

Oral interaction in EFL classrooms: the case of senior secondary schools in Ethiopia

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Abstract

This study investigates oral interaction in Ethiopian senior secondary school EFL classrooms. It aims at comprehending the process of classroom interaction and distinguishing the patterns and purposes of classroom interaction in English as Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. In this qualitative research, data were gathered from six senior secondary school EFL teachers through observations and interviews. The data obtained were organized thematically based on categories adapted from Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories and analyzed qualitatively. The results showed that senior secondary school EFL teachers do not allow students to orally interact during instructions and dominate almost the entire instructional time though they claim using it, so the classrooms are teacher dominated. That is, student-student interaction is absent in senior secondary school EFL classrooms. The fundamental type of oral interaction in senior secondary school EFL classrooms is teacher-students interaction whose purpose is to lecture grammatical and lexical items. Besides, the prevalent mode of interaction is questioning where teachers ask content related scanty questions to which students are unresponsive and get confused, as a result of which, there are pauses and chaos.

Keywords: EFL Teaching and Learning; CLT; Interaction; Oral Interaction

1. Introduction

Provided the global use of English language for variety of purposes such as the internet, education and continental and international summits and forums (Harris, 2015), good command in the language is essential. The Ethiopian Ministry of Education also emphasizes English language education since it is key to student learning and is used as a medium of instruction in the second cycle of primary schooling and throughout secondary and higher education (MoE, 2023) due to its roles in diplomatic, business, sport, internet, commercial, and industrial affairs (MoE, 2021). Consequently, it is indisputable that students need to attain a reasonable

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degree of mastery of the language to successfully respond to academic demands and the global market.

In Ethiopian senior secondary school EFL syllabi, it is clearly stated that one of the language teaching and learning approaches pursued is Communicative Approach (CLT) (MoE, 2021). Besides, the majority of tasks in the textbooks and methods suggested in the syllabi manifest this. According to Sociocultural Theory (SCT), the base for CLT, the crucial actions of the mind grow when the social and physical environments interact (Ellis, 2019). CLT encompasses Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Cooperative Language Learning (CLL) as its methodological expansions (Lennon, 2021). It accentuates authenticity, interaction, student-centeredness, task-based activities, and meaningful and purposeful communication (Qasserras, 2023; Srinath, 2024; Surkamp & Viebrock, 2018) to advance students' communicative competence and performance. These imply that interaction is the central point in the contemporary language learning model.

In the contemporary view of second and foreign language learning, interaction retains a prominent position. Interaction is defined as *the oral exchanges a learner participates in [...] which provide both 'input' and opportunities for 'output'* (Ellis, 2015:23), reactive exchanges between conversers (Surdkamp & Viebrock, 2018), a strategy used to induce students' attention to the language features under question (Fang, 2010). Hence, interaction is a dual talk about views or notions intended for mutual understanding between/among members of language classroom.

Interaction has many advantages in second and foreign language classrooms such as creating pleasant atmospheres for learning to take place, encouraging students to become more proficient communicators, and providing learners the chance to exchange their ideas in a real communicative setting. In second and foreign language learning, interaction helps to: process linguistic information (Alahmadi, 2019; Duff, 2019), inspire learners to participate in the instructional process and develop their oral performance or language (Bonavetti, 2015; Goronga, 2013), and enhance oral performance or communication (Mede, Cosgun, & Atay, 2019; Trofimovich, Lightbown, & Halter, 2013). Moreover, interaction helps students share experiences, build outlooks (personal and public) and autonomy, progress sense of cooperation, belonging and individuality, promote competence, provide practice opportunities for learning, build relationship, and allow meaningful negotiation (Badash, 2024; Braden, 2018; Liu, 2022; Surkamp & Viebrock, 2018; Swain & Watanabe, 2013; Teng, 2019). In short, interaction advances students' linguistic schema and social rapport through cooperative problem-solving. Consequently, classroom interaction is not a matter of choice for the successful achievement of communicative competence and performance, but a mandatory one.

Oral proficiency is the first concern of many learners and teachers. To illustrate, it has been claimed that the main inspiration for learning a foreign language is to achieve capability in effective communication/speech (Ahmad & Yusuf, 2014; Surkamp & Viebrock, 2018); the ability to the mastery of the speaking skill is a crucial part/ultimate goal of learning a language (Leong &

Ahmadi, 2017; Ur, 2012). It is through speaking that one mostly expresses ideas and feelings in his/her daily life. Potentially, *speaking a language is a skill best perfected through interaction and practice* (Abdu & Rosmaladewi, 2016:86).

