The Effect of Communicative Competence on Classroom Interaction[1]

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Abstract: *The primary aim of this study is to examine learners' awareness of specific areas of classroom interaction and to measure their attitudes to these interaction types both in terms of learners' enjoyment of these activities and also in terms of the effectiveness of these activities. The present findings indicate that there is a correlation between learners' level of communicative competence and their attitudes towards classroom interaction. The results reported here highlight the importance of giving voice to students and understanding their views about classroom activities especially regarding the effectiveness of these activities.*

1. Introduction

As language teachers, we usually center our attention on providing explanations while the students remain in silence. During a language class, many language teachers might have felt that they spent a considerable amount of time doing the talking and encouraging the students to participate rather than listening to students and helping them to cope with their weaknesses.

Teachers need now to be more conscious of the usefulness of applying and varying different teaching methodologies, techniques, and activities to promote students' active participation. Learners' participation in classroom activities helps them exchange information to obtain comprehensible input while they are engaged in constructing meaningful experiences to achieve academic success.

This study investigates learners' judgments of the learning value of different types of classroom activities, specifically whole-class activities (teacher- centered, with the participation of the whole class), group-work activities (student- centered, with groups of three to six students), and pair-work activities (student-centered, with the participation of only two students).

The objective of this study is to examine the effect of foreign/second language learners' levels of communicative competence on their attitudes to a number of activity types involving different kinds of classroom interaction. The study also examines learners' awareness of specific areas of classroom interaction and attempted to measure their attitudes to these interaction types both in terms of learners' enjoyment of these activities and also in terms of the effectiveness of these activities.[2] We assume that low-level learners, given their low level of communicative competence, will have more favorable attitudes to whole-class activities than to student-centered group-work activities, and again,

more favorable attitudes to group-work activities than to pair-work activities. Thus, our hypothesis for Pre-Intermediate learners is a rank order of favorable attitudes as follows:

Hypothesis 1:   Whole-class activities > group work activities > pair-work activities.

Our hypothesis for Intermediate learners is a similar rank order of favorable attitudes as follows:

Hypothesis 2:   Whole-class activities > group work activities > pair-work activities

On the other hand, we assume that the higher the level of communicative competence, the more favorable attitudes will be to learner-centered activities, and the less favorable they will be towards teacher-centered activities. That is to say, higher-level learners will prefer to be given the freedom to use their abilities in more communicative activities that allow for more creative use of language. Our hypothesis for Upper-Intermediate learners, then, is a rank order of favorable attitudes as follows:

Hypothesis 3:   Pair-work activities > group work activities > whole-class activities.

Fundamentally, we are motivated to investigate the proposal by Krashen (1985) that attitudes can act as barriers or bridges to learning a new language and are the "essential environmental ingredient" for language learning. Krashen (1982) states that learning can only happen if certain affective conditions (e.g. positive attitudes, self-confidence, low anxiety) exist and that when these conditions are present input can pass through the "affective filter" and be used by the learner.[3] In the same vein, Breen (2001) asserts that learners' attributes such as beliefs, aptitude, personality, or the concept of identity facilitate or hinder their learning and their conceptualizations of the language to be learned.

According to Wenden (1998: 52) attitudes are 'learned motivations, valued beliefs, evaluations, what one believes is acceptable, or responses oriented towards approaching or avoiding'. For her, two kinds of attitudes are essential: attitudes learners hold about their role in the learning process and their capability as learners (Wenden 1998: 53). In a sense, attitudes are a form of metacognitive knowledge (Wenden 1999; 2001). At any rate, 'learners' beliefs about their role and capability as learners will be shaped and maintained--by other beliefs they hold about themselves as learners' (Wenden 1998: 54). For example, if learners believe that certain personality types cannot learn a foreign language and they believe that they are that type of person, then they will think that they are fighting a "losing battle," as far as learning the foreign language is

concerned (cf. Bernat and Gvozdenko 2005; Matsura, et al 2001). Furthermore, if learners struggle under the mistaken belief that learning is successful only within the context of the "traditional classroom," where the teacher directs, instructs, and manages the learning activity, and students must follow in the teacher's footsteps, they are likely to be unreceptive or resistant to learner-centered strategies aiming at autonomy, and success is likely to be undermined (cf. Richard-Amato 2003).

