.

## ABSTRACT

The way how people learn a language has a close relation with the way how interaction is carried out within the class.

Classroom interaction encompasses some patterns, which at the same time are related with the types of questions that are asked for interaction to take place and thus to improve teaching and learning settings. Within types of questions, some other issues are taken into account such as modified interaction, modified input and output. Some pieces of research about interaction hold that modified interaction between the teacher and students is more crucial for learning to take place.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The first chapter deals with the description of the problem and its evaluation. We will also discuss the problem statement, its evaluation, objectives and why this problem was chosen. Moreover, some terms that are included in this research project will be explained in order to make readers better understand them and the limitations found in this research.

### Description of the Problem

In the process of teaching and learning a language, many factors can be found reflecting its complexity and their strong or weak relationships. The problem deals with how *classroom interaction through the different types of questions affects oral production*, when students face real English conversational situations, whose source of affirmation is students joining different English courses to learn to speak it. So, in order to know how classroom interaction is carried out through different types of questions, many factors are taken into account. According to Tsui (1995), there are some factors that influence classroom interaction such as the classroom, which is defined as “a place where more than two people gather together with the purpose of learning, with one having the role of teacher” (p.1). Regarding the teacher’s lessons, she claims that:

The teacher also has certain ideas about how the lesson should proceed, what kinds of questions to ask, what kinds of activities they want students to do, and what they expect students to get out of this lesson. Lessons are judged as good or bad on the basis of whether they turn out the way they were planned and whether the expected outcome is achieved. (p. 1)

Allwright and Bailey (1991) stated that “the students bring with them their whole experiences of learning and of life in classrooms, along with their own reasons for being there, and their own particular needs that they hope to see satisfied” ( p. 18). As a matter of fact, the

lack of interaction when learning English makes necessary to study and take into account each factor concerned in this process, especially when *questioning* takes place, in order to get a possible solution that will be reflected in the process of learning and teaching. Based on the problem as an important and useful factor to develop the language learning process, classroom interaction and its effect on oral production through different types of questions has been chosen, because it involves the methodology that the teacher can apply as a way for teachers and students to interact by asking questions to get and provide information.

#### Problem Statement

How does classroom interaction affect oral production through different types of questions in three levels (1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup>) in the Language Center at the University of Nariño?

#### Evaluation of the Problem

This research was made to notice how classroom interaction through different questions affects oral production not only to get an answer but also to learn, to get knowledge and to provide teachers and students with different choices in order to teach and learn by questioning.

Some outstanding aspects in this chapter took us to think that:

The research problem was considered relevant because it was related to a real situation that is usually present in classrooms where English is taught.

Besides, it was researchable because by means of class observation, we could collect some data that helped us to clarify all the factors involved in the research problem. Moreover, the implementation of the Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC) designed by Flanders (1970) helped to collect data while observing classes.

This research was considered to be feasible because there was enough time to complete it, considering class observation, and we counted on some useful sources such as specialized books, journals and internet articles to develop this study.

The role of teachers and students was the main tool in order to make this project worked, so we ensured that identities of the people who took part in the research were not revealed.

### Significance

Questioning is a daily activity in life. Nevertheless, when thinking about English teaching and learning it is doubtless that the process of questioning is a fundamental factor, because the question is a link between teachers and students. Besides, this process is also used to interact, get information, and knowledge. However, this process requires the use of several directions to work.

This research could be useful for teachers when they consider what a question actually is, and it can also help them to know what types of questions could work in a better way in an EFL context.

Choosing as a research topic the effect of interaction on oral production through the different oral types of questions asked by teachers and students in EFL classes deals with two reasons. The first one has to do with the real importance that interaction and questioning have in English learning and teaching, even in daily life, and the second one implies that this topic has been almost never considered when doing research. Besides, interaction is a deep and big area of study, that is why, we wanted to focus on a part of it, classroom questions.

Finally, with the results of this research project it is intended to demonstrate what types of questions are the most feasible to apply to have students interact.

## Objectives

With the achievement of the objectives, this project intends to help teachers and students to enhance both classroom interaction and the teaching and learning conditions through different oral questions.

### *General Objective*

To analyze if classroom interaction through the different oral types of questions in first, third and fifth levels in the Language Center at the University of Nariño in EFL classes might influence oral production and the English learning process.

### *Specific Objectives*

To determine what types of questions and interaction patterns are present within the classroom.

To identify what types of questions asked within the classroom have people interact.

## Delimitations

### *Definition of Terms*

In this research there are some main terms which are useful when thinking of interaction and asking questions, they are defined as follows:

#### *Acquisition*

Krashen (1982) (quoted by Lightbown & Spada, 1993) claims that acquisition is thought to represent unconscious learning, which takes place when the emphasis is on communication and there is no attention to form.

#### *Communicative Competence*

For Hedge (2000) it is “the knowledge of language rules, and of how these rules are used to understand and produce appropriate language in a variety of sociocultural settings”. (p. 407)

### *Comprehensible Input*

“Language that is understandable to a learner. It can be comprehensible because the language is adjusted to the proficiency level of the learner or because the learner uses contextual clues or schematic knowledge to make sense of it”. (Hedge, 2000, p. 408)

### *Comprehensible Output*

Hedge (2000) claims that it is the modified speech produced by learners to make themselves understood.

### *Corrective Feedback*

For Lightbown & Spada (1993):

It is an indication to a learner that his or her use of the target language is incorrect. This includes a variety of responses that a language learner receives. Corrective feedback can be explicit (for example, ‘no, you should say “goes”, not “go”’) or implicit (‘yes, she goes to school every day’), and may or may not include metalinguistic information (for instance, ‘don’t forget to make the verb agree with the subject’). (p. 120)

### *English as a Foreign Language - EFL*

For Brown (1994) it refers specifically to “English taught in countries where it is not a major language of commerce and education”. (p. 4)

### *Error*

For Hedge (2000), an error is seen as a process that students cannot avoid but helps when learning. Nowadays, errors reveal the reflections that students have in their interlanguage development.

“An error in the classroom is commonly understood as something that is rejected by the teacher because it is wrong or inappropriate” (Tsui, 1995, p. 43)

Moreover, an error could be something that the teacher does not hope students to do, or an error could also be something that does not correspond to certain rules proposed by the teacher. Errors are seen as an opportunity to be exposed to language input in order to obtain appropriate forms. These can also be produced by the effect of overgeneralization when learners try to dominate the language. In first and second language acquisition, errors are considered as an essential part of development where they are not viewed as an unacceptable process but the clue that allows the teacher to know the language development of his/her students. It is true that errors should be corrected because students can internalize something wrong but if the teacher corrects every error students will not participate again because they will be afraid of making mistakes. Therefore, correcting errors depends on the students' language competence and their level. In some cases, it is better to listen to students' ideas and not to limit their speeches because of the amount of corrections. Despite correcting errors is a fundamental part when learning, it must not be overused because it might affect communication. It is important to notice if students have internalized the correct form and have avoided using the error again. The process can be carried out by the teacher, by the learner who made the error, or by his/her own partners. (Tsui, 1995)

### *Feedback*

According to Ur (1996), feedback refers to all kind of information that students receive from the teacher concerning students' performance in certain tasks.

Feedback is a continuous language process that is produced when there is lack or incomplete understanding or misunderstood information. This process assumes that there must be explicit/implicit information and explicit corrections where learners will be able to notice their mistakes. (Klein, 1986)



Tsui (1995) affirms that feedback is a way of interaction between teachers and students because it allows teachers to make evaluations and give comments on students' performance. Feedback can be noticed through three simple parts: an initiation from the teacher, a response from the student, followed by feedback provided by the teacher. When there is teacher intervention, the students can realize that they have made something wrong in their speech.

A feedback session is a class activity in which various individuals or groups report back to the class on what they have been researching or discussing. It may also mean a session in which a tutor reports back to students with an evaluation of their work (e.g. after an assignment has been corrected). (Wallace, 1991, p. 45)

### *First Language*

“The language first learned. Many children learn more than one language from birth and may be said to have more than one mother tongue. The abbreviation L1 is often used”. (Lightbown & Spada, 1993, p. 121)

### *Input*

It is the language that the learner is exposed to (either written or spoken) in the environment. According to Brown (1994), Input given to learners is a useful factor when learning English because of intake where learners are provided with the necessary linguistic information. That information could be gotten through different kinds of exposure such as conscious or subconscious attention, feedback, retention and interaction.

### *Intake*

Hedge (2000) declares

Intake refers to the ways in which learners process input and assimilate language to their interlanguage system. Learners will not process all the input available to them. Some of what

they hear or read may not be understood, and some parts of input will receive more attention because they seem more important or salient to the learner at a particular stage of development. (p.12)

### *Interaction*

According to Brown (2001) “It is the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings, and ideas between two or more people, resulting in a reciprocal effect on each other”. (p. 165)

### *Language Learning*

It is conceived by Krashen (1981) (quoted by Klein, 1986) that “it is the internalization of explicit rules under conscious control”. (p. 28)

### *Learning*

Krashen (1982) (quoted by Lightbown & Spada, 1993) claims that it is “a conscious learning process in which learners attend to form, decode rules and are generally taking into account their own process”.

### *Modified Input*

Lightbown & Spada (1993) state that it is “Adapted speech which adults use to address children and native speakers use to address language learners so that the learner will be able to understand. Examples of modified input include shorter, simpler sentences, slower rate of speech and basic vocabulary”. (p. 123)

### *Modified Input and Interaction*

Modified input does not assure that input could be comprehensible to students, so it is needed to modify the structure of interaction. Modification of input and interaction made by the teacher or the students allows negotiating meaning and involve students to comprehend what is happening while interaction is carried out. There must be modified interaction and

comprehensible input in order to learning to take place. Regarding modified input, it refers to the various ways in which teachers' speech is modified trying to use simpler forms rather than complex ones in intonation, expressions, grammar, pronunciation, in the language students are exposed to. (Tsui, 1995)

Thus, when teachers ask questions that students cannot understand it is important to modify questions to get better understanding of the situation by involving them in this process because it assures the acquisition of information through comprehensible input.

### *Negotiation of Meaning*

For Hedge (2000), "it refers to the adjustments made by speakers in interaction by means of technique such as clarification, in order to make themselves understood and to understand each other". (p. 411)

### *Output*

Hedge (2000) claims that it is the speech produced by learners when attempting to communicate.

### *Question*

Ur (1996) says that "a question, in the context of teaching, may be best defined as a teacher utterance, which has the objective of eliciting an oral response from the learner (s)". (p. 229)

### *Questioning*

"Questioning is a universally use activation technique in teaching, mainly within the Initiation-Response-Feedback pattern, where the teacher initiates an exchange usually in the form of a question, one of the students answers, the teacher gives feedback (assessment, correction, comments), initiates the next question and so on. (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975) (quoted by Ur, 1996, pp. 227-228)

### *Second Language*

“It is any language other than the first language learned. The abbreviation L2 is often used. (Lightbown & Spada, 1993, p. 124)

### *The Socratic Method*

It refers to a questioning type where the teacher uses an amount of questions that allows answering the first question asked, going from general to specific. (Tsui, 1995)

*Note:* Some of the terms included above are not usually mentioned in this research project but they were added because they play an important role when talking about interaction carried through oral types of questions.

### *Population*

The average age of participants is between 10 to 15 years from both genders. They belong to medium-high class, are currently taught English, and most of them were born in the city of Pasto.

