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**The role of Interactive Teaching
Approaches in fostering Second-Language
Acquisition in the Post-Primary Classroom**

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**HIBERNIA
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The role of Interactive Teaching Approaches in fostering Second-Language Acquisition in the Post-Primary Classroom.

Chloe Watson

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the award of
Professional Master of Education in Post-Primary

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the role of interactive teaching methods in second language acquisition (SLA). The study examines collaborative learning, task-based learning, and technology-enhanced language learning's impact on learners' motivation, engagement, and communicative competency. Qualitative research conducted, including interviews with five language teachers, shows these methods enhance SLA by creating dynamic, immersive learning environments. They promote active participation, communication, peer interaction, and feedback. Digital tools and multimedia further support diverse learning styles and authentic language access. Research findings highlight the importance of interactive activities in language acquisition and provide practical suggestions for teachers and curriculum creators to improve SLA outcomes.

Acknowledgments

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To my family, thank you for constantly believing in me even when I didn't myself. For your shoulder to lean on when times got tough and when life through a few curveballs in the way, thank you for always being there.

Finally, to the research participants of this study, I would like to offer my gratitude for your voluntary participation when conducting research. For your contributions and guidance inside and outside of the research, I am truly honoured to have worked alongside colleagues like yourselves.

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List of Abbreviations

CBA – Classroom Based Assessments

CEFR – Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

CPD – Continuous Professional Development

DES – Department of Education and Skills

GDPR – General Data Protection Regulations

L2 – Second Language (also known as target language)

MFL – Modern Foreign Languages

P1, P2, P3, P4, P5 – Participant 1, 2, 3,4,5.

SLA – Second Language Acquisition

T2 – Second Language (target language)

TL – Target Language

ZPD- Zone of Proximal Development

1 Introduction Chapter

1.1 Origin of the dissertation

The title for this dissertation of using interactive teaching methodologies to foster student second language acquisition (SLA) has been a personal topic of interest. The spark of curiosity in the topic has been consistent since undergraduate level and has evolved throughout postgraduate studies. I have always enjoyed learning languages and found they came easier to me throughout years of education from post-primary to postgraduate studies. Although learning from textbooks or other materials aided my learning and language skills, I truly excelled when working with others and reaped its benefits. I found communicating and interacting with others boosted my language competency and I wished to put this to the test with my own teaching practice (Li, 2022). I have implemented interactive methodologies throughout all teaching experiences as well as completing substitution work and have seen improvement among students. However, I did notice that some students excelled more than others when using interactive methods (Bilad, 2023). As a result, I decided to conduct research into the matter to see does using these approaches benefit students' language acquisition.

1.2 Background to the project

Interactive teaching methods have been developed and used by language teachers to ensure students can communicate within and outside of the target language (Renau Renau, 2016). Many theorists have shared their opinions on the use of these methods including Vygotsky, Krashen and Chomsky. Not all researchers, however, agree with using these methods for fostering students SLA and believes that it may inhibit students' ability to communicate in the target language. A more communicative approach to teaching has been developed by the Department of Education in the new Junior Cycle Framework where students are encouraged to work more collaboratively with one another and in the target language (DES, 2017). However, this is not carried over to Senior Cycle where students are taught to examination and rote learning is encouraged by curriculum.

1.3 Rationale

Conducting research into this research topic is essential as these methodologies actively engage learners and making the language acquisition process more dynamic and effective (Abdel Meguid and Collins, 2017). Using these techniques enhances communication skills and cultural understanding among learners for real-world application (Omonova, 2024). By promoting active participation and feedback to students, this caters for their diverse learning styles and increases motivation and language proficiency for students. This research can lead to improved pedagogical strategies which will ultimately result in more effective language instruction and better learning outcomes for students. As a result, research aims will:

- Assess how interactive teaching methods enhance students' communication skills and cultural understanding in real-world situations.

- Investigate the role of active participation and feedback in increasing student motivation and proficiency in second language acquisition.
- Identify effective teaching and learning strategies that cater for the diverse learning styles of students which seeks to improve student SLA and student learning outcomes.