In a word, attitudes are 'part of one's perception of self, of others, and of the culture in which one is living or *the culture of the target language* (Brown 2006: 126), and it seems clear that positive attitudes may contribute to a more conducive learning environment and to more effective learning, while negative attitudes have the opposite effect.

2. Focus on the learner

The advent of the concept of communicative competence in English Language Teaching (ELT) over thirty years ago signaled a shift from grammar-based pedagogy to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). It was generally accepted that, in addition to grammar rules, language teaching needed to take account of social context and social rules of use. The concept of communicative competence appeared to offer an intellectual basis for pedagogic broadening. Foreign/second language acquisition and language teaching research shifted its focus away from different teaching methodologies and made the learner the centre of its attention, in a way that captures the wisdom of the Chinese proverb *'Tell me and I forget. Show me and I remember. Involve me and I learn.'* Since then researchers have examined students' personality characteristics, learning and cognitive styles, and attitudes towards classroom activities.

As the goals for language teaching became more concerned with enabling learners to interact successfully with members of other societies, so the explorations of applied linguists into the components of communicative ability assumed relevance and usefulness to the work of classroom teachers and materials designers. For example, collections of role-playing exercises, games, information gaps, and other communicative classroom activities were developed for inclusion in teaching materials. The goal of these communicative tasks is to develop students' communicative ability, i.e. to enable students interact with other people in the target language, in the classroom and outside. Next, we will explore the components of communicative language ability.

The fundamental theoretical concept in communicative language teaching is ''communicative competence,'' a term introduced into discussions of language use and second or foreign language learning in the early 1970s (cf. Savignon 1997).

Dell Hymes, a sociolinguist, was the first to introduce the idea of communicative competence in terms of the "appropriateness of socio-cultural significance of an utterance" (Canale and Swain 1980). Hymes (1972; 1974), retaining the idea of Chomsky's underlying grammatical competence, looks at contextual relevance as one of the crucial aspects of one's knowledge of

language and claims that meaning in communication is determined by its speech community and actual communicative event in question, which consists of the following components he calls SPEAKING (a mnemonic code word): Setting, Participants, Ends, Act sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms of interaction and interpretation, and Genre. See Hymes 1974; Coulthard 1985; Jaworski and Coupland 1999; Kramsch 1993; and Wardhaugh 2005, for detailed descriptions of SPEAKING. Hymes maintains that the knowledge of language that Chomsky associated with competence should be taken more comprehensively to include knowledge about the above-mentioned components, namely the rules of language use.

Canale and Swain (1980) proposed a theoretical framework in which they outline the contents and boundaries of three areas of communicative competence: grammatical, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence. Sociolinguistic competence was further divided by Canale (1983) into two separate components: sociolinguistic and discourse competence. He defines communicative competence as "the underlying systems of knowledge and skill required for communication" (Canale 1983: 5). What is intriguing about their framework of communicative competence is that even the aspects of skills that are needed to employ the knowledge are now assumed to be part of one's competence. The communicative competence is, then, distinguished from what Canale calls "actual communication," which is defined as "the realization of such knowledge and skill under limiting psychological and environmental conditions such as memory and perceptual constraints, fatigue, nervousness, distractions, and interfering background noises" (Canale 1983: 5). If we are to compare Canale and Swain's construct of communicative competence with that of Chomsky's in a broad sense, Chomsky's "competence" is equivalent to the "grammatical competence" mentioned by Canale and Swain, and all other areas of their framework are lacking in Chomsky's definition. As far as performance is concerned, Chomsky's performance and Canale and Swain's actual communication point to roughly the same phenomenon of uttering sentences in real communicative situations. (See Hedge 2007 for examples illustrating the four areas of communicative competence, and Alptekin 2002 for a new notion of communicative competence which recognizes English as a world language).

As a result of the dissatisfaction with Chomskyan approaches to second language acquisition, communicative language teaching (CLT) arose in line with the theoretical principles of 'communicative competence', where the focus is predominantly on the learner's linguistic socio-pragmatic awareness rather than a grammatical one.