### *Geographical*

This research will be carried out in the Language Center at the University of Nariño located in the city of Pasto near the neighborhood Las Acacias, in a range of time from February to June 2007, where the students are in first, third, and fifth level.

### *Limitations*

We found some limitations such as:

When we were reviewing previous theses about types of questions, we had some trouble because there was not enough information on this issue as a guideline to follow.

This research was first thought to be done in three high schools in Pasto but the Heads of them did not allow us to carry this project out there.

## CHAPTER TWO: THEORIES OF SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING AND CLASSROOM INTERACTION THROUGH DIFFERENT TYPES OF QUESTIONS

### Theories of Second Language Learning and Interaction

In this section, some literature explaining L2 interactive learning through different types of questions is developed as a way to guide and support the whole research. This literature is presented in order to better understand what interaction and questioning mean and the theories involving the types of questions for students and teacher to interact.

Each of these theories presents evidence that learning a language is linked directly with how classroom interaction through different oral types of questions improves the teaching and learning settings and consequently increases students' oral production.

#### *Whole Language*

The term whole language appeared in the 1980's. This approach focuses on the teaching of the language components such as grammar, vocabulary, phonics and word recognition as a whole group. When learning a language the skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) must be unified.

In this approach, language is seen as an opportunity to improve oral and written language through communication. Language is also seen as an internal interaction when thinking.

Richards & Rodgers (2001) claim that this approach assumes that "knowledge" is socially constructed, rather than received or discovered. Therefore, learners create meaning; they learn by doing and work collaboratively in mixed groups on common projects (p. 109). The teacher is seen as a collaborator and facilitator.

This approach proposes the use of authentic literature and materials focused on real students' experiences. Besides, errors are seen as important features when learning. The learners are

collaborators and self-directed when they use their own experiences to share and learn. They are also allowed to choose the activities and materials to develop their own purposes and needs using the language. (Richards & Rogers, 2001)

### *Cooperative Language Learning “CLL”*

This approach involves teaching in pairs and small group activities. Olsen & Kagan (1992) (quoted by Richards & Rodgers, 2001) define cooperative learning as “a group learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others” (p.192). Cooperative language learning deals with the development of communicative interaction and is learner centered. Considering its goals, learners are given opportunities to interact in pairs or group activities; the teacher uses interactive tasks to improve language structures, lexical items and communicative functions.

Weeks (1979) (quoted by Richards & Rodgers, 2001) says that this approach is based on five premises: the first one says that communication is the main goal of language because we learn to talk to achieve it. The second one deals with how we enhance our talk into conversation when it becomes meaningful. Richards & Schmidt (1983) (quoted by Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The third one, according to Grice (1975) (quoted by Richards & Rodgers, 2001) conversation occurs when there are cooperative rules previously agreed. The fourth one states that learning occurs when the cooperative rules are taken into account in the native language through daily conversations. The last one has to do with how the cooperative rules are concerned in second language through participation in interactional activities (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

According to McGroarty (1989) (quoted by Richards & Rodgers, 2001) cooperative language learning becomes a useful option when learning because it increases frequency and variety in practicing L2 through different types of interaction, it helps to foster cognition and language skills and provides several opportunities to communicate and involve learners in active learning.

Coelho (1992) (quoted by Richards and Rodgers, 2001) states different activities, they are a) team practice where students are given some material to be developed; they share their ideas and become confident because their work is the result of everyone's support, b) jigsaw where students are given different information, they share info, make discussion and synthesize it, c) cooperative projects where the group receives different subtopics, they are in charge of collecting the information; they summarize their information and share it to the whole class. This technique allows the expression of likes and interests.

The teacher's role is as facilitator of learning by creating environments with well-structured tasks. The teacher is in charge of providing open questions, s/he must not overuse commands and has to guide students in learning tasks.

#### *Task-Based Language Teaching - TBLT*

Task-based language teaching is an approach supported by the use of tasks in language teaching. Willis (1996) (quoted by Richards & Rodgers, 2001) proposes some principles that are stated in communicative language teaching, such activities carry out real communication. These activities promote meaningful language and tasks in learning process. When learners are involved in tasks, there is negotiation of meaning and meaningful communication therefore, they can learn a language.

Feez (1998) (quoted by Richards & Rodgers, 2001) suggests some assumptions concerned by task-based instruction. It is paramount the process rather than the product. There must be

activities and tasks that improve communication and meaning when students are involved in interactive communication through activities and tasks; they learn a language. Activities and tasks could be developed in real life or in pedagogical purposes. Activities and tasks range in a level of difficulty and it depends on the background of learners, the complexity of the task and the language to attempt it.

For Nunan (1989) (quoted by Richards & Rodgers, 2001)

The communicative task is a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form. The task should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right. (p. 224)

A task is defined as an activity or goal that is performed through the language. The use of tasks improves the opportunities to produce input and output. Tasks promote processes such as negotiation of meaning, modification, rephrasing, and experimentation. In task-based language teaching, tasks are the vehicle to enhance input and output, negotiation of meaning and conversations. Through tasks, students can get involved because they are allowed to use authentic language. The selection of the task has to do with the real needs of the learners. (Richards & Rodgers, 2001)

According to Willis (1996) (quoted by Richards & Rodgers, 2001) there are six task types, the first is listing, the second is ordering and sorting, the third one deals with comparing, the fourth refers to problem solving, the fifth has to do with sharing personal experiences and the last one deals with creative tasks.



The following tasks classification proposed by Pica, Kanagy and Falodun (1993) (quoted by Richards and Rodgers, 2001) is enhanced through some patterns of interaction. The first, jigsaw tasks occur when students are given different information in order to form a whole. The second one, information-gap tasks refer to when students or even groups are given a set of information and other students or groups have the complement, so they need to negotiate in order to finish the activity. The third one is problem-solving tasks that have to do with how students are asked to find a solution in order to solve a problem, there is usually just one outcome. The fourth one is decision-making tasks that deal with how students negotiate and discuss the solution of a problem from several outcomes. The fifth one refers to opinion exchanges tasks, students are involved in discussions and have to gather ideas and where there is no agreement needed.

Task-based language teaching promotes the use of pair and small groups, the use of tasks for improving learning must be guided through communicative purposes. The learner is allowed to initiate a task while the teacher has to select, adapt, and create the tasks that give them a sequence, which maintains learners' needs, interests and language level. Regarding materials, the authentic ones are paramount and the activities state choral repetition, completion, matching and the opportunity for students to ask individual questions. (Richards & Rodgers, 2001)

#### *The Interactionist Position*

This theory deals with the idea of how the linguistic environment in interaction with the child's innate capacities determines language development. Besides, it claims that language develops as a result of the complex interplay between the uniquely human characteristics of the child and the environment in which the child develops; language which is modified goes along with the capability of the learner as a crucial element in the language acquisition process. (Lightbown & Spada, 1993)

Besides, they argue that for the interactionists what is significant is the conversational give-and-take in which the adult instinctively replies the clues the child provides as to the level of language that s/he is capable of processing. Thus, the relevance of child-adult interaction becomes really clear and important.

#### *Krashen and his Hypotheses*

Krashen (1982) states five hypotheses to explain the process of language learning and the elements taken into account but for this research paper we will deal with two of them, the acquisition-learning hypothesis and the input hypothesis.

#### *The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis*

Krashen (1982) (quoted by Lightbown & Spada, 1993) suggested in his theory of second language acquisition *SLA* that learners have two different ways to develop competence in second language, those are acquisition and learning. Acquisition is a subconscious process children use in acquiring their first language, and learning, a conscious process, that is based on the amount of knowledge related to the specific rules of language. For Krashen, people only acquire their mother tongue and people only learn a foreign language.

Learners have two ways to get the target language. The first is acquisition, which is a subconscious and intuitive process of constructing the system of the target language. The second deals with a conscious learning process in which learners attend to form, decode rules and are generally taking into account their own processes.

A very strong idea that deals with the distinction of learning and acquiring is that learning the grammar rules of a foreign language does not result in subconscious acquisition. Krashen states that learning only occurs in a conscious way and acquiring only occurs subconsciously.

Essentially, we acquire as we are involved in meaningful and modified interaction in the second language, in the same way that children learn their first language disregarding attention to form.

### *The Input Hypothesis*

This hypothesis has to do with acquisition, not with learning. This states that people acquire a language in a better way when there is clear input, which goes further than their present level of competence, and when the teacher creates useful opportunities for students to acquire it. Moreover, Krashen argues that comprehensible input, which means  $i + 1$ , should be provided in order to get better comprehension. The input provided should be relevant and not grammatically sequenced.

## Classroom Interaction through the Different Question Types

### *What is Interaction?*

Interaction is a very useful word for language teachers. In communicative language teaching, interaction is seen as the stem of communication. We usually send messages, receive them, interpret them according to the context, negotiate meanings, and cooperate to get some goals through interaction itself.

Input is recognized as an essential part for language acquisition. In addition to input, interaction also plays a fundamental role in the process of learning a second language L2. The roles of input and interaction have been recognized as important in our understanding of how second languages are learned. In its simplest form, input is a necessary condition of acquisition.

Interaction is the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings, or ideas between two or more people, resulting in a reciprocal effect on each other. Theories of communicative competence emphasize the importance of interaction as human beings use language in various contexts to “negotiate” meaning, or simply stated, to get an idea out of one person's head and into the head

of another person and vice versa. From the very beginning of language study, classrooms should be interactive.

Rivers (1987) (quoted by Brown, 2001) sets it this way

Through interaction, students can increase their language store as they listen to or read authentic linguistic material, or even the output of their fellow students in discussions, skits, joint problem-solving tasks, or dialogue journals. In interaction, students can use all they possess of the language, all they have learned or casually absorbed-in real-life exchanges...Even at an elementary stage, they learn in this way to exploit the elasticity of language. (p. 165)

Current thinking is that participation in interaction is beneficial because it leads to the negotiation of meaning from questioning, offers opportunities for modified production through feedback, and helps learners segment the linguistic input. Negotiation work that activates interactional exchanges by the students or the teacher facilitates acquisition because it connects input, internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention, and output in productive ways. Therefore, through negotiation, learner's attention may be adjusted to a particular chunk of language between what s/he knows about the L2 and what the L2 really is. (Gass, 1997; Long, 1996) (quoted by Gass & Alvarez in SSLA, 2005)

#### *Interaction Patterns*

Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) (quoted by Ur, 1996) claim that the commonest type of classroom interaction is the IRF which means Initiation - Response- Feedback, where the teacher initiates an exchange, usually by questioning, one of the students answers, and the teacher provides feedback (assessment, correction, comment).

Nevertheless, there are alternative patterns where initiation is not always on the part of the teacher and interaction could be carried out between students or students and the material.

### *Group Work*

Students work in small groups through tasks to enhance interaction: conveying information like group decision making. The teacher moves around the classroom and intervenes when necessary.

### *Closed-ended Teacher Questioning - IRF*

There is just one correct answer that is approved by the teacher, who hopes students to guess.

### *Individual Group*

The teacher promotes a set of tasks where students work on them and intervenes by monitoring and assisting.

### *Choral Response*

The teacher gives an example aloud as a model of what s/he expects from her/his students to repeat.

### *Collaboration*

Students are given some tasks to work individually but in order to get better results they work in couples and there is no intervention of teacher at all.