Despite the necessity and significance of proficiency in EFL oral interaction skills, most studies show that students at various levels have difficulty to interact in English language. For example, it has been said that Ethiopian students and teachers struggle with English proficiency and this is worsening progressively (Deressa & Getachew, 2025); students are unable to orally interact in English due to inadequate background in the language (Desalegn, 2020; Zeleke & Alemtsehay, 2015). Not only in Ethiopia but also in L2 contexts, it has been said that numerous secondary school graduates encounter problems to properly speak English (Alonso, 2014; Alharbi, 2015). Even at tertiary levels, it is found that students' willingness to communicate is hindered by low competence (Dereje, 2024). To provide sustainable solutions to the problems in EFL oral interaction skills, its nature, types, and purposes should be identified.

Teachers take central position in the overall quality of education and teaching of foreign language oral interaction skills. In CLT, teachers serve as facilitators, participants, monitors and observers, resources and guides, managers and motivators (Srinath, 2024; Suyunovna & Qizi, 2021; Toro, et al., 2019; Walsh, 2011), need analysts, and counselors (Phuong & Vang, 2019). They also evaluate students' progresses and their own performances and take remedial actions. The entire aim of these roles is to help students develop communicative competences and performances through appropriate learning styles and strategies and increased autonomy. These demand teachers to be knowledgeable in the subject matter, the pedagogy/methodology, the students, and the learning contexts. By implication, teachers' abilities and strategies have remarkable influence on students' EFL proficiency oral skills and overall language learning capabilities.

In foreign language contexts where students have no exposure to the target language, these roles throw further burdens on teachers' shoulders since they are likely the main sources of learning inputs. In such cases, teachers assume further positions in maneuvering comprehensible input and output through apposite pedagogy to advance students' communicative competence and performance. Likewise, Long (2016) asserts that absence of exposure to a target language outside the classroom is one of the actual difficulties for entire types of language teaching. Therefore, what the students can do in formal language classroom is limited to what they are exposed to in the textbook and how the teacher handles it.

Despite the key roles they play to actualize the occurrence of real oral interaction in classrooms, EFL teachers show gaps regarding the knowledge and skills demanded in conducting oral interaction in methodologically appropriate ways. The Ethiopian Ministry of Education has stated that teachers' pedagogical knowledge is deficient (MoE, 2023), and this has contributed to the country's poor education system. The deficiency has emanated from lack of: sufficient knowledge on theories, methods, and the

subject matter from pre-service training (Dagne & Taye, 2017), contemporary pedagogical and acceptable level of content knowledge (PCK) for teaching speaking obtained from pre-service education (Wakjira, 2022), and/or understanding of methods for teaching (Temesgen, 2017). As a result of lack of contemporary methods, according to these authors, teachers resort to traditional teacher-centered approach.

Classroom interaction has been researched for long time. However, from literature review, the researcher has not found a study which focuses on interaction from teachers'/pedagogical perspective in both local and wider contexts. Most of the studies are focused on teacher-student behavior (talk time, usefulness of elicitation and feedback organization methods), types of tasks, affective methods, and technological roles. Furthermore, classroom interaction in a foreign language context for secondary schools particularly based on teachers' perspectives seems to have less attention (Sundari, 2017; Thoms, 2012); that is, most of the studies on interaction are in L2 contexts and are initiated by a concern for the learners (Walsh, 2011). Deressa and Getachew (2025) also put that studies targeting the ways in which interaction is used to advance students' oral abilities are remarkably scarce, and Alahmadi (2019) adds that several related studies examine the contributions and manipulations of input. Moreover, it has been said that the discussions made so far on interaction are in second language classroom contexts or in Western cultural settings (Hall, 2011).

The existing few local studies on oral interaction in EFL classrooms are diverse in focus and scope. For example, Zeleke and Alemtsehay (2015) targeted students' oral interaction performances; Fisseha (2024) and Dako, Narayana, and Davidson (2019) studied factors hampering students' oral interactions and participation; Deressa and Getachew (2025) examined teaching oral skills and the related problems to equally promote fluency and accuracy; Desalegn (2020) considered obstacles in exercising EFL speaking skills at tertiary level; Sisay (2022) analyzed feedback, interactional strategies, and inputs during speaking lessons; Bulbula, Bulti, and Sada investigated how teachers implement speaking activities (2021) and teachers' and students' attitudes and practices regarding oral communication in English classes (2023). Based on this review, it is identified that studies on oral interaction as a pedagogical tool and from teachers' perspectives are lacking in the present context. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to investigate the nature, types, modes and purposes of oral interaction in senior secondary school EFL classrooms from pedagogical and teachers' perspectives. As a result, this study targets answering the following questions:

- (1) What does the use of oral interaction look like in senior secondary school EFL classrooms?
- (2) What types of oral interaction are there in senior secondary school EFL classrooms?
- (3) What modes of oral interaction do senior secondary school EFL teachers use during instructions?
- (4) What are the purposes for which senior secondary school EFL teachers use oral interaction

2. Methodology

2.1. Design

In this study, qualitative approach was adopted. Qualitative approach allows producing insights regarding, for example, social procedures (APA, 2020); it permits adopting various methods (for example, classroom observations can be compounded with teacher interviews to get a further detailed inquiry than if only one is used separately), and captures ongoing interactions directly (Mackey & Gass, 2022). Since interaction is one of the group/social processes and an organizing theme in SCT, qualitative perspective was adopted in this study. To this end, Ellis (2015) states that the methodology for *Social SLA is qualitative and interpretative, emphasis is placed on uncovering the 'local agenda' through detailed analysis of naturally-occurring interactions* (p. 231). Furthermore, it yields in-depth and comprehensive understanding in actual setting, allows flexibility and rounded investigation, and supports greater interactions between the researcher and participants (Wojcik. 2024). Moreover, the method used in this study was case study. According to Mackey and Gass (2022), case study induces thorough understanding of circumstances from a definite group or its portion and from diverse sources. Therefore, to investigate oral interaction in senior secondary school EFL classrooms from teachers' perspectives, qualitative approach, case study method was used.

2.2. The Participants

Among four senior secondary schools found in Bishoftu City Administration of Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia, one is a special school where teachers with higher academic ranks and performances as well as students with high academic achievements are assigned. So, since it is not representative of most public schools in the country, it was excluded purposefully because one of the features of qualitative approach and case study is their quality in letting purposeful sampling depending on intended conditions (ibid). Among the remaining three schools, Qurqura Senior Secondary School was selected purposefully for its proximity and familiarity of the researcher with the teachers; these helped to get their consent and access demanded data smoothly.

Regarding the teacher participants, it is generally accepted that theoretical, not random/statistical, sampling is appropriate in case studies. Moreover, it is claimed that 20-60% is the most frequently used boundary of sample size in qualitative studies (Wasihun & Fikire, 2022). Subsequently, out of twelve (10 MA and 2 BA holders), six (50%) are sampled. Among MA holders, four teachers (40%) with varying teaching experiences are selected using purposive sampling technique while BA holders are included comprehensively. Selecting representatives from different professional levels and ranges of experiences helps the researcher to see if there is any variation emanating from differences across and within varying experiences and professional levels.

2.3. *Data collection and processing*

To gather data on the types, modes, and purposes of oral interaction in EFL senior secondary schools, observations and interviews are used. Unstructured observations are used to collect data on oral interaction in senior secondary school EFL classrooms. Observations help the researcher to ensure the reliability of data and reduce observer impacts. The classrooms are observed three times, after which the researcher ceased observing the classrooms since no different data was obtained during the first three observations – data saturation. The observations are audio-recorded to get classroom events holistically and to avoid the likely data leakage if other methods are used.

Moreover, interviews are conducted with the sample teachers to gather data pertaining or sensitive to their emotional attributes, their past experiences, attitudes, and administratively sensitive issues hindering oral interactions in secondary school EFL classrooms after the observations. It also helps the researcher discover casual information, determine causation, and cross-check their ideas and actual performances obtained through observations – triangulation. There are five broad, close- and open-ended questions designed based on research questions, literature review, classroom observations, and the researcher's own experiences. During interviews, the researcher freely posed prompts, additional questions, and clarifications based on the respondents' reactions. The respondents are interviewed by the researcher in the places and time they preferred. The interviews lasted 20 minutes on average. During the interviews, audio-recordings are made.