Communicative language teaching (CLT) places the emphasis on the learner. The new concept of learner-centeredness has evolved as a contemporary counter to the traditional teacher-centered approach to teaching/learning which has been authoritative in nature. The shift reflects a desire to explore ways of making teaching responsive to learner needs and

interests and allowing learners to play a fuller, more active and participatory role in the day-to-day teaching/learning processes.

CLT approaches to language teaching have not only changed the way teachers see the process of language learning, but also the way learners are taught to use their classroom time. These approaches center on learner/learner interactions. Indeed, they emphasize interactions that primarily involve standard communicative exercises like *role-plays, split information* (e.g. blanked timetable & split reading), *decision-making, information exchange, problem solving, games* (e.g. spot the difference & describe & draw)*, and jigsaw tasks* (cf. Johnson 1982; Brumfit 1984; Widdowson 1990). In the aforementioned activities greater interaction between students means that classes are less teacher-dominated. The teacher's role is to provide a framework within which learning can be structured, to encourage communication, to check that the bulk of communication is in English, with minimum use of mother tongue, and to discreetly assist those who are struggling for one reason or another. Otherwise, there is little direct teacher control or intervention. Evaluation involves discussing ways of saying things afterwards, rather than correcting students while they speak. In other words, the teacher has to use his/her own discretion here, as too much correction of forms can discourage students. It is often more helpful to make a note of errors produced and to discuss them with students after the activity, i.e. in a feedback session. Further and more importantly, communicative approaches have created a strategy-rich learning environment within which learners have the opportunity to explore and develop their awareness of language learning as part of day-to-day teaching-learning activities.

Awareness of one's own learning strategy is essential in learning a second/foreign language.[4] Oxford (1990) offers an analysis of learning strategies in which there are two main categories of strategy: *direct* (*memory, cognitive* and *compensation* strategies) and *indirect* (*metacognitive, affective* and *social* strategies). For a different categorization of learning strategies, see O'Malley & Chamot (1990: 137-139) who put forward a tripartite categorization of learning strategies: *metacognitive*, *cognitive*, and *social/affective*. Research on learners' learning strategies and the awareness that learners have specific learning needs and personal learning strategies have led to the creation of a vast array of teaching/learning methods and techniques. Usually, learners learn more effectively when they learn through their own initiative (cf. Garret and James 1991). When their learning strategies are matched with appropriate approaches in teaching, then their motivation, performances, and achievements will increase and be enhanced (Brown 2006). Learner-based teaching encourages learners to work together and learn from each other. Learner-based activities help foster a spirit of group solidarity in which everyone has a valid contribution to make, regardless of overall linguistic ability. Learners work with one another, not in competition with one another (cf. Campbell and Kryszwska 1992: 7-9).

One implication is that language teaching needs to acknowledge and work constructively with the diversity and richness of human experience that learners

bring to language study (Benson 2001; Nyikos and Oxford 1993; Oxford 1992). The reason for this is, in real sense, inherent in the concept of language-centeredness itself. Language learners differ from one another on a number of accounts and, if a learner-centered approach is to be coherent with itself, it must inevitably acknowledge these differences and their implications with respect to both course design and the more detailed level of classroom pedagogy.

Several researchers highlight the strong emphasis placed on approaches to teaching which involve the active participation of the learner, and which often relegate the teacher to the role of monitor/supervisor (cf. Tsui 2001; Lo, *et al* 2000; Sawyer 2006; Tarnopolsky 2000). This suggests a growing awareness on the part of teachers that interaction between students, and not just between teachers and students, is an essential component in the process of language acquisition (Krashen 1981; 1985; 1994).

It is also fundamental to our way of thinking that the decision-making process about the kind of language task to be used in the classroom should take into account learner attitudes and opinions. Learner participation in decision-making has the goal of enriching the knowledge base upon which decisions are made in the light of the knowledge and insights which learners as well as teachers bring with them. This, however, implies that learners are called upon to play a more active role in decision-making than is the case in traditional, teacher-driven approaches. This perspective on learner-centeredness ties in with that of the learner-centered curriculum developed by Nunan (1988). The learner-centered curriculum rests on two main principles. The first is that language learners of any level should be the main reference point for decision-making with respect to both the content and form of teaching. The second is that this should be realized by a process of consultation and negotiation between teacher and learners.