### *Student Initiates, Teacher Answers*

Students ask the teacher questions in order to get information; the teacher decides who takes part in asking.

### *Full-class Interaction*

Students are given a topic to be discussed; the teacher intervenes occasionally and is in charge of either monitoring them or stimulating them to take the floor.

### *Teacher Talk*

The teacher intervenes most of the time while students are listening quietly.

### *Self-access*

Students are allowed to choose their own tasks to learn freely.

### *Open-ended Teacher Questioning*

There are a number of possible good answers that teachers hope students to answer.

All these interaction patterns are very useful to have an interactive and meaningful class but to develop the topic of this research, the researchers considered necessary to focus on some interactive patterns, where questioning takes place, and on some useful topics that link these two issues.

## *Types of questions*

### *Definition*

The art of asking questions is one of the basic skills of good teaching. Knowledge and awareness are an intrinsic part of each learner. Thus, in exercising the craft of good teaching an educator must reach into the learner's hidden levels of knowing and awareness in order to help the learner reach new levels of thinking.

Through the art of thoughtful questioning teachers can extract not only factual information, but aid learners in: linking concepts, making inferences, increasing awareness, encouraging creative and imaginative thought, aiding critical thinking processes, and generally helping all learners explore deeper levels of knowing, thinking, and reasoning.

### *Introduction*

Researchers and other writers like Brown, Tsui, Lightbown & Spada, concerned with questioning techniques seem to want to remind us that “the art of questioning” has a very important history as an educational strategy. In fact, the *Socratic Method* that is concerned with the use of questions and answers to challenge assumptions, expose contradictions, and lead to a wide knowledge and wisdom is a wonderful teaching approach.

In addition to its long history and effectiveness, questioning also interests to researchers and practitioners because of its widespread use as a contemporary teaching tool. Until teachers are quite skilled at classroom questioning, they might write their main questions in advance. Arrange their list in some logical sequence (specific to general, lower level to higher level, a sequence related to content). They might think of additional or better questions during the questioning process, they can be flexible and add those or substitute them for some of their planned questions as these proposed below:

### *Closed and Open Questions*

In addition to asking questions, an instructor might consider whether s/he is asking closed or open questions.

A closed question is one in which there are a limited number of acceptable answers, most of which will usually be anticipated by the instructor. (“The teacher is asking students about a story called ‘Kee Knock Stan’, which means ‘I cannot understand’.”)

T: Last week we were reading ‘Kee Knock Stand’. What is ‘Kee Knock Stand’? Janice.

S. I cannot understand.

T: Yes. And what language is it supposed to be? Julia

S: Lalloon language.

T: Right.”

Closed questions have the following characteristics a) they give the teacher facts, b) they are easy to answer, c) they are quick to answer and d) they keep control of the conversation with the questioner.

This makes closed questions useful in the following situations:

Usage	Example
As opening questions in a conversation, as it makes it easy for the other person to answer, and does not force them to reveal too much about themselves.	It's a great weather, isn't it? Where do you live? What time is it?
For testing their understanding, (asking yes/no questions). This is also a great way to break into a long ramble.	So, you want to move into our apartment, with your own bedroom and bathroom?
For setting up a desired positive or negative frame of mind in them (asking successive questions with obvious answers either yes or no).	Are you happy with your current supplier? Do they give you all that you need? Would you like to find a better supplier?
For achieving closure of a persuasion (seeking yes to the big question).	If I can deliver this tomorrow, will you sign for it now?

(Taken from: [www.changingminds.org/techniques/questioning/open and close questions.htm](http://www.changingminds.org/techniques/questioning/open%20and%20close%20questions.htm))

Note how the teacher can turn any opinion into a closed question that forces a yes or no by adding tag questions, such as “isn't it?”, “don't you?” or “can't they?” to any statement.

An open question is one in which there are many acceptable answers, most of which will not be anticipated by the instructor. For instance, “Give an example of an adjective”, only requires that students name “any adjective”. The teacher may only judge an answer as incorrect if another part of speech or a totally unrelated answer is given. Although the specific answer may not be anticipated, the instructor usually does have criteria for judging whether a particular answer is acceptable or unacceptable.



Open questions have the following characteristics: a) they ask the respondent to think and reflect, b) they will give the teacher opinions and feelings, and c) they hand control of the conversation to the respondent.

This makes open questions useful in the following situations:

Usage	Example
As a follow-on from closed questions, to develop a conversation and open up someone who is rather quiet.	What did you do on your holidays? How do you keep focused on your work?
To find out more about a person, their wants, needs, problems, and so on.	What's keeping you awake these days? Why is that so important to you?
To get people to realize the extend of their problems (to which, of course, the teacher has the solution).	I wonder what would happen if your customers complained even more? Rob Jones used to go out late. What happened to him?
To get them to feel good about the teacher by asking after their health or otherwise demonstrating human concern about them.	How have you been after your operation? You're looking down. What's up?

(Taken from: [www.changingminds.org/techniques/questioning/open and close questions.htm](http://www.changingminds.org/techniques/questioning/open%20and%20close%20questions.htm).)

Open questions begin with words such as what, why, how, describe. Using open questions can be scary, as they seem to hand the baton of control over to the other person. However, well-placed questions do leave the teacher in control as these questions steer learners' interest and engage them where the teacher wants them. When opening conversations, a good balance is around three closed questions to one open question. The closed questions start the conversation and summarize progress, while the open question gets the other person thinking and continuing to give the teacher useful information about them.

A key trick is to get them to ask the teacher open questions. This then gives students the floor to talk about what the teacher wants. The way to achieve this is to intrigue them with an incomplete story or benefit.

*Display and Referential Questions.* a) Display questions attempt to elicit information already known by the teacher. e.g., “(the teacher is asking students about how a post-office worker would sort the mail.

T: What do you think the man and the post office would do?

S: I think I would divide it if the letters are to Hong Kong or other places.

T: Yes, I think that’s a sensible way, right? Good. All right, now anybody else has any other ideas?” (Taken from Tsui, 1995, p.25)

In this example, we can see that the teacher already knows the answers, so he is only checking if students know them.

b) Referential questions request information not known by the questioner; sometimes responses to the questioner involve judgment about facts. e.g. “(The teacher is asking the students whether they have dogs at home and what their dogs do when they are happy).

T: Queenie, when your dog is happy, what does your dog do?

S: He sticks out his tongue.

T: Sticks out his tongue? What does he do when he sticks out his tongue?

S: And wags his tail.

T: and wags his tail. I see. I see he does two things.” (Taken from Tsui, 1995, p.26-27)

We notice that in this example the teacher doesn’t know the facts and the learner answers the questions to inform the teacher, not to know if students’ answers are correct or wrong.

At times despite referring to a specific level of complexity, people talk about display and referential questions. Display questions are those at the knowledge, comprehension, and simple application levels of difficulty. Referential questions are those that require complex evaluation skills such as inference, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

Usually display questions are appropriate for a) assessing students' training and understanding, b) diagnosing students' strengths and weaknesses, and c) reviewing and/or summarizing content.

Referential questions are usually most appropriate for a) encouraging students to think more deeply and critically, b) problem solving, c) encouraging discussions and d) stimulating students to seek information on their own. (Taken from [www.cte.uiuc.edu/Did/docs/QUESTION/quest1.htm#levels](http://www.cte.uiuc.edu/Did/docs/QUESTION/quest1.htm#levels))

Typically, a teacher would vary the level of questions even within a single class period. For example, a teacher might ask the synthesis question, how can style of writing and research writing be related? If s/he gets incorrect student's response to that question, s/he might move to display questions to check whether students know and understand material. For example, the instructor might ask, what are some steps in writing style? If students cannot answer those questions, the instructor might have to quickly change his/her teaching strategy, e.g., briefly review the material. If students can answer display questions, the instructor must choose a teaching strategy to help students with the more complex synthesis which the original questions requires, e.g. propose a concrete problem which can be used as a basis for moving to the more abstract synthesis.

*Bloom's Taxonomy.* Teachers usually might tend to ask knowledge questions to check language progress. These questions are not bad, but using them all the time is, because they do

not require much brain work nor a more extensive and elaborated answer. According to Bloom (1956) & Kinsella (1991), their classroom types of questions range from display (knowledge, comprehension and application) to referential (inference, analysis, synthesis and evaluation).

The seven question subcategories as defined by Bloom and Kinsella are:

**Knowledge.** These are usually at the lowest level of cognitive or affective processes and answers are most of the time either right or wrong. It looks for facts like 1) remembering, 2) memorizing, 3) recognizing, 4) recalling identification, 5) recalling information, 6) who, what, when, where, how...?, and 7) description.

**Comprehension.** Answers to these types of questions are generally within a very finite range of acceptable accuracy. It looks for facts like 1) interpreting, 2) translating from one medium to another, 3) describing in one's own words, 4) organization and selection of facts and ideas, and 5) Retell...

**Application.** The answerer asserts or conjectures based on personal awareness, or on material read, presented or known. It looks for facts like 1) problem solving, 2) applying information to produce some result, 3) use of facts, rules and principles, 4) how is ... an example of...?, 5) How is ... related to...?, and 6) Why is ... significant?

**Inference.** Forming conclusions that are not directly stated in instructional materials. Common questions words are 1) how, why, what did ... mean by?, 2) what does ... believe?, and 3) what conclusions can you draw from ...?

**Analysis.** The learner infers questions from material presented previously. It looks for 1) subdividing something to show how it is put together, 2) finding the underlying structure of a communication, 3) identifying motives, 4) separation of a whole into component parts, 5) what

are the parts or features of...?, 6) classify ... according to... 7) outline/diagram... 8) how does ... compare/contrast with...?, and 9) what evidence can you list for...?

Synthesis. These questions let students explore different variations and alternative answers or scenarios. It looks for 1) creating a unique, original product that may be in verbal form or may be a physical object, 2) combination of ideas to form a new whole, 3) what would you predict/infer from...?, 4) what ideas can you add to...?, 5) how would you create/design a new...?, 6) what might happen if you combined...?, and 7) what solutions would you suggest for...?

Evaluation. These types of questions usually require sophisticated levels of cognitive and/or emotional judgment. In attempting to answer these types of questions, students may be combining multiple cognitive and/or affective processes, levels frequently in comparative frameworks. It looks for 1) making value decisions about issues, 2) resolving controversies or differences of opinion, 3) development of opinions, judgments or decisions, 4) do you agree that...?, 5) what do you think about...?, 6) what is the most important...?, 7) place the following in order of priority..., 8) how would you decide about...?, and 9) what criteria would you use to assess...?

The chart that is presented below can show us the real implications of Bloom's Taxonomy.