The following questions were deployed to guide the project:

Q1 – How does a more interactive, communicative approach help students acquire an additional language at Post Primary level?

Q2- What are the challenges to implementing a more interactive approach to language acquisition in comparison with more traditional teaching methods?

1.4 Dissertation Layout

This research dissertation will be composed of an introduction chapter where the reasoning behind the research topic, background of the research, research aims will be highlighted. Following this will be the literature review where a review of the relevant literature on the topic will be presented thematically. This chapter will provide the context to the research including what is second language acquisition (SLA), theorist views and educational policies on the SLA process. Subsequently, the methodology will include a phenomenological approach to conducting research guided by qualitative research where the research design instruments (interviews), procedures to ensure credibility (member-checking and peer review), ethical considerations (voluntary participation and data protection), data analysis (thematic analysis with axial coding), research output (five interviews of language teachers on SLA process) and final data analysis (thematic analysis). The findings of this research will be presented in the following chapter under a thematic analysis where themes of SLA (conceptual frameworks & approaches, key challenges, finding solutions, assessment & feedback, and continuous improvement) will be reviewed under relevant sub-headings. The subsequent discussion chapter will review the research findings in conjunction with peer-reviewed articles. The final chapter of this dissertation will form a conclusion to the research where conclusions drawn from each chapter will be discussed without the introduction of new materials.

1.5 Conclusion

To conclude, this thesis will research the use of interactive methods on the SLA process for students where communication is encouraged to acquire a second language. The reasoning for this chosen topic was from the author's own personal experience as both a student and teacher during the SLA process. This thesis will adhere to the research aims highlighted. This chapter outlined the structure the dissertation will follow throughout with a brief overview of the contents of each chapter.

In the next chapter, a review of the relevant literature will be conducted on this research topic. Each section will be discussed thematically to provide context for the research on this subject including theoretical views and educational policies on the SLA process.

2 Literature Review

Introduction

In this section, the background to Second-Language Acquisition will be reviewed in context of relevant theorists and their importance in educational policies. Theorists such as Vygotsky, Krashen and Chomsky are imperative to the language learning process with their theories underlying language acquisition which will be further examined in future chapters. This will also address challenges to the language learning process such as student engagement, differentiated teaching and the impact of class sizes. Many key themes will also be further discussed including the benefits of interactive learning, applying Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development in teaching and learning as well as the balance between communicative competence and grammar instruction.

2.1 Background

This thesis will discuss the importance of using interactive teaching methods to foster Second Language Acquisition (SLA) in the Post-Primary classroom via the relevant literature on the matter. Upon reflection of previous personal professional teacher experience in a modern Post Primary classroom, it was evident that classroom interaction aided students' ability to acquire a second language that was new to them. Students who engaged in classroom discussions in the target language in comparison to those who did not highlight higher levels of achievement and language fluency than those who did not (Reinders and Wattana, 2012). Teachers who implement interactive teaching approaches in the language classroom seek to improve student interest in the learning process, making them active participants in their own learning. Interactive teaching strategies caters for students to be teachers themselves as they work with others in group or pair work activities in the target language to aid one another who may be of different levels of ability (Jackson and Bruegmann, 2009).

Interactive teaching approaches engage students in their learning in many ways such as watching, participating, experiencing and engaging, a contrast to traditional teaching approaches that sought for students to perform the four key skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking (Harris and Bacon, 2019). However, although interactionism contains many benefits for student SLA, using this strategy is not without its flaws and may not meet the needs of individual students (Cohen, 2003). Cohen suggests that, given the difficulties involved, and the need for learners to more self-directed:

It is valuable to have learners diagnose for themselves their own language learning and uses, styles and strategies and preferences so that they will perhaps be more aware of the kind of specific challenges which both classroom and out-of-classroom tasks pose to them as language learners (2003, p. 289).