In terms of classroom interaction, it has been suggested that L_2 learners, when involved in conversational exchanges with other non-native speakers (NNS), become more intensely involved in meaning negotiation than they would if interacting with a native speaker (Varonis and Gass 1985; Pica and Doughty 1985; and Pica 1994). Negotiation is defined by Pica (1994: 495) as "modification and restructuring of interaction that occurs when learners and their interlocutors anticipate, perceive, or experience difficulties in message comprehensibility". Negotiation of meaning is important not only because it provides non-native speakers with a chance to receive input but also because it provides them with chances that help them adjust their speech so that they produce comprehensible output in the direction of target language-like performances (Long 1983; Varonis and Gass 1985; Doughty 1992; Hall and Verplaetse 2000).

Most of the studies of meaning negotiation focused on the effects on the learning of the different interaction types (see Ellis 1991: 5 for a review of these studies). A good deal of research has focused on whether small-group work leads to greater meaning negotiation than teacher-led activities (Duff 1986;

Porter 1986; Ellis and Rathbone 1987). We are primarily concerned with learner attitudes towards the dynamics of classroom interaction; we will have little to say about the effects of different types of classroom activities on meaning negotiation.

2. 1 What is Learner-centered Classroom?

Learner-centered classroom puts much emphasis on the learners, together with the learner's responsibility. Learner-centered classroom usually involves a number of features which fit the principles of communicative language teaching. The dimensions of function, structure, topic demonstrated in many current communicative textbooks are essentially learner-centered.

According to Marzano (1992) and Weimer (2002), a learner-centered classroom should be achieved by such methods as to analyze learners' needs, to shift the responsibility of learning and to create authentic interactive activities.

Nunan (1988) maintains that "in a learner-centered system, course designers will engage in extensive consultation with learners themselves in deriving parameters". Tarone and Yule (1989) underline the understanding of how the process of identifying learners' needs can have a beneficial effect on the process of attempting to meet those needs, aiming at putting the learner firmly at the center of language teaching. A clear understanding of students' needs will help teachers develop students' awareness of the importance of classroom participation.

The learners' role in learner-centered classroom is to participate actively and creatively in learning, using both the materials they study in the course and their own knowledge and language resources. As we have stressed earlier, students should be treated as intelligent adults with ideas and opinions of their own. Students learn through interacting with others in pair, group, or whole class activities and draw both on previous learning as well as their own communicative skills. To give more responsibility to students does not necessarily mean teachers have no role in a learner-centered classroom. One of the teachers' roles in learner-centered classroom is to create a learner-centered environment. Teacher should have a very clear picture of teaching content and classroom activities as well, delicately instructing students and making sure every student take part in the language practice.

According to what have been discussed above, a learner-centered classroom puts much emphasis on the learners, together with the learner's responsibility. Therefore, in a learner-centered classroom, teaching should not be the focus in classroom instruction instead students learning should be in the first place so that teaching would be able to facilitate more and better learning for students in respect to language learning.

3. Research method

3.1   Participants

The study involved a total of one hundred and thirty-six students of English as a foreign language studying at the English Language Center (ELC), University of Sharjah. The ELC offers a four-level, fully integrated program in listening, speaking, grammar, reading, writing, vocabulary and TOEFL preparation, in order to help students reach their immediate goal of 500 or more on the TOEFL, while at the same time preparing them for their academic studies and beyond. It should be pointed out here that the instructors of the sections surveyed use the same teaching activities described in this paper though with some variation depending on the program component being taught. These activities are prescribed in the syllabi, which are designed for the intensive English course.

The participants were both male and female, belonged to the 17-19 age group, and were attending intensive English course so that they might fulfill the 500 TOEFL entry requirement for a degree course at the university. The participants' levels of competence were determined by the institutional TOEFL test given to them before the commencement of the course. The TOEFL placement ranges are as follows: level 1 (300-389), level 2 (390-429), level 3 (430-464), and level 4 (465-499). The participants were selected from a total student population of nine hundred and fifty. All participants participated in the study on a voluntary basis. Some participants did not complete the questionnaire and, therefore, their answers were excluded.