The data obtained through observation on the types of talk are organized under three categories – teacher-talk, student-talk, and silence and confusion – based on the concept obtained from Flanders (1970) Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC). However, this tool is mainly used to analyze interaction in SL context in terms of teachers' direct and indirect influence, but not in EFL contexts and does not include the purposes and frequency of interactions. Moreover, it includes more teacher-talk categories than that of student-talk and reduces the complex nature of classroom interaction to a few discrete points. Hence, in this study, it is modified to include the types, modes, purposes, and frequency of interaction. Based on the themes in the research questions, first, the data from both tools are categorized and tabulated. Following these, the types (teacher-and student-talks), modes (means/ways in which the interaction takes place), purposes, and frequencies of oral interactions are thematically analyzed. Next, the results are interpreted and discussed in line with the results from interviews, research questions, and literature review. Finally, conclusions are drawn and recommendations are made.

3. Findings

The purpose of this study is to investigate oral interaction in Ethiopian senior secondary school EFL classrooms. Hence, its employment, types, modes, and purposes are discussed in the following sections.

3.1. The use of oral interaction in senior secondary school EFL classrooms

The data obtained on this question through observations show, generally, that senior secondary school EFL teachers rarely use oral interaction during instructions. The teachers dominate almost the entire instrumental time giving lexical and grammatical explanations while the students listen silently. Despite this, some of the respondents stated during the interviews that they use oral interaction, but with varying degrees. T2, T3, T4 and T6 said that they use oral interaction usually and sometimes respectively. A question was asked to the respondents to consolidate these contrasting data from the observations and interviews. To this end, they proclaimed that they use oral interaction chiefly during speaking lessons, but no such instances are witnessed during the observations. Even during speaking lessons, students are made to read dialogues aloud in pairs. This implies that senior secondary school EFL teachers have misconceptions about what oral interaction is. On the other hand, T5 confessed that he uses oral interaction rarely; he uses when teaching how to introduce oneself or others typically at the beginning of the course. Besides, T1 admitted that he never uses oral interaction for he pursues, as he puts, “exam-oriented” teaching where his main purpose is preparing students for national examination.

3.2. Types of Oral Interaction used

The data collected on the types of oral interaction used in senior secondary school EFL classrooms demonstrate that there are basically three types: teacher-talk (teacher-students and teacher-student), student-talk (student-teacher, students-teacher, student-student), and silence and confusion (absence of interaction).

3.2.1. Teacher-Talk

In language classrooms, teachers talk with students in different modes, on variety of occasions, and for different purposes. Whenever teachers talk with the entire class or individual student, it is considered as teacher-talk (Tuan & Nhu, 2010); teacher-talk is everything that a teacher says in the classroom (Starr, 2017). To make the idea clear, both are discussed below.

3.2.1.1. Teacher-Students Interaction

From the data obtained, it is found that teacher-talk is the dominant mode of interaction in senior secondary school EFL classrooms. The teachers talk to the entire class to give lexical and grammatical explanations, to ask questions and/or give instructions. Consequently, it is possible to say that teacher-students interaction is nearly the solitary type of oral interaction in senior secondary school EFL classrooms.

3.2.1.2. Teacher-Student Interaction

Teacher-student talk designates a teacher talking with individual student or groups of students. Teachers interact with not only the entire class but also with individual student or groups of students on a variety of occasions. In this study, senior secondary school EFL teachers interact with individual student or groups of students when seeking spontaneous responses to questions. In such cases, the teachers ask questions to a volunteer or

nominate an individual though the student does not respond and the teachers providing answers themselves without wait-time. In short, teacher-student interaction is the second prevailing type of teacher-talk in senior secondary school EFL classrooms.

3.2.2. Student-Talk

This type of interaction occurs when a student interacts with the teacher. Here, it is categorized as student-teacher and student-student interaction, as presented below.

3.2.2.1. Student-Teacher Interaction

Student-teacher interaction occurs when an individual student utters something to the teacher. The data gathered on this manifest that students occasionally talk with the teachers when giving short responses: complying to “yes-no” questions, or showing uncertainties uttering “Mm/huh”. Nonetheless, a student does not orally interact with a teacher to express his/her ideas extensively.

3.2.2.2. Student-Student Interaction

In foreign language classrooms, student-student interaction plays vital roles. In contrast, according to the data obtained, it is difficult to say there is such type of interaction in senior secondary school EFL classrooms. Totally, students are given the opportunity to orally interact with each other on different instructional contents only on a single instance by T2: to discuss and do an activity (to find the meanings of phrasal verbs given in the student textbook) in groups of three (desk) for six minutes and forty-six seconds. During that time, the teacher was standing in the front and gazing at the textbook. Though most of the activities in the student textbook require students to discuss questions, enact dialogues, report results, etc., teachers do not allow them to do so for the reasons mentioned under 3.1 above.