Quite often students aim to go “off-track” from their desired task when in their groups or pairs to discuss material not relevant to the task, an observation personally witnessed on professional teaching practices. As a result, teachers must navigate how to best group students for students’ educational benefit. Interactive teaching strategies also create the challenge of increased preparation time of tasks for teachers who aim to ensure students are paired with those just outside their level of ability as according to Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (1998). ZPD believes that students should be paired with others whose comprehension of the topic is just above their level of ability and they will be capable of achieving independently in days that follow.

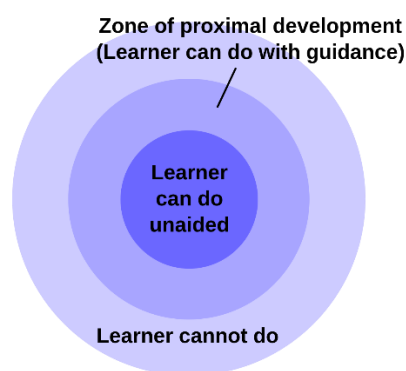


Figure 1 Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development

The process of interactive teaching methods may also be difficult in implementing if in a larger class setting (Frederick, 1986). If used in a setting like this, the risk of students misunderstanding material if not explained coherently or correctly increases and also may result in classroom misbehaviours.

As a result, this research will seek to identify how using interactive teaching approaches aid students to acquire an additional language. It will also examine the challenges of using a more interactive approach to language acquisition in comparison to traditional teaching methods.

2.2 Second Language Acquisition

SLA or second language learning is a process by which people learn languages in addition to their native language. The acquirement of a second language or any subsequent language occurs after learning a first or native language. It is a subconscious practice that occurs with a key focus on communication, as highlighted by many theorists such as Vygotsky (1986). The language to be learned is often referred to as the “target language” or “L2”. SLA plays a pivotal role in education as people of all ages and differing levels of ability strive to attain the language in question. SLA research highlights how different factors influence language learning such as motivation (Carrió-Pastor and Mestre, 2014), Socio-cultural Theory (Vygotsky), learning styles and teaching approaches. According to early research conducted by W. E. Lambert (1955, 1956a, b, c), there are a series of barriers to overcome in the language learning process. One of the most difficult obstacles to overcome in this process is the cultural aspect and claimed that students must make the language part of them to overcome this barrier. Learning elements of the

language, such as grammatical structures, also created an obstruction to student language acquisition whereas simplistic aspects such as vocabulary was relatively easy for students to comprehend.

Learning a second language requires students to adopt aspects of the culture of the target language including attitudes (influenced by motivation), students' beliefs in their ability of achievement as well as the implications of acquiring a second language (Gardner and Smythe, 1975). Various teaching approaches are seen to influence the way language is acquired by students. Previous methods to language teaching show how a greater emphasis was placed on grammar rather than communication in the target language. In her chapter entitled "Grammar", Hedge (2000) only studies presenting and practicing grammar as two separate concepts under the same title of "Grammar". With grammar being a complex area which all students are obliged to learn in the language learning process, using a method as such, often referenced to as the grammar-translation method, gives students little input on their learning. The weakness of this approach is the assumption that language could be taught as content, but communicative proficiency is a routine skill that must be partially taught as a process (Little, 2003). Allowing students to expose themselves to grammar and attempt to understand it themselves removes the stigmatism that language learning is only a grammar-based method and not a process. Krashen (1981), argued that grammar instruction had little input in acquisition as student motivation and built-in syllabus grammar were sufficient to learning. However, grammar instruction may contribute to learning but in a limited capacity as the ability to communicate is dependent on language acquisition. According to Tomasello (1992), developing communicative competence, including lexical, syntactic and pragmatic skills, principally depends on feedback about communicative efficacy that students receive from different interactions.

2.3 Theorists and theories in Second-Language Acquisition

Educational theorists have different views on the process of Second-Language Acquisition on students.