Level	Age Range	Male	Female
Pre-Intermediate/L2	17-19	24	24
Intermediate/L3	17-19	16	28
Upper-Intermediate/L4	17-19	20	24

Table 1: *Demographic breakdown of participants by age group*

3.2   Instrument

The rationale for this study is that there is no known literature on students in the United Arab Emirates and their attitudes towards to a number of activity types involving different kinds of classroom interaction.

As stated above, the aim of this study was to ascertain whether learners enjoy teacher-or student-centered activities more, and which activity they feel is more effective for successful language learning.[5] The study investigated the following classroom activities: pair-work activities, small-group activities (student-centered activities), and whole-class activities (teacher-led activities). Pair-work was described as interaction between two students on "a range of activities designed to learn vocabulary or grammar, or build fluency, and may include: discussion and practice of new vocabulary or grammar material, practice of textbook dialogues, readings and exercises, and creative conversation and information exchange conversational activities."

Among the pair communication activities observed in this study, one type of tasks was stressed by the instructors, namely the two-way information gap. The two-way information gap is an extremely useful activity that allows students to apply the target language with other, previously learned material. It has the further benefit of placing that language in a real context, which each individual student can fine tune to his/her personal life. This makes the language more realistic, and thereby more memorable. This activity assigns clear roles, a realistic setting, and an achievable goal for the students. For example, student A plays the role of a hotel receptionist, and student B wants to make a reservation. The hotel serves as the setting, and the obvious goal is to have student B make a reservation.

Small- group activities were described as interaction between more than two students but less than the whole class, on a range of activities identical to those described above. Whole class activities were described as activities that involved all of the students in conjunction with the teacher on "a range of activities designed to help students learn vocabulary or grammar, or build fluency, and may include: explanation of vocabulary or grammar in English, repetition with grammatical transformation of sentences into present, past forms, etc, and question and answer sessions with teacher and students."

The study asked three questions about each activity type under investigation. The first question was a simple closed question with binary settings (i.e., requiring a *yes/no* answer).

(1) Has this kind of activity been used in your class?

This question was asked to ensure that the participants had understood the exact nature of the activity being investigated. Almost 98% of participants answered *yes* to the above question.

The second question was also closed. Participants were asked to choose from a set of semantic differential scale responses. The question and answer choices are given below:

(2) How much did you enjoy this kind of activity?
    5 ❏   4❏   3❏   2❏   1❏
    A lot   somewhat   not very much

Semantic differential scales are techniques first devised by Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum (1957) to measure affect, i.e. peoples' positive and negative feelings towards an attitude, object, etc. However, we felt that some valuable qualitative data could be collected by additionally asking participants, in an open-ended version of the above question, to provide reasons for their answers.

The final question, like the previous one had both an open and a closed version, and was as follows:

(3) How effective did you find this kind of activity as a learning technique?
      5 ❑   4❑   3❑   2❑   1❑
      A lot   somewhat   not very much

It should be pointed out that the questions asked were not 'bipolar'; that is, participants were not asked if they found tasks to be effective or ineffective, enjoyable or unenjoyable- they were simply asked to what degree they found tasks to be effective and enjoyable. This approach, we felt, would give us finely tuned answers than would straightforward bipolar answers.

3. 3   Procedure
First, the researcher explained the goals of the study to the instructors. Written instructions were presented in the target language; these instructions were also read aloud by the instructors, and it was ascertained that all participants understood the content of the instructions. Students were told that no testing would be involved; the results of the survey would not affect their course grades; and their participation would help them get to know more about themselves as learners and enable them to consider how their learning might be made more effective. After the explanations, volunteers filled in a demographic data sheet and an attitude survey form.

4. Limitations of the study
Before the results are discussed and recommendations made, it is useful to highlight some of the limitations this study has. First, the participant sample used in this study was selected from one university. Therefore, under no circumstances will the study attempt to generalize the current findings beyond the local context. This may be keyed to the complex nature of attitudes towards language learning and the numerous factors that can shape learner attitudes in different universities and different countries. Second, the results may have been biased as the participants self-selected; those who did not respond may have had different attitudes.