3.3. Modes of oral interaction in senior secondary school EFL classrooms

In this study, modes of oral interaction refer to the ways or methods in which oral interaction takes place among the interactants in the classroom. Teachers and students interact in different modes during the lessons. These are categorized under teacher-talk and student-talk, and each are presented below.

3.3.1. Modes of teacher-talk

Senior secondary school EFL teachers orally interact with a student or students in different modes during the instructional time. The following table is a summary of these modes of oral interaction used by the teachers.

Table 1
Modes of teacher-talk in senior secondary school EFL classrooms

Modes of interaction	<i>f</i>
1. Accepting feelings	22
2. Reacting to students' ideas	8
3. Motivating	10
4. Asking questions	631

5. Lecturing	115
6. Organizing	48
7. Criticizing or justifying authority	23
8. Speech Repairs	342

In the above table, the first three show indirect influence while the next show direct influence. The later exceeds the former by far, hence indicates the teacher-centeredness of the classrooms. Furthermore, it indicates that the dominant mode of oral interaction in senior secondary school EFL classrooms is asking questions. In fact, this method includes word questions, yes-no questions, interjections such as ‘*Huh? Mm? Ihi?*’ etc., and words such as *Yes? What? Clear?* etc. Speech repairs, on the other hand, show instances when teachers utter something such as *Eee..., hmm..., you know, ok, yeah,* etc. to keep the smooth flow of their speeches. In sum, the most frequent modes of teacher-talk, according to their prevalence, are: asking questions, speech repairs, and lecturing.

3.3.2. Modes of student-talk

In this study, student-talk designates both student-teacher and student-student interaction. When students talk to the teacher either individually or chorally, it is considered as student-teacher talk; when students talk to each other, it is student-student talk. Therefore, each of them is presented below.

3.3.2.1. Student-teacher interaction

The data gathered on this manifest that students occasionally talk with the teachers either individually or chorally in different modes. The following table shows the summary of these modes of student-teacher talk.

Table 2
Modes of student-teacher interaction

Modes of interaction	<i>f</i>
1. Responding	55
2. Submitting	37
3. Asking	7

Table 2 shows that students talk with teachers on three different modes. In responding, students give short responses either individually or chorally to short and scanty questions that the teachers pose at phrase or word levels, but not in complete sentences. Some of the prominent responses of this kind are:

Tense is about time; ... have or has plus verb three; I've visited BMNP; ...been plus - ing form; consonant letter plus 'an'; [synonyms and antonyms] quite, washed, weak, started, etc.

The other mode of student-talk is submitting, which is intended to confirm what the teachers say, and are in tag forms. These are tag answers to the tag questions teachers ask. To illustrate, the following examples are given:

T: Have you done your homework? S/Ss: Yes!
T: Isn't it? S/Ss: Yes!

- T: *Is this correct?* S/Ss: *Yes!*
- T: *Yes? /Right?* S/Ss: *Yes!*
- T: *Yes or no?* S/Ss: *Yes!*
- T: *You know the difference, yeah?* S/Ss: *Yeah!*
- T: *The answer is A, isn't it?* S/Ss: *Yes!*
- T: *Is that clear?* S/Ss: *Yes!*
- T: *Do you have questions?* S/Ss: *No! etc.*

Moreover, students rarely ask for clarification when they encounter ambiguities. The questions students ask are not related to the instructional content but to uncertainties resulting from teachers' utterances. These include: *Which exercise? Which one? Yes? Huh? This one? Do we copy down? Page what? B and C are the same?* etc.

3.3.2.2. Student-student interaction

Regarding student-student interaction, according to the data obtained, it is difficult to say there is such type of interaction in senior secondary school EFL classrooms. Totally, students are given the opportunity to interact with each other on different instructional contents on a single instance to discuss and find the meanings of phrasal verbs (activity in the student textbook) in groups of three (in their desks) by T2. However, this teacher merely told students to discuss and stood next to the blackboard staring at the textbook; he was not checking if the students were discussing or not.

Moreover, during one of the speaking lessons observed, T3 made three pairs of students whom he nominated to only read a dialogue aloud in turns being *on their feet* while others were silent listeners. Despite it all, the textbook requires students to enact the dialogue and produce similar dialogues of their own. Consequently, it is intolerable to say that senior secondary school students really interact during EFL speaking sessions since teachers do not give them the chance to orally interact.

3.4. Periods of silence and confusion

There are several instances when the students keep silent and get confused due to various reasons which are apparent in different ways. These are summarized in the following table.