Category	Bloom's subcategory	Student activity	Typical question words
Display	Knowledge	Remembering: Facts, terms, definitions, concepts, principles.	<i>List, name, define, describe, tell, identify, select, point out, label, reproduce. Who, what, where, when? Answer "yes or no"</i>
	Comprehension	Understanding the meaning of material.	<i>State in your own words, explain, define, locate, select, indicate, summarize, outline, match, give examples, predict, translate.</i>
	Application	Selecting a concept or	<i>Demonstrate how, use the data to solve,</i>

		skill and using it to solve a problem.	<i>illustrate how, show how, apply, construct, explain, compute, modify.</i> <i>What's _____ used for?</i> <i>What would result? What would happened?</i>
Referential	Inference	Forming conclusions that are not directly stated in instructional materials.	<i>How, why, what did _____ mean by? What does _____ believe? What conclusions can you draw from...?</i>
	Analysis	Breaking material down into its parts and explaining them to the whole.	<i>Distinguish, diagram, chart, plan, deduce, arrange, separate, outline, classify, contrast, compare, differentiate, categorize.</i> <i>What's the relationship between? What's the function of? What motif? What conclusions? What's the main idea?</i>
	Synthesis	Combining elements into a new pattern.	<i>Compose, combine, estimate, invent, choose, hypothesize, build, solve, design, develop.</i> <i>What if? How would you test? What would you have done in this situation? What would happen if...? How can you improve...? How else would you...?</i>
	Evaluation	Making a good or bad judgment based upon a pre-established set of criteria and stating <i>why</i>	<i>Evaluate, rate, defend, dispute, decide which, select, judge, grade, verify, choose why, compare and contrast.</i> <i>Which is best? Which is more important? Which do you think is more appropriate? What judgments can you make about...?</i>

Bloom (1956) & Kinsella (1991) (quoted by Brown, 2001, p. 172)

### *Planning Questions*

Effective questioning sessions within the classroom require advance preparation. While some instructors may be skilled in extemporaneous questioning, many find that such questions have phrasing problems, are not organized in a logical sequence, or do not require students to use the desired thinking skills.

*Steps for planning questions.* Decide on your goal or purpose for asking questions. Your goal should help you determine what levels of questions you are to do. Some practical steps for planning questions include a) select the topic for questioning. Choose material that you consider important rather than useless. Students will study and learn based on the questions you ask. Do not mislead them by using trivial material, b) phrase your questions carefully, c) ask questions that require an extended response or at least a “content” answer. Avoid yes/no questions unless you are going to follow with more questions to explore reasoning, d) phrase your questions so that the task is clear to students. Questions such as “What about foreign customs?” do not often lead to productive answers and discussion. “What did we say about Chibchas’ history?” is too general unless you are only seeking a review of any material the students remember, e) be sure the questions allow enough flexibility so that students are not playing a guessing game. Avoid “guess what I am thinking” questions, f) your questions should not contain the answers. Avoid implied response questions when you are looking for an answer from the class. A question such as “Don’t we all agree that the author of the article exaggerated the dangers of taking pills to strengthen health?” will not encourage student response, and when planning your questions try to anticipate possible student responses. You might do this by considering 1) what are some typical misconceptions that might lead students to incorrect answers?, 2) Am I asking an open or closed question?, 3) What type of response do I expect from students, a definition? Example? Solution?, will I accept the answer in the student’s language or am I expecting the textbook’s words or my own terms?, 4) What will I do for handling incorrect answers?, and 5) what will I do if students do not answer?, g) anticipating student responses should help in your planning by forcing you to consider whether phrasing is accurate, whether questions focus on the goal you have in mind,

and whether you have enough flexibility to allow students to express ideas in their own words.

(Taken from [www.cte.uiuc.edu/Did/docs/QUESTION/quest2.htm](http://www.cte.uiuc.edu/Did/docs/QUESTION/quest2.htm))



### CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

In the previous chapter, the theoretical implications of learning, teaching, interaction and questioning were presented. In this chapter, we intend to explain the steps that have to do with the methodology of this research topic to know the qualities and features of participants and of the setting. Moreover, the most appropriate technique to collect the data will be described. The characteristics of the instrument used for validation criteria, the aids to analyze data and the ethical issues to take into account when making research will be also addressed.

#### Design

This research was based on a qualitative study because it dealt with the development of a process. It means, interpreting the different events that happen in a usual environment, the way how English teachers ask questions within the classroom to generate input and then to promote the communication for learning to take place. The purpose of this research was not to discover, verify or identify relationships of cause and effect among concepts provided by a pre-established theoretical framework. On the contrary, it was to understand how meaningful questions are when teachers and students use them for interacting. Then, these mechanisms can give us a start and guide a discursive interchange, in order to check if it is relevant and generates learning.

On the other hand, regarding data analysis collected in this study, we ignored the preconceptions and prejudices about part of the theme (research done on interaction), in order to get the real meaning of the information collected through classroom observation. The focus of the method is descriptive because it describes the real characteristics and properties of a population, area and defined circumstances, which are specific in a systemic way.

## Participants, Setting and Sample

### *Participants and Sample*

We took as participants almost 750 students and 53 teachers from all levels who belonged to the Language Center at the University of Nariño, and we took a 3-teacher and almost 60-student sample during the months from February to June 2007. The average age of the groups was 10-15 years old both male and female, who belong to a middle-high class. In order to collect data provided by students and teachers, we observed classes from the levels mentioned above in order to determine what was the progress achieved in light of interaction through questioning. This sample of students helped us to understand the questions asked by the teachers and English students and how they affected classroom interaction.

### *Setting*

Talking about the internal setting, the Language Center is an institution that offers English courses to people yearning to learn it. We noticed that the Language Center has appropriate classrooms, where the students spent two hours a day in their classes from Monday to Thursday. Each classroom has a TV set and it is possible to borrow a tape recorder. There are five buildings where there are offices, libraries, classrooms, laboratories, computer rooms, toilets, an astronomical observatory, teachers' advisory rooms, an auditorium, two rooms one for the television channel and the other for the radio station, a building for the offices of the postgraduate programs and a small health center for retired people from the University of Nariño. There is a parking space outside the buildings. There is a cafeteria and places like soccer fields, a basketball court and green areas where students can exercise.

## Procedure

### *Data Collection Techniques*

To carry out this research the researchers considered important to take into account the following instrument in order to collect data:

Classroom observation: To collect information, it was useful to observe a class through a modified and structured observation format. It included Flanders' FIAC system, Bloom's taxonomy, and Ur's patterns of interaction.

### *Description of the Procedure*

To begin this research, first, the researchers designed a format to write down how a daily English class was developed in these classrooms. Moreover, with the permission of the teachers, a camcorder was used to record the whole class in order to gather all data. Thus, the commonest interaction patterns and categories and types of questions asked by the teachers and the students were identified. Then, the researchers analyzed the data and gave some useful conclusions and recommendations.

### Validation Criteria

In order to make a systematic analysis of the data, an objective descriptive tool was necessary. Up to now, numerous excellent systems of classroom observation have been proposed and the researchers took the existing ones and modified them according to the specific purposes of the analyses. The system proposed here is by no means innovative, but rather brings together features of several observational systems, those proposed by Flanders (1970) *FIAC* (Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories), Kinsella (1991) and Bloom's taxonomy (1956), and Ur's *Patterns of Interaction* (1996), helped to analyze the gathered data. Therefore, the data-gathering

instrument is valid because it was designed and has been applied by some second language acquisition expertise people.

The researchers analyzed the information, gathered it, and coded it in order to convert facts into data and to assign it appropriate meaning. It was useful to find basic elements such as categories and subcategories. Therefore, some proposals and tendencies through the questions asked by English teachers within the classroom and the effect that they had on students and on the learning process were identified. Regarding categories, some of them were planned by taking into account the works of authors such as Ur who sets some interaction patterns such as a) group work, b) close-ended teacher questioning “IRF”, c) individual work, d) choral responses, e) collaboration, f) student initiates, teacher answers, g) full-class interaction, h) teacher talk, i) self-access, and j) open-ended teacher questioning

Besides, this project also emphasized the work of some other authors such as Flanders who proposes some interaction categories like a) the teacher accepts the expression of students feelings, b) the teacher praises or encourages the students, c) the teacher accepts or uses pupils’ ideas, d) the teacher asks questions, e) the teacher gives information, expresses his/her ideas, f) the teacher gives directions, commands or orders, g) the teacher criticizes or justifies authority; h) the students answer specific questions, i) the students volunteer their ideas or ask questions; j) students use the native language, and k) there is silence or confusion

And Bloom & Kinsella who stated the following question categories that are used in order to teach English within the school a) knowledge, b) comprehension, c) application, d) inference, e) analysis, f) synthesis, and g) evaluation.

### Data Analysis and Interpretation

Calvache (2005) states that data analysis highlights the findings related to both the research problem and the main and specific objectives.

This study was given a qualitative focus, so making good interpretation of data in the qualitative research includes some steps such as a) data organization, b) identification of the main ideas to be classified, c) finding categories and subcategories, d) analyzing some data and e) final interpretation of it.

The instruments to get data were observation formats (see appendixes), this technique is very useful but eye contact is sometimes not enough, so the use of a camcorder was fundamental to record how participants behaved.

According to classroom observations, the researchers decided to design two observation formats (see appendixes). One of them was used to gather information in light of interaction patterns and interaction categories and the second one to collect data about different types of questions asked by teachers and students. These formats were devised according to the information provided by the categories, subcategories and the gathered information.<sup>9</sup>

### Ethical Issues

To develop this research, there are some aspects to take into consideration. The first one had to do with the permission to carry out an investigation at the institution with the Principal's authorization. The second one dealt with the identity of the teachers and students involved in the research. Teachers' names were changed to the consonants A, B, C. Moreover, it did not cause any harm to the participants of the institution.

In this chapter, the researchers have showed some significant features about the method such as the design, the participants, the setting, the sample, the procedure, the validation criteria, and the techniques used to gather the data.

In the following section, the data gathered through class observations is analyzed.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Subsequent to the chapter on methodological aspects, the fourth chapter of the project is presented in order to provide readers with all the information about the analysis and outcomes of the observation done in classes with the aid of the FIAC system (1970) and the two observation formats.

### Class Observation Analysis

Classroom observation was intended to help us clarify what interaction patterns were present in classroom development and to realize what type of questions asked by teachers and students within the classes influence students' oral production.

Then, the characteristics of the chosen sample and the most relevant findings collected can be seen by means of the observation done by the researchers.

Although questioning and interaction are considered two evident phenomena, one can hardly be separated from the other, they are often related. In interactions consisting mainly of the teacher asking questions and pupils giving answers, the input will inevitably consist of the linguistic forms of questions. An interaction in which modifications are constantly made will probably contain more comprehensible input. However, in the following analysis of data, the observation formats for both interaction and questioning will be discussed individually.

## Appendix A - Observation format 1 - Interaction patterns and categories

Teacher A - First level

The interaction patterns observed in the classes were:

Group work, close-ended teacher questioning, choral responses, collaboration, student initiates - teacher answers, and teacher talk.

	Interaction categories	Occurrence	Total
Teacher talk	The teacher accepts the expression of students' feelings	IIII	4
	The teacher praises or encourages the students	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII III	53
	The teacher accepts or uses pupils' ideas	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII	50
	The teacher asks questions	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII	85
	The teacher gives information, expresses his/her ideas	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII II	62
	The teacher gives directions, commands or orders	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII III	68
	The teacher criticizes or justifies authority	IIII IIII IIII III	19
Student talk	The students answer specific questions	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII II	77
	The students volunteer their ideas or ask questions	IIII IIII IIII IIII III	23
	Students use the native language	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII I	71
Silence	There is silence or confusion	IIII IIII III	14
Total			526

Adapted from Flanders' FIAC system (1970) - Interaction categories



## Appendix A - Observation format 1 - Interaction patterns and categories

Teacher B - Third level

The interaction patterns observed in the classes were:

Group work, close-ended teacher questioning, individual work, collaboration, student initiates - teacher answers, teacher talk, and open-ended teacher questioning.