Table 1 summarises the theoretical contributions of Schumann, Krashen and Chomsky on the Second-Language Acquisition process.

| Theoretical contribution | Summary |
|--|--|
| Schumann's Acculturation Model for SLA (1986) | Students cannot obtain a second language beyond early linguistic acquisition due to social and psychological distance between their own culture and that of the target language. |
| Krashen's Second Language Acquisition Theory (1981) | Students acquisition is at its best when students are exposed to second language input at a slightly higher level than they are competent at. |
| Chomsky's Language Acquisition Device (1957) | Students' language acquisition is not solely dependent on external factors but instead on the innate ability of the human brain to acquire grammatical categories and syntactic rules. |

Table 1: Theoretical Perspectives in SLA

Schumann's Acculturation Model for Second-Language Acquisition (1986) is based on social-psychology. This model states that some learners of the L2 do not progress past early linguistic stages as a result of the distance between the social and psychological of the learner's culture and the target culture. According to his research, Schumann believes languages can be obtained socially in a group setting but does not require students to adopt the lifestyle of the target language's country. Schumann's study also highlighted a concept many language learners experience when learning a new language. Language shock is a fear of speaking in the target language in case they make errors that other students in the classroom find comical (Schumann, 1986). This psychologically impacts students, reducing their confidence in their abilities and also their language learning development. Making mistakes is inevitable and has been seen to improve students' retention of the new material (Kornell et al 2009, Moser et al 2011).

Communication is vital for language acquisition as students utilise their newly obtained language skills to practice the four key skills in the language learning process. Schumann's research emphasises that student motivation to acquire a language is solely for socialisation purposes. As a result, Schumann believes that students can only truly acquire the language if they communicate in the target language and adopt the culture of the target language. Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory also underlines that participating in cultural activities is essential for learning and that active engagement in social dialogue is important (Vygotsky, 1987). In comparison with the Second Language Acquisition Theory (1981), Krashen states that language learning needs conscious knowledge of rules and grammatical structures. Krashen believes the process is subconscious assimilation of language skills through exposure and understanding to the language. This strategy is more effective than learning by developing fluent and natural language skills. The idea for student language progression is embedded in a low-anxiety, high-motivation situation that the teacher creates in the learning environment. Krashen's hypothesis maintains language learners will utilise their acquired knowledge to self-monitor their production (Krashen, 1981). However, this may hinder spontaneous and fluent communication of students. Chomsky also reviewed student creativity upon examination of Skinner (1957)'s report on Verbal Behaviour. Chomsky argued that students' stimulus-response psychology did not account for student creativity in language behaviour (Chomsky, 1959). According to Chomsky (1957), students are exposed to poor language input as they those who they learn from, adults, speak in grammatically incomplete sentences, reducing their accuracy in communication. Chomsky's theory of innateness, known as the *Language Acquisition Device*, states how students are born with a faculty for language acquisition that is determined biologically (Sachs, Bard and Johnson, 1981). This theory however is not without its faults. The research conducted did not study real children and did not include interactions which are imperative for language development. Other

theories of the same topic emphasise how real children develop language to meet their needs and interact with their environment, including other people.

2.4 Educational Policies on Second-Language Acquisition

Government policies on the role of language acquisition have been implemented for numerous years by the Irish government which includes the acquirement of both modern- foreign languages (MFL) and the Irish language (Gaeilge) as two separate policies. The Languages Connect Policy caters for the acquirement of foreign languages between the years of 2017 to 2026 (DES, 2017). Former Minister for Education and skills, Richard Bruton, admits on the publication of this policy the need for change in mindset towards language learning. Becoming a language learner not only supports students in learning skills and gaining confidence in the target language, but it also increases their understanding of different cultures and societies (DES, 2017). This strategy was developed on the basis of the *Action Plan for Education 2016- 2019*, with objectives to enable learners to communicate effectively and improve their competency in the target language. Communication enables learners to develop their reading and writing skills and further enhance their abilities to acquire a second language.