Table 3
Cases, manifestations, and reasons of silence and confusion

	Case	Manifestation	Purpose	f
Silence	Pause	Unresponsiveness	Self-taking thinking time	23
Confusion	Chaos	Off-task behavior	Remaining on-task	21

Table 3 embodies the cases, manifestations, and reasons for silence and confusion to interact during EFL lessons. In most cases, the students pause responding, no matter how the teachers encourage them, because questions are asked and students are expected to respond without think-time allowed. During those times, the students remain unresponsive and see sternly in the teachers' eyes or turn pages in the textbook to search for information. These instances happen, for example, when they were asked to rehearse previous lessons, give definitions of vocabulary items, tell when and how (use and usage) to use grammatical points, read model conversations, etc. The other

case in silence and confusion is chaos. When confused, the students become inattentive or/and go off-task and this results in chaos. The questions that the students asked include Which exercise? Which one? Yes? Huh? This one? Do we copy down? Page what? B and C are the same? to mention some. The examples given under 3.3.2.1 are caused by such confusions emanating from lack of short and precise information in giving instructions and orientations into tasks.

3.5. *Purposes of oral interaction in senior secondary school EFL classrooms*

To understand the purposes for which oral interaction is used in senior secondary school EFL classrooms, it necessitates a summary of the types and modes in which it is used. This is to indicate that a given type of interaction is used in a particular mode for a definite purpose, as presented in the following table.

Table 4
Purposes of oral interaction in senior secondary school EFL classrooms

Type	Description	Modes	Purposes	
Teacher-Talk	Indirect Influence	1. Accepting feelings	A. to affirm responses B. to praise performances	
		2. Reacting to students' ideas	A. to brief/consult B. to give feedback	
		3. Motivating	A. to encourage participation	
	Direct influence	4. Questioning		A. to seek for information B. to reassure understanding C. to elicit desired behavior D. to scaffold E. to assess conception F. to motivate G. to activate schema H. to evaluate accomplishments
			5. Lecturing	A. to present lessons B. to explain/describe contents C. to exemplify D. to model utterance
			6. Organizing	A. to give directions B. to guide/orient in to task C. to organize groups
			7. Criticizing justifying authority	A. to direct attention B. to manage misbehavior
		8. Speech Repairs	A. to restore discourse breakdown B. to maintain speech continuity	
	Student-Talk	1. Responding		A. to reply
		2. Submitting		B. to recall
3. Asking			C. to clarify ambiguities	
4. Group discussion			A. to complete task	

From Table 4, it is possible to understand that different modes of interaction, either by the students or teachers, have definite intentions. That is, whenever teachers interact using a particular method or in a particular mode, they intend to realize a peculiar intention or purpose. Hence, different modes of teacher- and student-talks are intended to realize certain purposes. Likewise, whenever the participants in this study say, for instance, *Ok, Good, Right*, they intend to affirm responses (express agreement) or to praise performances. They also react to responses saying: *Yeah, but..., which one, week or weak? Or* rehearse student's responses for the purpose of briefing/consulting, giving feedback, or developing student's idea. In addition, expressions such as *Excellent try it; Don't be silent/afraid; It is easy; Well, continue, ...* and nodding heads are meant to motivate for inclined participation or to lessen student shyness to speak. These modes of interaction are mainly related to students' behaviors and are labeled as indirect influence.

Not only indirect influence, teachers' oral interactions also include direct influence, which includes different modes to convey instructional content as effectively and efficiently as possible. It is identified under 3.3.1 that the most prevalent mode/means of teacher-talk is questioning, and this is intended for numerous purposes. Senior secondary school EFL teachers use questions for purposes of: seeking information, reassuring understanding, eliciting desired behavior, scaffolding, assessing conception or fixing misconception, motivating learning, activating students' schema, as well as evaluating accomplishments or/and establishment of objectives. In lecturing, teachers' purposes are principally to present instructional contents by giving explanations, depicting acceptable linguistic forms, portraying model utterances, and so on.

Actually, different modes of teachers' oral interactions have definite purposes which can be observed from their classroom actions and utterances. Yet, designating periods of silence and confusion to firm traits can sometimes be obscure, so they demand scrutinizing together with teachers' actions and utterances. Consequently, students keep silent to teachers' questions and become unresponsive when teachers ask them and search for replies spontaneously without giving thinking time and /or ask jerky questions. Of course, these are the causes for manifestations of the cases. It is prevalent, then, to comprehend that the purpose of silence in such instances is to take thinking time. On the other hand, students go off-task when confused due to vague instruction and task-orientations. They start to seek for accurate information from their partners or murmur to signal compliant, so the classroom becomes chaotic. Here, the purpose is to remain on-task.