	Interaction categories	Occurrence	Total
Teacher talk	The teacher accepts the expression of students' feelings	IIII 1	6
	The teacher praises or encourages the students	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII II	32
	The teacher accepts or uses pupils' ideas	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII III	38
	The teacher asks questions	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII III	54
	The teacher gives information, expresses his/her ideas	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII III	48
	The teacher gives directions, commands or orders	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII 1	31
	The teacher criticizes or justifies authority	IIII IIII IIII 1	16
Student talk	The students answer specific questions	IIII 1	111
	The students volunteer their ideas or ask questions	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII	60
	Students use the native language	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII	34
Silence	There is silence or confusion	IIII IIII 1	11
Total			450

Adapted from Flanders' FIAC system (1970) - Interaction categories

## Appendix A - Observation format 1 - Interaction patterns and categories

Teacher C - Fifth level

The interaction patterns observed in the classes were:

Group work, close-ended teacher questioning, individual work, student initiates - teacher answers, full class interaction, teacher talk, and open-ended teacher questioning.

	Interaction categories	Occurrence	Total
Teacher talk	The teacher accepts the expression of students' feelings	IIII	4
	The teacher praises or encourages the students	IIII IIII IIII II	17
	The teacher accepts or uses pupils' ideas	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII 1	26
	The teacher asks questions	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII II	97
	The teacher gives information, expresses his/her ideas	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII	34
	The teacher gives directions, commands or orders	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII	45
	The teacher criticizes or justifies authority	IIII	5
Student talk	The students answer specific questions	IIII IIII	114
	The students volunteer their ideas or ask questions	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII	50
	Students use the native language	IIII IIII IIII III	18
Silence	There is silence or confusion	IIII	4
Total			414

Adapted from Flanders' FIAC system (1970) - Interaction categories

### *Interaction Patterns*

In the period of class observation, the researchers noticed that in first level the most relevant pattern of interaction was teacher talk because the teacher usually tried to get students involved in the topic through teacher's speech. Most of the time, this class was centered on the teacher who always wanted his/her students to receive input and after some time s/he asked similar questions to check students' comprehension and in some way forced them to produce language. This was noticed when the teacher wanted students to work in groups to do some activities that also involved them in collaborating with each other to accomplish the set activity. This is said to be a good technique for interaction to take place because Brown (1994) claims that such activities are good to improve learners' outcomes and to give them the opportunity to interact through speaking. As a result of teacher talk, the teacher usually asked closed questions that encouraged learners to answer these questions no matter with a "yes" or "no". This process also led them to answer questions very limitedly because the questions did not promote students' thinking because they already knew the answers. An example of this was

Teacher: Do you think that Angelina Jolie is beautiful?

To which some students answered

Students: *no* and *yes*

With this example, we also noticed that some yes/no questions were answered by most of the students in chorus. Besides, the teacher had already given some practical questions in English to use in class rather than using Spanish, they allowed students to communicate, but they were also limited because the teacher did not try to explain the term giving students real experiences or examples, but translating into Spanish. An instance of this was

Teacher: What is the meaning in Spanish of grass?

Then, the teacher said *pasto* without attempting to point it out or use some examples based on real experiences in the second language. This differs from that stated by the task-based language teaching approach, which says that it is preferable to enhance language learning through negotiation of meaning. (Richards & Rodgers, 2001)

In third level, the most relevant patterns of interaction were collaboration and individual work. The teacher usually set some activities that required students to work on themselves and then they had to work in pairs to deduce and negotiate meaning and find a solution to a task. We think that this practice allowed the raise of group work where students had to work in small groups to plan an amount of questions to be asked to other partners as the cooperative approach claims it is best work in couples or in groups rather than individually because it enhances learning for all learners (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Therefore, we noticed that teacher talk was next. In this case, it was very poor; the teacher appeared when help and monitoring were necessary.

The next two patterns were close-ended and open-ended teacher questioning. These were little present in the class because the questions asked were related to reading comprehension where students had to answer to some questions posed on the book and in some cases students had to tell *Why?* An example of a closed question was

Teacher: Did you lose your book?

After, an example of an open question was

Teacher: Why did you lose it?

These questions were not very common during the class but at least they tried to make students say something in their own words.

The last interaction pattern present in the classes was student initiates, teacher answers, but we included it here despite the questions were student-student and not student-teacher because the activities required students to prepare some questions to be asked among themselves. It is important to say that there was student-participation when they looked for meanings. An example of this was

Students: Teacher, come here. What's the meaning of starfish?

To which the teacher gave the answer in Spanish, very similar to the answers given in first level.

In fifth level, the most relevant patterns of interaction were full class interaction because all of the students were given some tasks where they had to develop them as a whole group because they dealt with a trial in which some students were the jury and the others were the suspicious of a murder. Besides, individual work was carried out through some tasks. Some of the students had to work on their own and prepare some convincing arguments to not look guilty. In addition, we noticed that some of the students that were part of the jury worked as a group because they were in charge of preparing some questions that were asked to the possible suspicious. At the end of the task, students had to agree who was the murderer by giving concrete ideas why they thought that person was accused guilty. The next pattern we observed was asking questions on the part of students and then the teacher answering them with the aid of teacher talk. We could notice that this pattern was present when students needed help from the teacher in explaining vocabulary, giving clearer directions and checking questions and the discourse, they had already prepared. In this case, the teacher was a facilitator and a monitor. As stated by the approaches cooperative language learning and task-based language teaching, the teacher is seen as a guide who facilitates learning when creating environments with real structured tasks where the teacher must not

overuse commands. (Richards & Rodgers, 2001) It is necessary to say that most of the questions were student-student and not the teacher answering questions posed by the student.

The last patterns were close-ended teacher questioning and open-ended teacher questioning. Some activities just required a *yes* or *no* and some others focused on the student saying *why*. As an example we wrote down

Teacher: Why do you think that person is guilty?

Then the teacher asked a closed-ended question

Teacher: Are you ready to answer?

As seen in the descriptions before, we can analyze that

The most used interaction pattern in the three levels was teacher talk because the teacher is in charge of providing students with the necessary input in order to complete certain tasks.

Additionally, teacher talk was differently used because Brown (1994) states that teacher talk in beginning levels is appropriate because teachers are in charge of controlling what students do, however, in these levels teachers do not forget that they can include student-centered work. In first levels, the amount of vocabulary and structures must be simple but not too much. For intermediate levels, the teacher must give the opportunity for student-student interaction through small groups, pairs of whole class activities. The teacher must design cooperative activities from where students can take advantage. The teacher's speech must be clear and must not be present during the whole class. For advanced levels, students are the center of the class and the teacher plays the role of being a director of it where effective opportunities to enhance learning are provided by students. The teacher's speech must be natural and agree with students' level. Through teacher talk, the teacher provides feedback for students to produce language.

The next were group work; student initiates, teacher answers and open-ended and close-ended teacher questioning.

Disregarding the level, group work and collaboration are very beneficial because they involve collaboration and self-initiated language where students are given a defined task. They offer the opportunity to use the language for communicative purposes and generate spaces to interact. They also give the opportunity to create settings where students feel secure and there is practice of negotiation of meaning. They allow students to be responsible and autonomous because they are in charge of their own learning, too. Group work is worth using because of what mentioned before. However teachers should think twice if this pattern of interaction is implemented all the time because according to Brown (1994) it carries some disadvantages such as a) teacher's limited control of the class where there is much trouble with students' discipline, b) students use their native language when they have joined their "cliques", c) not everybody is benefited from the mistakes of others because there is small group correction, d) teachers are not aware of controlling the whole class, and e) some learners prefer working by themselves.

Besides, Tsui (1995) states that group work makes possible students' genuine communication where it is paramount the message rather than form.

Following with students initiate and teacher answers, we noticed it has been developed as a way of getting students involved into the lesson and as a way of making students feel secure to talk and use the set tasks to do. Besides, the teacher answering the questions was very useful because the teacher provided students with the necessary input in order to have them produce output and if it was not understood teachers sometimes used modified input and interaction through open and closed questions to assure students have internalized what was planned. These two types of questions help the learner to improve the understanding of a certain issue but do not

guarantee the success of a class (Brown, 1994). Teachers have to be aware of the importance of asking questions and then check them to see if they were understood. As Tsui (1995) claims feedback affects students' language learning because it can motivate learning and participation within the class as well as generate effective social environment.

The last two almost never present patterns were choral responses and full class interaction. Choral responses were useful to catch students' attention, to check students' pronunciation, and word stress but they are useless because in some cases students used them to repeat to what they did not pay attention. Finally, full class interaction was an option that allows students to be the center of learning, besides it enhanced language learning through the whole class. Activities that promote full class interaction have higher levels of interaction because students are in charge of developing the task by themselves where the teacher is only a guide who provides feedback.

The next step to follow is to analyze the different categories of interaction that took place as the classes went on. The categories were described as they appeared in the observation format and not according to their frequency.

#### *Interaction Categories*

In this part of the project, the researchers showed different ways through which teachers and students interacted within the classroom.

#### *Teacher Talk*

Interaction category	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Total
The teacher accepts the expression of students' feelings	4	6	4	14

*The teacher accepts the expression of students' feelings.* This category was less used although the teachers were very understanding to students' feelings. The teachers, in any case, threatened students despite some of them did not want to answer some questions and did other



different activities proposed by them. We saw that the way how the teacher behaved influenced students' behavior because if they felt in a cool environment. They felt free to either take the floor no matter if mistakes were made or to do some activities without feeling afraid of the teacher's voice.

Interaction category	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Total
The teacher praises or encourages the students	53	32	17	102

*The teacher praises or encourages the students.* The chart above shows us that as the level went up, teachers were not too much concerned with encouraging students. One reason could be that in first levels learners needed to gain language confidence to keep learning it. This category depends too much on teachers' personality and attitudes towards their students because encouraging people for something they attempted to say is a good way of making students feels self-esteem and security. We could notice that when students were encouraged they did not feel afraid of been laughed at, on the contrary, they wanted to participate even though they made mistakes. When they were corrected, we could perceive that students considered it as a way of getting language and getting progress. Besides, students, who were right in their answers, continued participating actively. Therefore, teachers must be careful when encouraging students because no one must be assigned as the best or be discouraged as the worst. Concerning this issue, Brown (1994) says that teachers must be patient and supportive in order to base students' self-esteem when using the language. Teachers need to give positive comments to students' performance to make them participate, use the language and give quieter students a chance to interact.

Interaction category	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Total
The teacher accepts or uses pupils' ideas	50	38	26	114

*The teacher accepts or uses pupils' ideas.* In the chart, we noticed that in the first level teacher A made the most use of students' ideas because it involved students into repetition as well as a way to catch attention. The teachers A, B, and C used most of the learners' ideas to provide feedback. They repeated students' interventions while stressing their errors when necessary. When teachers noticed errors in students' speeches, they tried to give feedback by saying the same sentence and omitting students' errors; we noticed that teachers rephrased learners' ideas when they were not very understandable for others.

We are sure that errors need to be corrected only when they affect communication and not as a way of showing students that they are not ready to produce language yet. Tsui (1995) says that if the teacher corrects every error students will not participate again because they will be afraid of making mistakes. Therefore, correcting errors depends on the students' language competence and their level. In some cases, it is better to listen to students' ideas and not to limit their speeches because of the amount of corrections.