The new Junior Cycle Framework (2015) has adjusted language teaching and learning to a communicative approach through the introduction of Classroom Based Assessments (CBA). Students are required to complete a CBA where they must speak about their chosen topic orally, vastly improving their communicative ability and improves their understanding of the language. This is linked to my research topic of using interactive methodologies in the SLA process as students who interact in the target language are improving their communicative abilities and increasing their chances of acquiring a second language. The new Junior Cycle Framework emphasises the importance of interaction as students are encouraged to work in a group setting, further increasing their communication in the target language. The Languages Connect policy has specific language goals such as improving language proficiency through an engaging learning environment. To ensure students benefit most from this policy, a number of actions have been taken to improve their language proficiency through a more engaging learning environment. The Teaching Council requires all teachers of MFL to hold a minimum B2.2 on the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR) across all language skills (The Teaching Council, 2020). Although this policy strives to increase uptake in languages in schools, without a sufficient supply of language teachers, due to the current shortage of language teachers in the country, students are placed at a disadvantage immediately when trying to acquire a second language. Previous educational policies, such as the Language Education Profile (2005-2007), emphasised the importance of valuing and developing the abilities of all students to learn and use several languages and expand their

competency through suitable teaching methods (DES, 2005). However, continuous imbalances between syllabus objectives and assessment objectives and methods continues to occur. This causes a back-wash effect on classroom practices and furthermore decreases student ability to acquire a language (DES, 2005). Teaching toward examination impacts students as they miss out on key concepts, such as grammatical sentence structure, and reduce their skillset in language acquisition.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter identifies that the implementation of interactive teaching methods significantly enhances Second Language Acquisition in post-primary classrooms. By actively engaging students in the learning process through discussions, group work, and collaborative activities, it fosters a deeper understanding and greater fluency in the target language. Although traditional methods focus on the four key skills, interactive approaches provide a more dynamic and inclusive learning environment. However, the effectiveness of these methods depends on careful planning and classroom management. Challenges such as off-task behaviour and the increased preparation time required for teachers must be addressed. Despite these challenges, the benefits of interactive teaching—including increased student motivation and communicative competence—underscore its importance in modern language education. Future research should continue to explore ways to optimise and ensure these methods meet the diverse needs of all students and maximise their potential for successful language acquisition.

The next chapter will discuss the methodology used to conduct the research into this topic using semi-formal interviews with established teachers.

3 Methodology Chapter

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology employed to investigate the role of interactive teaching methodologies in the second language acquisition process. This chapter will provide an overview of the approach, methods and instruments used to generate and analyse the research data, specifically a qualitative approach to understanding the phenomenon. Qualitative research requires the use of in-depth interviews and focus groups to collect, analyse and interpret data on what people say and do (Smythe and Giddings, 2007). This process will be implemented to conduct research upon analysis of the research questions;

1. How does a more interactive, communicative approach help students acquire an additional language at Post Primary level? and;
2. What are the challenges to implementing a more interactive approach to language acquisition in comparison with more traditional teaching methods?

The implementation of qualitative research in this dissertation involves semi-structured interviews. The participants in this research, teachers, will be able to voice their opinions on interactive teaching methodologies.

3.2 Research Approach, Methods

This investigation is guided by phenomenological approaches to research in the social sciences. Phenomenology is a qualitative method of research for data collection, analysis and interpretation. This type of research focuses on an individual's lived experiences within the world and the meaning that these individuals give to these experiences. (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). This research accumulates these meanings by analysing individuals' language as spoken or written (Kvale and Brinkmann 2008; Langdridge 2007). According to Creswell (1998) a phenomenological approach entails the following steps:

1. The researcher first reads all descriptions in their entirety.
2. The author then extracts significant statements from each description.
3. These statements are formulated into meanings, and these meanings are clustered into themes.
4. The researcher integrates these themes into a narrative description.

Semi-structured interviews of teachers will be used and required to answer the research questions described above. The data collected from the interviews will be composed of a series of questions in relation to the teacher's own understanding on using an interactive and communicative approach for

students acquiring an additional language. Teachers will also be able to voice their opinions on the challenges of implementing interactive teaching practices in comparison to more traditional teaching methods.