5. Results
The analysis states clear information that can contribute to the enrichment of the teaching and learning process in English language classrooms. All data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 14.0 for Windows). The results of the study were converted into percentages, and the mean scores were calculated for each group's performance on each activity under investigation. The mean results of the three groups' scores in terms of reported attitudes as to levels of enjoyment are shown in Table 2.
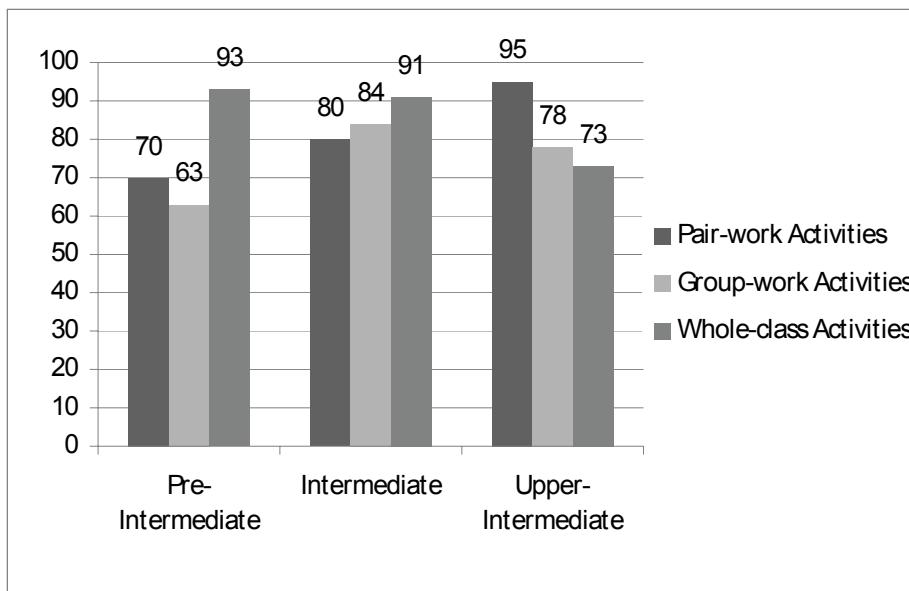
Table 2 *Attitudes towards Classroom Activities - Mean Percentage Scores Representing Degree of Positive Attitudes in terms of Enjoyment*

The mean results of the three groups' scores in terms of reported opinions as to level of effectiveness are shown in Table 3.
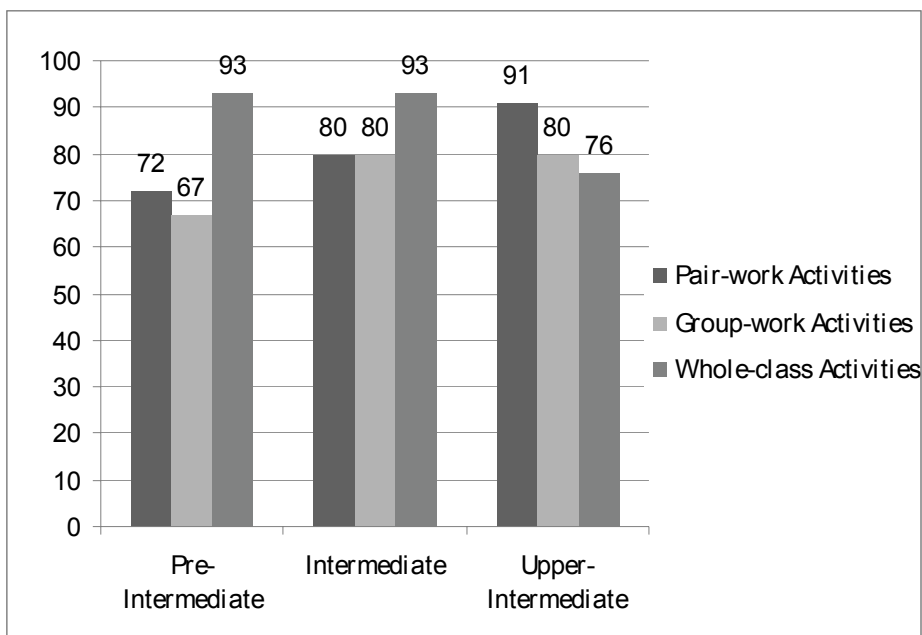

Table 3 *Attitudes towards Classroom Activities - Mean Percentage Scores Representing Degree of Positive Attitudes in terms of effectiveness*

5.1 Pre-Intermediate Students' Attitudes towards Classroom Activities
The study focused on students' attitudes to the usefulness of certain classroom tasks, specifically on what kind of activity students reportedly enjoy, which activities students feel are more effective for successful language learning and so on.