Interaction category	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Total
The teacher asks questions	85	54	97	236

*The teacher asks questions.* The chart shows that teacher A and C made most use of questions to check knowledge, understanding, synthesis, and in some cases to evaluate by defending points of view. There is some difference between teachers but we would suggest that it happened because the teachers used to give much more time than established to achieve a task, not because the classes were weak, bad or boring.

This category was the most relevant in teacher talk, which refers to asking questions. The teachers were always seeking students to interact by asking and being asked some questions. The idea mentioned before is reflected on the amount of specific questions that the students had to answer. This category, as stated in literature, was very important because most of the questions always look for making students interact.

Interaction category	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Total
The teacher gives information, expresses his/her ideas	62	48	34	144

*The teacher gives information, expresses his/her ideas.* With this chart, we can infer that as soon as the level rises teachers' interventions were going down. Learners from first and third levels needed more instruction and background so that they could accomplish the set of tasks. The teacher from this level was required to express his/her own ideas in order to make himself/herself understood. Besides, the researchers noticed that the classes were centered on form rather than meaning because the teacher wanted students to manage certain structures. Teacher B developed an activity where the main purpose was to provide with information about the language. An example of this was:

The teacher began an activity where students had to recognize the tenses of some sentences in their books.

Teacher: What tense is this?

To which learners answered

Students: past simple tense.

The teacher from fifth level gave less information taking into account his/her ideas because advanced learners needed to focus on output. In this part, the teacher expressed his/her ideas not about the language but about the task that learners were doing.

Interaction category	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Total
The teacher gives directions, commands or orders	68	31	45	144

*The teacher gives directions, commands or orders.* In the classes observed, all the teachers used directions, commands or orders to make the classes flow as they used a set of activities to be done. Besides, they used them to guide students, to control the class, and to make students understand the processes they had to follow in order to complete a task. This kind of interaction enhances students' learning through teacher talk. The problem we found in the classes was that teachers used to say to their students *read* or *tell me...* but they forgot to give their students more complete previous directions for them to produce speeches that are more detailed. In the classes, it was easy to recognize that the amount of given directions depended on the activity provided by the teacher. Teacher B proposed an activity where the students were in charge of doing everything without the guidance of the teacher, and as a result, the frequency was the lowest.

Interaction category	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Total
The teacher criticizes or justifies authority	19	16	5	40

*The teacher criticizes or justifies authority.* In this chart, the researchers noticed that this category deals with how students' speeches were corrected by the teacher. Besides, it also paid attention to how good or bad students behaved in the class. It is important to say that students worked a lot on their own and by couples but the most relevant thing was that the more interactive the class was, the less students talked about something different from the activity they had to reach. Brown (1994) claims that one possible reason to explain why teachers use authority is that they had lost their influence on students' behaviors or maybe the teacher has not gained students' respect. Besides, when there are discipline problems with some students, teachers

prefer to get control of the class by giving the undisciplined students something to be busy and not something that possibly involves them in what they are supposed to do.

### *Student Talk*

Interaction category	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Total
The students answer specific questions	77	111	114	302

*The students answer specific questions.* In teacher A, it was noticed that the lack of responses to questions asked by the teacher was because learners could not understand what the teacher was talking about. When teachers asked students to read aloud for them to know what the reading was about, the teachers posed questions that appeared in the text. On the other hand, teachers tended to ask questions as a way of evaluating learners' comprehension; they used to ask some questions to which students already knew the answer, that is, a limitation because they just had to repeat a content from any source. An instance of these questions is

Teacher: Did you all read the story?

Therefore, the answer is obvious; a *yes* was enough to calm the teachers' inquires. It is also necessary to pay attention to how competent our students are because as stated by Tsui (1995) (quoted by Carter & Nunan, 2001) our students possibly know what the question means but they do not know how to express it in English. For teachers B and C, the chart says that most of the tasks that teachers did in classes used this type of interaction because all the activities were prepared in advance, looking for specific purposes that students needed to enhance. Most of the students in these two levels kept answering questions because they did know what to do with the task, the unknown words were previously explained and they were involved actively.

Interaction category	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Total
The students volunteer their ideas or ask questions	23	60	50	133

*The students volunteer their ideas or ask questions.* In this chart, the researchers saw that the lowest number of asked questions autonomously was in first level maybe because they did not have the necessary background and structures to keep a conversation or to produce clear and comprehensible output. We realized that when the students felt very confident with the teacher, they could produce language because they knew that the teacher was a guide and not a judge, thus, giving them comprehensible input and not criticizing their thoughts. When students knew what to talk about and how to convey it, they were enthusiastic to report their ideas. An instance of this was

Teacher: What do you like doing when you are on vacation?

Some students answered to this question that

Students: We love traveling to different cities for visiting our relatives because we like meeting new people and having a good time with them.

It is important that the teachers advocate some activities that are concerned with students' own experiences and points of view. Teachers B and C gave some activities in which learners had to prepare some questions to be asked to their partners; this means that the interaction occurred mainly among students, the teacher was just a guide and a helper.

Interaction category	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Total
Students use the native language	71	34	18	123

*Students use the native language.* In this chart, we could notice a big number of students from first level used Spanish; when students wanted to participate they used English but most of

the time they combined it with Spanish. It is understandable that students use their native language but using it all the time could be harmful to learning a second language. Besides, students only used the foreign language when they were forced by the teacher to do it, but students almost always used their native language when they spoke with their partners. In the classes, native language was a limitation for students to practice pronunciation because when they were reading and found a difficult word to read, they showed displeasure and used their native language by saying

Students: ¡Ah! No sé ¿Cómo se pronuncia esto *outrageous*, teacher?

Then, the teacher pronounced slowly by making students did too.

In addition, we noticed that as soon as the level is higher, the use of native language decreases considerably in comparison with the first and third level.

Moreover, an important fact to take into account was that in fifth level students used the native language just to communicate and chat about irrelevant aspects that were not a concern of the class when the teacher was not looking at them.

Interaction category	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Total
There is silence or confusion	14	11	4	29

*There is silence or confusion.* In this chart, the researchers noticed that in teacher's A and B classes there was much silence because students did not comprehend teacher's instructions, so they got lost. Besides, when the teacher gave an instruction and some students caught the message but others did not, therefore teacher tried to rephrase it with other words and by instance, students were confused. On the other hand, in teacher's C classes there was sporadic silence and confusion. They were present when some students misunderstood teacher's instructions and when learners joined the groups to develop the task; they did not know what

they had to do. In other cases, students kept in silence just because they tried to organize in a better way their own ideas, they did not know how to state their responses or in the most critical case, students did not know how to answer due to lacking of language comprehension or lacking of understanding in the given information. However, in pre-intermediate levels, students remain in silence. It does not mean that they do not know, maybe they are organizing mentally their ideas. According to Gattegno (1976) (quoted by Richards & Rodgers, 2001) silence is an aid to alertness, concentration and mental organization because in silence students concentrate on the task to be accomplished and the potential means to its accomplishment.

After analyzing each part dealing with the types of interaction presented in the three levels, we are aimed to say that the interaction that the acquirer is involved in has important effects on L2 acquisition. Thus, how learners are actively involved in the language learning process is a determining factor.

From the input provided by the teacher, we noticed that interaction consisted mainly of questions and feedback to pupils' answers. It is therefore not surprising to find that the immediate output of the pupils consisted of only responds, which were all restricted replies of a word or a phrase or a recitation of a sentence from the textbook.

Next, we will analyze another part of the class that had to do with how classroom interaction was carried through different oral types of questions by teachers and students.



## Appendix B Observation format 2 - Classroom questions

Teacher A - First level

	Types of questions	Occurrence	Total
Teacher	The teacher asks knowledge questions	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII	40
	The teacher poses comprehension questions	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII III	28
	The teacher poses application questions	IIII	5
	The teacher asks inference questions	IIII 1	6
	The teacher uses analysis questions	II	2
	The teacher poses synthesis questions	-----	---
	The teacher asks evaluation questions	1	1
Total			82
Students	The students ask knowledge questions	IIII IIII IIII III	18
	The students pose comprehension questions	II	2
	The students pose application questions	1	1
	The students ask inference questions	1	1
	The students ask analysis questions	-----	---
	The students pose synthesis questions	-----	---
	The students ask evaluation questions	-----	---
Total			22
Final score			104

Adapted from Bloom (1956) and Kinsella (1991) - Classroom questions

## Appendix B Observation format 2 - Classroom questions

## Teacher B - Third level

	Types of questions	Occurrence	Total
Teacher	The teacher asks knowledge questions	IIII IIII IIII IIII	20
	The teacher poses comprehension questions	IIII IIII IIII	15
	The teacher poses application questions	III	3
	The teacher asks inference questions	IIII II	7
	The teacher uses analysis questions	III	3
	The teacher poses synthesis questions	-----	---
	The teacher asks evaluation questions	IIII 1	6
Total			54
Students	The students ask knowledge questions	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII	35
	The students pose comprehension questions	IIII IIII IIII IIII	20
	The students pose application questions	III	3
	The students ask inference questions	III	3
	The students ask analysis questions	-----	---
	The students pose synthesis questions	III	3
	The students ask evaluation questions	-----	---
Total			64
Final score			118

Adapted from Bloom (1956) &amp; Kinsella (1991) - Classroom questions

## Appendix B Observation format 2 - Classroom questions

Teacher C - Fifth level

	Types of questions	Occurrence	Total
Teacher	The teacher asks knowledge questions	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII III	38
	The teacher poses comprehension questions	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII	40
	The teacher poses application questions	IIII	4
	The teacher asks inference questions	IIII IIII III	14
	The teacher uses analysis questions	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII II	32
	The teacher poses synthesis questions	IIII IIII IIII III	18
	The teacher asks evaluation questions	IIII 1	6
Total			152
Students	The students ask knowledge questions	IIII IIII IIII IIII	20
	The students pose comprehension questions	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII II	27
	The students pose application questions	-----	---
	The students ask inference questions	1	1
	The students ask analysis questions	II	2
	The students pose synthesis questions	-----	---
	The students ask evaluation questions	-----	---
Total			50
Final score			202

Adapted from Bloom (1956) &amp; Kinsella (1991) - Classroom questions

### *Questions Types*

Below, the commonest types of questions present in the classroom are identified according to teachers and students.

#### *Teachers' Question Types*

In this part, the researchers mentioned the different types of questions asked by teachers and students within the classroom.

Types of questions	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Total
The teacher asks knowledge questions	40	20	38	98

*The teacher asks knowledge questions.* From the chart above, we realized that teacher A asked many knowledge questions. Among the questions that the teacher asked, we found

Is she beautiful? (Talking about an actress)

The types of questions the teacher asked were very common because they only required students to give simple responses such as *yes, no, tomorrow, in the park* etc.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that teacher C used similar amount of knowledge questions because there were some activities that required the use of them, such as reading comprehension and grammar activities. These questions were very useful to introduce the language and check if students understand what the teacher is talking about. However, we have to pay attention to how often teachers ask those questions because according to Bloom (1956), these questions are not bad, but using them all the time is, because they do not involve much brain work nor a more extensive and elaborated answer.

Types of questions	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Total
The teacher poses comprehension questions	28	15	40	83

*The teacher poses comprehension questions.* In this chart, we could notice that teacher B used fewer comprehension questions than teachers A and C, because most of time the activities were focused on learners production. However, teacher B used comprehension questions for activities that emphasized reading comprehension and writing tasks. On the other hand, teacher A used comprehension questions when developing activities and exercises from the book, but teacher C used them because s/he wanted students to summarize and say in their own speech what was happening according to the reading tasks. Besides, these questions facilitate comprehension by giving the learner more time to process the language. An instance of this was

Teacher: Can you give me a definition of the term fire (job)?