3.3 Research Design; Instruments

A research site has been identified and all research will be conducted in one school. The community school is comprised of seventy members on a staff role to meet the needs of seven hundred and seventy students of mixed genders in an urban area. This is due to the large number of language teachers, especially of modern foreign languages in the school of twelve language teachers, as well as the larger class sizes for implementing interactive teaching methodologies. Using a single school setting for carrying out research maintains a focus on the research as well as providing a uniqueness of a large student and teacher base in comparison to other smaller schools in the vicinity.

The sampling of participants requires purposeful sampling techniques. Due to the narrowness of the research being conducted requiring teachers of second languages only, teachers of Modern Foreign Languages, such as French and German, as well as Gaeilge were chosen who teach at both Junior and Senior Cycle. Using purposeful sampling in qualitative research produces manageable data with clear evidence in comparison to larger scale of data collection that could undermine the ability to perform a thorough analysis of the data (Palinkas et al., 2011).

Semi-structured interviews will act as research instruments. The interviews will question the participants use of interactive teaching methods in their teaching approach. The interviews will gather information from key participants with regards their views and opinions on the role interactive teaching in fostering second language acquisition (Silverman, 2000). These teachers have various first-hand experiences, perceptions, and beliefs on using interactive teaching strategies. By interviewing these teachers, the qualitative data collected can be reliable and comparable with each of the participants who each have their own personal opinions.

3.4 Procedures for ensuring trustworthiness and credibility in the research:

Ensuring both trustworthiness and credibility of the research data requires different procedures such as triangulation of data and member checking. The triangulation of data relies on other data sources to test the legitimacy of the research conducted in comparison to previous research (Flick, 2004). Multiple sources of peer-reviewed articles will be referred to in order to check the veracity of the research findings. This research will also require member checking with the participants in the research data. Upon completion of the research findings, the participants of the research will be shown the findings from their data. This will give the participants an opportunity to amend any misinterpretations during the data

collection process as well as omitting any information they do not feel comfortable sharing. Upon completion of the member checking process, I hope to complete a peer checking of the data also. This will require fellow students to review the research findings also.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations for this research require voluntary participation from research participants. Each participant received a letter of information regarding the research that was being conducted. This allowed participants to have informed consent about the research before they agreed or disagreed to participate. All data obtained from participants will be anonymised by removing personal information to protect participants identities. The use of member checking will also be used and entails participants reviewing the transcripts of interviews. This will provide credibility to participant data and overall research as it allows correction of errors stated or found during the research. This will also give participants the opportunity to remove any information they would prefer not to be included.

All submitted data and results will be confidential and will not include the identification of any teachers or institutions. Confidentiality is crucial when conducting research to ensure personal information is not shared and is in line with general data protection regulations (GDPR). Each teacher who participates will be labelled Participant 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 in accordance with when they were interviewed to prevent a breach of GDPR and personal data. All data will be stored for one year after data collection in line with Hibernia College's Privacy Policy, after which all data must be safely and securely destroyed in line with GDPR. All data collected will be secured in a security encrypted folder that is password protected to prevent data breaches. This will include interviews and classroom observations being password protected and created as an encrypted file.

3.6 Data Analysis, or how you intend to organize and analyse the data?

To both analyse and organise this data will require different methods. Firstly, each of the interview recordings will have to be transcribed manually to ensure that all information is available for data analysis in a text form. Upon completion of each of the five transcriptions, each interview will need to be coded accordingly. This requires categorising reoccurring themes and patterns upon review of the transcripts. Relationships between different codes will be identified to see their connections also known as axial coding. After completing this step, a coding structure that captures the essence of the teachers' perspectives on interactive teaching methodologies will be developed in a process known as selective coding. This will group similar themes that represent the key concepts related to the role of interactive teaching methodologies in second language acquisition and develop themes. This process will also align with each of the themes within the research questions and objectives previously identified in this thesis.