In the analysis of the Pre-Intermediate learners' attitudes towards classroom activities both in terms of 'enjoyment' and 'effectiveness', we notice that their attitudes rank as follows:

<div align="center">Whole-class > pair-work > group-work</div>

The obtained results show that whole class activities dominate in this level. This suggests a fairly traditional teaching method where the teacher is in charge of the events in the classroom. However, the original hypothesis suggested the following order:

<div align="center">Whole-class > group-work > pair-work.</div>

The difference between the results obtained and the original hypothesis may be due to learners feeling that pair situations are less threatening as they involve working with only one of their peers, while in a group situation they may feel more peer pressure (this, in Krashen's 1981; 1985; 1994) term, would be a case of the Affective Filter being 'up') or one individual may dominate the activity; generally speaking, it is worth noting that group-work can often be the least structured of the three activity types, and may therefore be the least attractive to low-level learners. Whole-class activities are both enjoyed and felt to be efficient by 93% of Pre-Intermediate participants, reinforcing the notion that low-level learners possibly feel more comfortable participating in teacher-led activities. Put differently, the preference for whole class activities might be the fact that many students feel insecure speaking in front of a lot of people.

5.2 Intermediate Students' Attitudes towards Classroom Activities
The second hypothesis was statistically confirmed. Intermediate learners felt classroom activities effective in the following order:

<div align="center">Whole-class > group-work > pair-work (table 3).</div>

When asked about enjoyment of classroom activities, Intermediate students reported enjoyment in the following order:

<div align="center">Whole-class > group-work = pair-work (table 2).</div>

As suggested in the original hypothesis of this study, the differences in the scores on attitudes between the different activities are smaller for intermediate learners than pre-intermediate.

5.3 Upper-Intermediate Students' Attitudes towards Classroom Activities

In accordance with the original hypothesis of this study, Upper-Intermediate learners reported enjoying classroom activities in the following order:

Pair-work > group-work > whole-class.

The same order was observed for effectiveness scores. This preference for learner-centered activities implies that learners seek to create for themselves better learning environments than those created by the teacher. Ultimately, this preference contributes to successful learning by preventing boredom and providing better learning opportunities which suit the learners' needs, wants, learning styles and goals.

Upper-intermediate participants thought pair-work effective and enjoyable as it allows the student to use the English s/he already knows. This means that pair-work provides a greatly enhanced opportunity for communication between students, and most of it is *real* communication. On the other hand, upper-intermediate participants felt whole-class work, especially *repetition* work, monotonous and something they had been doing for a number of years.

6. Implications and recommendations

What this research shows is that direct questioning of learners' attitudes towards classroom activities, their beliefs about language learning, language learning goals, preferred ways of learning and existing strategy repertoire provides a wealth of useful information for teachers and materials writers.

Teachers can then use the information gained from these insights in the planning and execution of an integrated approach which: a) satisfies the needs of their students; b) allows students to discover more about themselves as language learners; c) encourages them to evaluate their learning preferences and learning strategies; and d) gives them the opportunity to explore new learning approaches/techniques and make any personal improvements to their existing learning behavior, with the contents of an existing approach providing a real context (cf. Nunan 1997; Scharle and Szabo 2000). By developing students' awareness of their needs in this way teachers are helping learners take greater control of their own learning and encouraging the kind of active involvement and personal investment that has proved crucial to successful L2 acquisition.

The kind of information to be amassed from these insights is equally important to materials writers who want to produce textbooks which satisfy learners, and to learners themselves who want to contribute actively to their own learning processes, know more about themselves as learners, and consider how their learning might be made more effective.