In general, data on the types, modes, and purposes of oral interaction in senior secondary school EFL classrooms are analyzed and interpreted. Regarding the types of oral interaction, it can be said that Teacher-Talk is the major. The most prevalent mode of teacher-talk is questioning followed by speech repairs through which teachers try to keep in tune. Teachers chiefly ask questions of different types in their attempts to lecture the content of the lesson; consequently, they consume almost the entire instructional time. The second main type of oral interaction in senior secondary school EFL classrooms is student/s-teacher talk, where a student

or students respond to short questions at phrasal or word levels. In fact, this is not actually interaction because students do not exchange ideas at large to negotiate meanings. However, it is a nuisance to find that student-student interaction is the least in senior secondary school EFL classrooms for students are given almost no opportunities to interact with each other whatever the purposes of the instruction can be.

4. Discussion

The aim of this study is to investigate the nature, types, modes, and purposes of oral interaction in senior secondary school EFL classrooms from teachers'/pedagogical perspective. To begin with, most teachers assert that they use oral interaction as a pedagogical tool though no data supports this. An implication is that there is mismatch between what teachers say they do and their actual performances. This matches with Wakjira's (2023) finding. Similarly, Adaba (2017) concludes that teachers seldom perform their roles during oral interactions; Zeleke and Alemtsehay (2015) also state that interaction is not properly implemented in English language classroom, and teachers and students do not play their anticipated roles accordingly.

In this study it is also found that oral interaction is fundamentally teacher-talk, so teacher-centeredness is a defining characteristic. Similarly, it was found that teacher-centeredness is common in Ethiopian EFL classrooms (Wakjira, 2023); teachers are dominant speakers in EFL classrooms, student-student interaction being inadequate during lessons (Badash, 2024). This type of talk/interaction occurs when teachers talk with the whole class (teacher-students talk) serving as a leader or controller who decides the form and procedure of the process. It is essentially designed to provide students more and more affluent input and inspect understanding (Ellis, 2015), clarify and exemplify/demonstrate language points, instruct/direct, trigger exchange, and motivate (Starr, 2017). However, teachers in this study take almost the entirety of instructional time mainly in lecturing and questioning modes to give grammatical and lexical explanations and ask scanty questions to which they spontaneously give answers themselves.

The second type of oral interaction in senior secondary school EFL classrooms is teacher-student interaction, where the teacher talks/interacts with an individual student. Of course, operational teacher-student interaction, as a pedagogical tool, has a substantial part in the process of language acquisition/learning (Sert, 2019). Teachers in this study conduct teacher-student interaction, though very little, predominantly in the mode of questioning and organizing to ask questions and accepting responses during lectures. The intention of the teacher in this type of interaction should be to nurture response to a specific question, enhance participation in the interaction process, evaluate understanding, guide into an activity, or informally talk with the student (Sundari, et al., 2017). It can be Initiation, Response, and Feedback (IRF) exchange or contingent interaction. Naturally, IRF includes teacher-initiated interaction, student response, and teacher follow-up (Ellis, 2015). Nonetheless, in this study, teachers evaluate, give corrections, or directly reject students' responses at the feedback stage in case students responded. Given the procedures to be adopted to benefit from

it, teacher-student interaction is inadequately and inappropriately implemented in this study.

The third type of oral interaction found in this study is student-student interaction. It is found in this study that there is only six minutes and forty-six seconds of student-student interaction allowed by only one of the teachers throughout the observations. The purpose of the interaction was to make students accomplish a task in group discussion mode. Though most of the activities in the student textbook require students to discuss questions, enact dialogues, report results, and so on, teachers do not allow them to do so. Therefore, student-student interaction is almost inexistent in senior secondary school EFL classrooms. In contrast, student-student interaction is given a prominent place nowadays since how students interact in a classroom, among other things, is considered decisive in constructing their own knowledge (Lennon, 2021). Moreover, this type of talk allows students to react to interlocutors' ideas (Surkamp & Viebrock, 2018), build relationship, develop problem-solving and critical thinking abilities, alleviate boredom, and enhance their production (Martin & Bolliger, 2018). During such reactions, students attempt novice notions, inspect their views with that of the conversers, and organize evidences and concepts into different shapes – negotiation of meaning. The above authors add that

When we interact, meaning is not simply transferred from one person to the next, but it is negotiated. In this process, called negotiation of meaning, speakers try to reach a clear understanding of each other. It has been proposed that negotiation of meaning is at the heart of language development (p. 113).