The data will be summarised within each theme by condensing the information but retaining the original meaning of the research. By using quotes from the interviews, this will help support the summary of data collected. The newly summarised data will be analysed to draw conclusions about the impact of interactive teaching methods on second language acquisition from a teachers' perspective. This will look at different patterns, variations and connections between the themes identified from the data. This requires looking at other data sources to test the validity of the research in a method known as data triangulation. Upon completion of the data analysis, the data can be displayed in numerous ways through data visualisation. This will require the creation of visual representations of the research findings such as charts and graphs to communicate key patterns and relationships in the data. This will make it easier to identify patterns and trends in the data set. When all data has been analysed and presented visually, the findings will be shared with the interview participants. This is to ensure that interpretations of the analysed data align with teacher perspectives. This process of member checking adds both rigour and validity to the research and provides evidence that the analysis and interpretation of the data are appropriate, accurate and reflective.

3.7 Research Output

I interviewed five different language teachers. Three of the teachers teach two languages at the school. One is a teacher of two modern foreign languages, French and German, while the other two teach French and Gaeilge. One of the French and Gaeilge teachers has more than twenty years of teaching experience in comparison to five years of the other French and Gaeilge teacher. The other two teachers interviewed teach a language and history. Each teacher took part in a one-on-one semi structured interview. Each teacher shared their own experience with implementing interactive teaching methodologies. Each teacher identified different strategies to maintain student engagement during language lessons. They also identified how engaging students in their learning related to language learning outcomes of the lesson. Each teacher also recalled their means of assessing language proficiency in students. These teachers also admitted to the challenges they have faced when implementing interactive teaching methods during the language acquisition process. They also shared strategies and solutions they found to be effective in overcoming the challenges.

3.8 Data Analysis

To both analyse and organise this data required different methods. Each of the interview recordings were transcribed manually to ensure that all information is available for data analysis in a text form. Upon completion of each of the five transcriptions, each interview was coded accordingly. This required categorising reoccurring themes and patterns upon review of the transcripts. Relationships between

different codes were identified to see their connections also known as axial coding. After completing this step, a coding structure that captured the essence of the teachers' perspectives on interactive teaching methodologies was developed in a process known as selective coding. This grouped similar themes that represent the key concepts related to the role of interactive teaching methodologies in second language acquisition and developed themes. This process also aligned with each of the themes within the research questions and objectives previously identified in this thesis.

The data was summarised within each theme by condensing the information but retaining the original meaning of the research. By using excerpts of quotes from the interviews, that added support the summary of data collected. The newly summarised data was analysed to draw conclusions about the impact of interactive teaching methods on second language acquisition from a teachers' perspective. This looked at different patterns, variations and connections between the themes identified from the data. Multiple sources of data were used to strengthen the reliability of the research findings. This required looking at other data sources to test the validity of the research in a method known as data triangulation. Upon completion of the data analysis, the data was displayed in numerous ways through data visualisation. This required the creation of visual representations of the research findings such as charts and graphs to communicate key patterns and relationships in the data. This made it easier to identify patterns and trends in the data set. When all data was analysed and presented visually, the findings were shared with the interview participants. This was to ensure that interpretations of the analysed data align with teacher perspectives. This process of member checking adds both rigour and validity to the research and provides evidence that the analysis and interpretation of the data are appropriate, accurate and reflective. This also gave the participants in the research an opportunity to clarify any details to aid the research.

3.9 Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, this chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the methodology employed to investigate the role of interactive teaching methodologies in the second language acquisition process. The research focuses on a qualitative approach, utilising semi-structured interviews with language teachers to explore their perspectives on interactive teaching methods. The chosen research site, a single school, is justified by the abundance of language teachers and larger class sizes, facilitating the implementation of interactive teaching methodologies.

The purposeful sampling technique ensures a targeted selection of participants, specifically teachers of Modern Foreign Languages and Gaeilge, teaching at both Junior and Senior Cycle. Ethical considerations are meticulously addressed, with voluntary participation, informed consent, and the protection of participants' identities through anonymisation. The use of member checking and data triangulation enhances the credibility and reliability of the research findings. The presentation of data through

visualisations, such as charts and graphs, facilitates the identification of patterns and trends.