It is recommended that future studies find out how much classroom time is spent on each of the three activity types under investigation. Studies should be carried out to find out whether or not there is any correlation between classroom time spent on each activity and learners' attitudes.

It is also recommended that future studies look at specific activity types. It would be worth investigating, for example, students' attitudes to the different

kinds of pair activities (*role-plays, information exchanges, parroting activities, grammar-centered activities* (like *correct-the-errors-ones*), games (like *describe & draw* and *spot the difference*), etc.).

7. Conclusion

This study set out to investigate learners' attitudes towards a number of classroom activities through the use of self-reported questionnaire. The findings of this study have provided some clues of a learner pathway towards more interactive student-centered activities as their language levels develop, and reconfirmed the CLT's premise that the learner should be given opportunity to process information, solve problems and make decisions at his/her own. In other words, teaching should aim at developing in each learner a sense of responsibility for his/her own learning and managing all related processes as early as possible. It means listening to what the needs of the learners are.

The study revealed that learners' attitudes to specific classroom activities are directly influenced by their level of communicative competence. High level learners have more favorable attitudes towards learner-centered activities than towards teacher-centered activities. Low-level learners, on the other hand, have more favorable attitudes towards teacher-centered activities than towards learner-centered activities.

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[2] The term 'awareness' refers to the explicit knowledge about language, and conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching, and language use. It covers a wide spectrum of fields. For example, language awareness issues include exploring the benefits that can be derived from developing a good knowledge about language, a conscious understanding of how languages work, of how people learn them and use them? Language awareness interests also include learning more about what sorts of ideas about language people normally operate with, and what effects these have on how they conduct their everyday affairs: e.g. their professional dealings.

[3] Krashen (1981) claims that the Affective Filter represents the internal processing system that subconsciously screens incoming language based on the learner's motives, needs, attitudes, and emotional states. In other words, the Affective Filter describes a kind of barrier to acquisition that results from negative feelings or experiences. Basically, if you are stressed, uncomfortable, self-conscious or unmotivated, you are unlikely to learn anything. In fact, the Affective Filter Hypothesis was originally proposed by Dulay & Burt (1977) who used the term 'affective delimiters' but Krashen revised it in an attempt to incorporate the so-called 'affective factors' into his second language acquisition theory, i.e. motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. Krashen's view is that these affective factors play a facilitative, but non-causal, role in second language acquisition. Krashen (1982: 31) claims that lack of motivation, low self-esteem, and weakening anxiety can combine to 'raise the filter', to form a 'mental block', which prevents comprehensible input (i.e. language that is heard or read and *understood*) from reaching the linguistic acquisition device, and thereby from being used for acquisition. A negative affective disposition (a filter that is 'up') constitutes a constraint on the successful workings of comprehensible input. In other words, positive affect is necessary, but not sufficient, for second language acquisition.

[4] The term 'learning strategy' is used here to refer to the purposeful actions learners engage in either consciously or unconsciously with the goal of promoting their understanding of or proficiency in the target language. Oxford (1990) offers an analysis of learning strategies in which there are two main categories of strategy: *direct* and *indirect*. Within the category of *direct* strategies, Oxford recognizes *memory* strategies, which help learners to store and retrieve new information, *cognitive* strategies, which learners use to understand and to produce new language, and *compensation* strategies, which are used when learners encounter a gap in their knowledge of the target language and which enable them to deal with this deficiency. Oxford's category of *indirect* strategies include *metacognitive* strategies, which relate to the organization of the learning process in strategic terms, *affective* strategies, by which learners regulate their emotions, motivations, and attitudes, and *social* strategies, which direct learners' interaction with other people (teacher, peers, etc) for the purpose of language learning. For a different categorization of learning strategies, see O'Malley & Chamot (1990: 137-139) who put forward a tripartite categorization of learning strategies: *metacognitive*, *cognitive*, and *social/affective*.

[5] An anonymous reviewer raised the question as to whether or not the instructors of the students surveyed in this study have the same attitudes towards the classroom activities described in this paper and whether or not they enjoy teaching these activities, and are motivated to implement such teaching practices. The discussion of the instructors' feedback falls beyond the scope of the current paper, and will not, therefore, be attempted. Many other questions remain, we leave them unaddressed.