It is useful to say that students were talking about a man who had lost his job. Then, one of the students stood up and told the class the meaning but before doing it, the student took some time to define it. The definition was the next

Student: When the boss tell that you don't work anymore in the office" (tells)

For us, this example shows that the student understood what the teacher asked despite this student made a grammatical mistake that is not remarkable because it did not affect the meaning of the word nor communication.

Types of questions	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Total
The teacher poses application questions	5	3	4	12

*The teacher poses application questions.* The researchers saw that in the three levels application was weak. When teachers had the opportunity to apply these types of questions by giving different tasks or asking questions that required them to activate the use of the topic they just decided to say

Teacher: Do you understand how to use the superlatives?

In spite of pushing students to answer some related topic questions that are of interest for them such as

Teacher: For you, what is the best actor in the world?

Class work looks for increasing conscious linguistic knowledge of the target language, to the extent that the target language is used practically so that acquisition can occur.

For the task-based language teaching approach when teachers use activities that involve real communication, in which language is used for carrying out meaningful tasks, and when they are meaningful to the learner, learning takes place. Willis (1996) (quoted by Richards & Rodgers, 2001)

Types of questions	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Total
The teacher asks inference questions	6	7	14	27

*The teacher asks inference questions.* The chart shows us that teacher A and B used very similar amount of inference questions. However, teacher C asked more frequently this kind of questions. The next example was taken out from one teacher's classes. The following question took into account real life experiences:

Teacher: Why did you not come yesterday?

To which a student answered:

Student: Sorry, teacher, I had many homeworks.

Though there are two mistakes in the student's answer (much homework), the teacher knew what s/he wanted to express. In this question, the teacher proposed a referential question which this teacher did not know the student's response, because there could have different options to answer. So, referential questions are those which improve skills such as inference, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. In this example, it is paramount to mention Week (1979) who states

that communication is the main goal of language because we learn to talk to achieve it.

Therefore, interaction appeared but in few circumstances because students were almost forced to talk about their real experiences and it was maintained by communication.

Types of questions	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Total
The teacher uses analysis questions	2	3	32	37

*The teacher uses analysis questions.* The chart can show us that analysis questions were very limited in first and third levels but they were very used in fifth level. The difference among students from first and third levels with fifth level students was determined by the “quality” of activities developed within the classroom. Moreover, the students’ performance influenced in applying these kinds of activities because students deduced, compared, contrasted, and categorized some information given through tasks. As an example of analysis questions given in third level, we found:

Teacher: What are the main ideas in order to find Mr. xxxx guilty?

Students from the jury answered:

Jury: We found guilty Mr. xxxx because he is an expert in shooting, Mr xxxx fired him some months ago and Mr. xxxx did not liquidate the Mr. xxxx. Therefore, we assumed those are sufficient reasons to take revenge and kill him.

Despite teacher’s intervention students answered these questions with isolated words; there was a breakdown in communication. Therefore, the teacher didn’t use comprehensible input which is necessary in this case. Krashen (1982) states that people acquire a language in a better way when there is clear input, which goes further than their present level of competence, and when the teacher creates useful opportunities for students to acquire it.

Types of questions	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Total
The teacher poses synthesis questions	0	0	3	3

*The teacher poses synthesis questions.* These types of questions look for the combination of some information to generate new patterns from some pre-established ones. In first level this type of questions was absent due to the background students have, so it would have been almost impossible to obtain an answer, this way making students look at the others while staying in silence. In third level, we cannot affirm the same because the level of students was better but the activities that the teacher proposed did not look for synthesis. In fifth level, there were a reduced number of these questions. After finishing one of the activities, the teacher asked the students

Teacher: What would you have done if you had been accused guilty?

There was silence, then one student took the floor and said

Student: If I had been accused guilty, I would have called a very good lawyer to help me. The lawyer can show some evidence of...(thinking)

After the pause, the students asked

Student: How do you say mi *inocencia* in Spanish?

Then, the teacher answered by saying *my innocence*.

After that, the student completed his answer with the word the teacher said. So, this question lead students to think about something already established to form new ideas to solve the problem, which according to Pica, Kanagy and Falodun (1993) problem-solving tasks have to do with how students find a solution in order to solve a problem and decision-making tasks that deal with how students negotiate and discuss the solution of a problem from several outcomes.



Types of questions	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Total
The teacher asks evaluation questions	1	6	6	13

*The teacher asks evaluation questions.* The teacher in first level asked just one evaluation question but did not look for the *why*.

Teacher: Xxxx, What is the best soccer player for you?

Then, the student just said the name

Student: Ronaldinho

And in this way the talk finished.

Again, here the limitation for the student to answer was his background and lack of vocabulary followed by correct grammar structures.

In third and fifth levels, the teachers asked the same number of evaluation questions .They gave an activity in which they had to defend their points of view by telling the *why*.

In third level, at the end of the activity, the teacher posed a question to the audience

Teacher: Why do you think this person is suspicious?

Then, students gave an answer

Students: We think that Mr. xxxx is guilty because Mr. xxxx was nervous, besides, Mr. xxxx did not answer all the questions that the jury asked.

The teacher from fifth level did a similar activity; the class was divided into the jury and the suspicious people. In the development of the activity one of the members from the jury called a suspicious girl and asked her to sit down and answer with the truth.

Jury: Sit down and tell us what is your relationship with Mr. xxxx's son.

Student: He is my lover, I met him when I was working for Mr. xxxx and then, Mr.xxxx fired me

Jury: Why did Mr. xxxx fire you?

Student: Because Mr. xxxx noticed our relationship and did not agree with it, so Mr. xxxx gave me two choices, break up this relationship or leave your job.

Jury: Which do you think was more appropriate in that moment?

Student: I really thought that the best option was going out and leaving my job but I decided to keep it because my economic situation was not the best. Thus, Mr. xxxx agreed with that but some months later Mr. xxxx fired me without any reason.

In this activity, opinion exchanges tasks were used because students were involved in discussions and had to gather ideas, where there was no agreement needed. Pica, Kanagy and Falodun (1993)

After having described what happened with each type of question used by teachers A, B, and C, we could conclude that do not all types of questions proposed by Bloom (1956) & Kinsella (1991) favor interaction among learners and the teacher.

To conclude, we would like to cite Brown (1994) who says

All types of questions promote interaction even those that belong to the display category, which are useful when eliciting content and language. Referential questions are those that improve the use of language while a class becomes interactive.

### *Students' Question Types*

The questions identified below were those mainly asked within the classes to get teachers' explanations of what was misunderstood.

Types of questions	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Total
The students ask knowledge questions	18	35	20	73

*The students ask knowledge questions.* Most of the students decided to ask these types of questions because they just wanted to check if they had understood the task that the teacher had set. One of the questions that all students asked in order to check vocabulary, grammar structures or vocabulary was

Student: What is the meaning of xxxx?

To which the teacher used to give the translation in order to make them complete the task successfully. In this chart, we can notice that the most relevant type of question used by students was knowledge because students asked them to seek meaning, correct pronunciation, correct the use of grammar structures so that students concentrated on the language (linguistic forms).

In this category, we have to point out that students sometimes asked questions because they did not comprehend teacher's instructions because they have been got lost.

Types of questions	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Total
The students ask comprehension questions	2	20	27	49

*The students ask comprehension questions.* As can be seen from the chart, students from third and fifth levels asked more comprehension questions than students from the first level did. This fact had to do with how students tried to get a teacher's explanation. An example could reflect this.

Student: teacher, can you explain the activity again?

Therefore, students tried to understand something that was not clear before.

Types of questions	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Total
The students pose application questions	1	3	---	4

*The students pose application questions.* From the chart, we can see that there was not a strong participation when asking application questions because of two reasons. The first one had to do with the kind of activities that did not allow the use of these questions. On the other hand, it is too difficult for students to ask questions that deal with solving a problem. In third level, we noticed the following question when they were talking about the sea.

Student: “What is the usage of a diver?”

To which teacher answered

A diver is a person who swims under water with special clothes. Despite there was an error (usage), it did not affect what the student wanted to express and the teacher understood. Thus, the teacher used appropriate feedback and the answer was focused on students needs and not based on the error.

Types of questions	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Total
The students ask inference questions	1	3	1	5

*The students ask inference questions.* In this chart, we could see that students from the three levels asked very few inference questions. This could be the result of student’s lack of background or of the fact that activities did not create a meaningful environment where these questions could be asked. An example of third level was

Student: how people breathe under water?

To which teacher answered: it is possible to breath under water when people use a cylinder of oxygen.

Types of questions	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Total
The students ask analysis questions	---	---	2	2

*The students ask analysis questions.* Regarding this chart, we can notice that just teacher C used this category twice. This type of question was not present in most of the students' speeches because they required a higher level of complexity when preparing them. One example given by students in fifth level was

Student: what motif did you have to keep your job in Mr. xxxx's company?

Types of questions	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Total
The students pose synthesis questions	---	3	---	3

*The students pose synthesis questions.* The chart shows us that only students from third level used synthesis questions thrice. Because of the activities developed in class, students interacted by volunteering their ideas. One of the questions asked by a student was

Student: how did you solve your economic situation?

The teacher answered: I had to look for a new job and fortunately, I found in a good company.

As it can be seen, these types of questions forced students to create a well-structured answer where students have not only to take into account language forms but also be aware of being understood by the others.

Types of questions	Teacher A	Teacher B	Teacher C	Total
The students ask evaluation questions	---	---	---	---

*The students ask evaluation questions.* As the chart shows there is not student's questioning because these questions required the judgments and the criteria of pre-established information. Therefore, it is too difficult to find opportunities to ask evaluation questions within the classroom, unless some activities were established in order to develop these questions.

There were many display questions used by teacher and learners, which were appropriate for low level and pre-intermediate classes. Teachers tended to use a lot of display questions so we noticed an abundance of examples such as: ‘How do you spell exciting?’ and then later the teacher was asking questions based on the text ‘Does she like the sea?’ of course the answers to the questions were known by students. ‘What’s the adjective for the noun ‘pollution?’ There was a referential question where there was discussion with a higher level group so, that’s one thing that came out. ‘Is your city in Colombia polluted?’ This type of question enabled students to use a bit freer sort of speech. However, these were very limited referential questions in order to extend or reinforce the vocabulary. This confirms that the teacher understood not only what display and referential questions were but also how they functioned. These comments indicated that the teachers were able not only to ‘talk the talk’ to describe the interactional features of this particular mode, but more importantly, to connect his/her pedagogic goal and use of language.

As a conclusion, teachers used appropriate teacher talk, language that was convergent to the mode in light of their stated teaching objectives. Interactive strategies are highly context dependent; display questions are used more at lower levels and referential questions are more appropriate for a class discussion with a higher level.

In this chapter, we have explained some relevant aspects about the results when doing the instrument report and data analysis in order to accomplish the objectives of our research project.

After applying the (FIAC) Flanders’ interaction analysis categories system and using the formats to observe the classes, we obtained helpful information that took us to arrive at a practical analysis telling *why* some interaction patterns, categories and types of questions were used when attempting to communicate.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND PEDAGOGICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

After the data analysis and the interpretation chapter, the fifth chapter about conclusions and pedagogical implications is presented in order to give teachers different choices to get settings that might help teachers and students to enhance both classroom interaction and the teaching and learning conditions through using different question types.