Student-student interaction is also found to soothe anxiety (Kruk, 2021). Therefore, by maximizing talk time than IRF, student-student interaction fosters language learning.

Lastly, it is worth elucidating that students do not respond to most of teachers' questions. The students keep silent when teachers ask questions and often become unresponsive because the questions are not targeted on the contents of lessons, ambiguous and scanty and the instructions and task-orientations are vague. Consequently, students go off-task. Unfortunately, teachers also do not give thinking time, so students remain silent to take thinking time. Thinking time/wait-time is the time given to answer a question. It maximizes involvement and more capable replies from students (Smith and King, 2017), enriches their share in classroom exchange (Badash, 2024). As a result, they start to seek for accurate information from their partners or murmur as complaint to remain on-task, both of which cause chaos. In justification of these, Nehyba, Juhanak, and Cigan (2021) proclaim that classroom spaces/paces for different purposes ensure students to know how to behave in each of the situations.

To sum up, oral interaction in senior secondary school EFL classrooms are three types: teacher-students talk, teacher-student talk, and student-student talk. This finding is in harmony with the categories by Sundari, et al. (2017). Among these, teacher-students talk is the most dominant type consuming instructional time at large according to the findings of this study. Students are not given the opportunity to orally interact in the target

language though it is through practice that students sharpen their speaking skills.

5. Conclusions

Based on the findings, it is possible to make the following conclusions on the use, types, modes, and purposes of oral interaction in senior secondary school EFL classrooms:

- there are disparities among teachers in the extent to which they use oral interaction as a pedagogical tool. The extent to which oral interaction is conducted in senior secondary school EFL classrooms depends on teachers' personal preferences rather than instructional demands
- there is mismatch between what teachers say they do and their actual performances
- teacher-talk (teacher-students) is the most dominant type of oral interaction in senior secondary EFL classrooms, so instructions are teacher-centered
- the predominant mode of teacher-talk (teacher-students) is questioning during lecturing
- most of senior secondary school EFL teachers use teacher-students interaction
- teacher-students interaction is used entirely to teach language items (grammar and vocabulary) than to teach speaking skills
- questioning is the chief mode of interaction teachers use
- student-student talk is almost nonexistent type of oral interaction in senior secondary school EFL classrooms; students are not given the chance to interact orally with each other
- students remain unresponsive when they do not understand instructions rather than asking for clarifications
- when confused, students remain silent, ask clarifications from peers, or murmur to express complaint
- off-task behavior and chaos are caused by confusion

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions made so far, the following recommendations are proposed.

1. The Ethiopian Ministry of Education should:
 - arrange trainings on the contemporary theories, approaches, and methods in EFL teaching
 - arrange trainings on the what and how of oral interactions for senior secondary EFL teachers
 - enforce CPD in senior secondary schools
 - initiate and support the preparation manuals on language teaching methods for senior secondary school teachers
 - enforce the quality assurance of teachers
 - work to reduce the class size across the country
2. The regional Education Bureau should:

- facilitate the trainings and seminars on contemporary teaching methods for senior secondary EFL teachers
3. The Zone Education Offices should:
 - facilitate CPD in senior secondary schools
 - initiate and facilitate experience exchange among senior secondary school EFL teachers
 - collaborate with teacher training institutions to give HDP training for EFL teachers and certify it
 4. Schools should:
 - execute and monitor CPD
 - evaluate and inform teachers on their classroom performances
 - conduct experience exchange among teachers.
 5. Senior secondary school teachers should:
 - assume the responsibility to improve their own professional capabilities rather than always expecting external bodies for support
 - conduct self-reflections on their own teaching perpetually
 - conduct CPD genuinely as a means to improve themselves than for the sake of reporting
 - use modern technological results such as the internet to educate themselves on contemporary language teaching theories, approaches, and methods.

7. Future research in the area

Future studies should include wider geographical locations to obtain a comprehensive insight into the problem. Besides, observation should be used as fundamental tool for data collection because what teachers say they do and actually perform in the classroom vary. Last, video recording had better be used than audio recording during data collection so that some of the non-verbal elements related to teachers' classroom performances would be captured.

Author contribution statement:

Tesfa Bella Defa: designed the research, collected and analyzed the data, and wrote the text.

Abebe Damtew Berlie: provided comments throughout the research.

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