### Conclusions

After analyzing the data, the following conclusions can be drawn:

In the classes, it was noticed that interaction is a crucial part for students to learn. A proof of students' progress is to give students a chance to communicate their ideas and opinions. It was seen from the interaction that the input provided by the teacher consisted mainly of questions to check understanding and feedback to learners' answers with isolated words, among the questions, knowledge and comprehension questions took up a very significant portion in the classes. In few instances when students were asked some useful referential questions that answered with success, we realized there was an improvement on oral production because the questions asked promoted analysis and critical thinking.

The interaction generated was predominantly a teacher-centered question-answer-feedback interaction during which knowledge was present. Questions were predominant in the input and this limited pupils' exposure to the target language because output is necessary if teachers wanted learners to start enhancing language production.

Some of the tasks that the teachers proposed were mainly focused on developing comprehension, inquiring attitudes and inference of the information in them. Besides, teachers' tasks and activities were also thought to enhance insights by exposing students to interaction.

Teachers also looked for making students set their own activities to be exposed to the language learned and to gain knowledge on their own.

The use of too many questions within the classroom do not assure the class becomes interactive. However, the constant use of knowledge and comprehension questions affected interactive purposes due to these types of questions made learners lose attention because they were not required to force themselves neither to produce language nor to organize the sentences to be said, making this way the class loses significance.

When teachers just used either display questions or referential questions and their complexity level was not the best, students usually got confused and even lost.

The teachers determined the topic of talk; all exchanges were teacher-initiated. Students were seldom given a chance to express their opinions, feelings and personal experiences; nor were they encouraged to raise questions or to comment freely. Students' responses were most of the time taken as right or wrong rather than seen as contributions to the interaction. When there was a breakdown in communication, the question was often directed to another student instead of repairing the discourse. For this reason, the value of classroom interaction as a source for learners to get optimal input had been greatly reduced.

The types of questions asked by teachers and students within the classroom made students talk when the questions were very meaningful to them, that is, when teachers asked questions about students' lives. Thus, the classmates were a help because they knew each other and tried to support the answers of the student with some negative or positive affirmations.

On the other hand, the classrooms almost never approached the real world because some of the activities developed in class were out of context, thus making students lose interest for something they have never seen. Krashen (1982) suggests that the classroom can take out



students' output if the teacher focuses on communication and comprehension, and not on the accuracy of linguistic forms. Meaningful communication is in fact necessary in the classroom. When the teacher structures the lesson, gives instruction, explains grammatical concepts, and when the learners make requests and relate personal experience, meaningful communication is going on.

It was also important to recognize the strong link that existed among classroom interaction through patterns and its categories and the types of questions. When teachers based classes on tasks and different activities, most of the time this process was carried out through questions. So, it did not matter the level of the tasks and activities, what was paramount was how different questions involved learners to produce language. Through this process, interaction patterns invited learners to produce the language such as student initiates-teacher answers, full class interaction, open-ended teacher questioning, choral response, collaboration, self-access and even group work. These patterns improved the use of questions and thus learners had the opportunity to express themselves through the language. Moreover, when learners and teachers interacted, they carried on a process called negotiation of meaning where teachers used appropriate language when students did not understand what s/he wanted to express.

Besides researchers might state that the different types of questions involved in some interaction patterns affected student's oral production because the provided input (questions) appeared in most of the activities and tasks that students had to develop. The quality of the student's oral production (output) dealt with how complex the questions were answered or posed.

As a final conclusion, the researchers say that the types of questions teachers asked influenced a lot the way the class was carried out because some times the students were exposed to input through them, teachers' types of questions allowed the researchers to say that the

insufficient students' output indicated an inactive role of the students which not only disadvantaged them to put the target language into communicative use, but also it affected the quality of the input. When students did not indicate whether they had understood the different types of questions, they just tried to use isolated words or yes-and-no answers, causing this way trouble in communication because display questions did not invite learners to give more complex answers, even less to initiate new topics and maintain interaction, thus, the teacher had no way of knowing when and what kind of feedback to provide.

The data took us to think that there is a belief that the classroom differs from an informal linguistic environment in that the teacher is the main source of input and therefore the students necessarily have a much less active role to play. The output is therefore too limited and the interaction almost becomes false, even when they have to use the answers from the book to respond to a question.

#### Pedagogical Recommendations

The most important aspect in order to create an interactive language classroom is the initiation of interaction by the teacher. Despite the teaching style, the obligation is to encourage your students with meaningful input for successful interaction. Encouraging is very important in the initial stage of a classroom lesson as well as throughout the lesson. Without the teacher's assistance, classroom interaction may indeed be communicative, but it can easily fall prey to tangential disapproval.

One of the best ways to maintain interaction is to develop a range of questioning strategies. In second language classrooms, where learners often do not have a great number of tools for initiating and maintaining language, your questions provide necessary clues to communication. Christenbury & Kelly (1983), Kinsella (1991), (quoted by Brown, 2001) state that suitable

questioning in an interactive classroom can accomplish a number of different functions a) questions give students the opportunity to produce language comfortably without risking initiating language themselves because it is very intimidating for students to begin speaking. Questions asked appropriately can give more uncommunicative students an affective "green light" and a planned opportunity to exchange a few words in their second language; b) teacher's questions are useful to initiate a chain reaction of student interaction among them. One question may be the link to start a discussion; without the initial question, however, students will be reluctant to initiate the process, c) teacher questions give the instructor immediate feedback about student comprehension. After posing a question, a teacher can use the student reply to detect or treat linguistic or content difficulties, and d) teacher questions give students opportunities to expose what students think by hearing what they say.

Moreover, Lake, Vickery, Ryan (2004) quoted by the Medical Journal of Australia 2005 ([www.mja.com](http://www.mja.com).) argue there are some tips to ask questions, which are: a) use the learner's name, b) use the "pose, pause, pounce" technique, pose a question to the group, pause long enough for the entire group to consider the answer, then direct it to someone at random, c) spread the questions around to involve everybody, don't let a few dominate. Start at one end, then the other, and randomly move to the middle. It keeps learners engaged, d) remember that questioning can be intimidating. Provide a supportive atmosphere by being friendly, by encouraging questions and making it clear that any response is acceptable, e) when you ask a question, don't get embarrassed by the silence that follows and rush to rephrase it or answer it yourself. Just pause, and they will get embarrassed before you do, f) expect the unexpected. Brief the learners, because you don't want either to upset them with an unexpected answer "you failed it!" or embarrass learners if they don't know.

Besides, teachers need to a) encourage and engage learners, b) find out their learning needs and knowledge level, so that what you teach them is relevant and pitched at an appropriate level, c) promote higher-order thinking (i.e. reasoning), and d) monitor how learners are progressing; and encourage reflection.

Classroom interaction should be and can be a dynamic process, which involves the co-operation of the teacher and the learners so that optimal input will be obtained. When the teacher modifies the questions and helps students out in answering questions, s/he is providing comprehensible input and when learners raise questions, ask for explanation, interrupt the discourse; they are helping the teacher to adjust the input to the right level so that acquisition will occur.

Helping students enhance their skills to communicate is a teachers' task and depends on the teachers' attitude to English and the activities they include in the class. So, to have students develop oral skills, teachers have to pay attention to the level they are teaching currently. If teachers are with a beginning level, they should expose students to the listening of the new language because they do not have enough background to set out communication. After some time of exposure to the language, teachers can include some activities and tasks like reading aloud, repeating meeting people, getting and giving personal information, introducing people, spelling of words, describing things and giving their locations, describing and identifying people, talking about daily life and routines, clothes and colors, school, hobbies, likes and dislikes, asking for explanations and offering help. It is useful to note that in first levels, students are more limited by grammar and vocabulary than by communicative functions. Researchers suggest teachers to use a mixture of individual work to make students learn autonomously, choral responses to develop stress and intonation, pair work to make students help each other,

researchers also want to point that teachers can use advanced questions, but the number of questions has to be reduced so that students do not discouraged themselves by saying *English is difficult*.

If teachers are in charge of intermediate levels, they can include some activities and tasks such as agreeing and disagreeing, apologizing, getting and giving personal information, talking about people and events, emphasizing, talking about preferences, asking for and giving advice, giving reasons or excuses, talking about past habits, abilities and activities, making suggestions, talking about leisure time activities and talking about likes and dislikes and future plans. It is advisable to have students work in small groups not to lose control of the class as a way of getting cooperative learning, full class interaction, so students can learn from others' mistakes.

Teachers who teach advanced levels should include in their classes some activities that require the students to infer, analyze, synthesize and evaluate information not stated in the tasks such as drawing conclusions, expressing hopes, making suggestions, complementing and complaining, giving additional information, talking about hypothetical situations, asking for confirmation, making appointments, stating the purpose or reason, expressing doubt, asking about likes and dislikes, talking about preferences, inviting and declining and invitation, talking and speculating about the future, making wishes, reporting other people's opinions and ask what people say. For advanced level, researchers advice teachers to use any kind of interaction through questions that requires students to talk and answer while using more complicated speech instead of replying yes or no.

The activities set in class have to be contextualized enough and significant to students. Some of these can be used with beginners, intermediate and advanced levels but the level of complexity and language production must be higher to achieve the set goals.

These are some over millions of activities that can help students to learn. The activities that the researchers proposed here are based on the observations done in class. The activities that the teachers use are going to be according to what s/he wants to achieve in classes. If students work in groups, it is clear that the teachers seek students to interact, but if teachers always ask students to translate pieces of writing, they could be looking for the development of some skills separately and not as a whole part.

To finish, Ur (1996) states that in a class teachers have to use group work, use activities that have students' level, choose carefully the topic to motivate students especially some of their interests or some in which they have experience, give anticipated directions so students know what they have to do, and try to encourage students to only use the language to learn.

In this chapter, researchers have showed some paramount aspects about the conclusions and recommendations to be considered when doing research on this topic.

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## APPENDIX

## Appendix A - Observation format 1 - Interaction patterns and categories

Teacher \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ level

The interaction patterns observed in the classes were

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	Interaction categories	Occurrence	Total
Teacher talk	The teacher accepts the expression of students feelings		
	The teacher praises or encourages the students		
	The teacher accepts or uses pupils' ideas		
	The teacher asks questions		
	The teacher gives information, expresses his/her ideas		
	The teacher gives directions, commands or orders		
	The teacher criticizes or justifies authority		
Student talk	The students answer specific questions		
	The students volunteer their ideas or ask questions		
	Ss use the native language		
Silence	There is silence or confusion		
		Total	

Adapted from Flanders' FIAC system (1970) - Interaction categories

## Appendix B - Observation format 2 - Classroom questions

Teacher \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ level

	Types of questions	Occurrence	Total
Teacher	The teacher asks knowledge questions		
	The teacher questions comprehension questions		
	The teacher poses application questions		
	The teacher asks inference questions		
	The teacher uses analysis questions		
	The teacher poses synthesis questions		
	The teacher asks evaluation questions		
Total			
Students	The students ask knowledge questions		
	The students question comprehension questions		
	The students pose application questions		
	The students ask inference questions		
	The students ask analysis questions		
	The students pose synthesis questions		
	The students ask evaluation questions		
Total			
Final score			

Adapted from Bloom (1956) and Kinsella (1991) - Classroom questions