This research aims to draw conclusions about the impact of interactive teaching methods on second language acquisition from a teachers' perspective. By involving the participants in the final stages of data analysis and interpretation, the research ensures that their perspectives are accurately represented, adding rigor and validity to the study. Overall, the detailed methodology outlined in this chapter provides a robust framework for investigating the research questions and objectives identified in the thesis.

In the next section, the conclusions of each interview will be portrayed in the findings chapter. This will require each interviewee's data to be organised in a systematic manner upon reflection of each transcript.

4 Research Findings

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, findings from participant interviews will be portrayed through a thematic analysis. A number of key themes and subthemes emerged from the data analysis as shown in Table 2, below.

Table 2: Emergent Themes, Sub-themes

| Theme | Subthemes |
|---|--|
| Conceptual Frameworks & Approaches to Second Language Acquisition (SLA) | Methodologies & Methods for SLA |
| Key Challenges for SLA teaching | Student motivation, class sizes Student engagement & the learning environment |
| Finding solutions for SLA | Technology integration Student learning styles Cultural sensitivity Collaborative teaching & learning |
| Assessment & Feedback | Tools and techniques for SLA |
| Continuous Improvement | Techers as Lifelong learners |

4.2 Conceptual Frameworks & Approaches to Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

Research participants identified in each of their interviews of having a communicative approach to teaching, requiring students to be regularly exposed to the target language through classroom instruction. Using simplistic instructions and setting realistic goals for students highlighted an increase in students' linguistic abilities. Each research participant was a language teacher who stated continuous exposure to the target language and numerous opportunities to speak in the target language to both the teacher and fellow students is essential. A balance of the four main key skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking is required to maintain full immersion of the students in the target language while also maintaining their attention throughout lessons. Participants also identified how students' comprehension skills of reading and listening come earlier to students rather than production skills of speaking and writing. Many factors influencing second language acquisition have been distinguished with students age, motivation, self-esteem, and confidence key elements in fostering students' language awareness. Participants also acknowledged that portraying their own love of the language is critical in enticing students in their language learning journey; **P1**: *“Instilling a love of the language from early on in a students' language journey is imperative to fostering second language acquisition.”*

4.2.1 Methodologies for SLA

Many of the research participants described collaborative and reflective learning methodologies in their teaching. Here, students are used as a resource for one another to further develop their understanding of

the target language. Research participants identified Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as a continuous framework used in their classroom on a daily basis - pairing students who are of slightly different abilities together to increase their knowledge and abilities to a higher standard. Scaffolding and sentence builders are given to students to enhance their understanding and language awareness. This simplifies creating sentences for students and also increases their abilities to communicate in the target language with scaffolded sentences as their aid. Participants also identified the reflective learning approach as highly impactful on their teaching. Most of the participants give students the opportunity to discuss what they think went well during the lesson and what could be further improved on in future lessons. This aids teachers' future planning and learning as well as giving students a voice for any materials they were unsure of during the lesson. It is imperative, according to two of the research participants of *"showing respect and genuine care about each individual student to help encourage them in their learning journey"* (P1 & P2).

Some participants interpreted interactive teaching methods as a communicative teaching style that allows students to work together in a group or pair settings to practice speaking in the target language. This active style of teaching caters for interaction on a student-to-student or student-to-teacher basis but also has consistent exposure to the target language. Examples of such practices included role plays, dialogues, pair, and group work. Using dialogues as an example for pair work allows students to construct their own conversations improving their grammar and increasing their vocabulary. Students could then present the dialogues to the class, preparing themselves for elements of Classroom Based Assessments (CBA) they will complete during the Junior Cycle which requires an oral based assessment. Teachers also stated that; *"a silent classroom doesn't give a huge amount feedback or activity back, (P3)"* indicating that student engagement and learning is minimised. Other participants identified interactive teaching methods as the use of technology to facilitate language learning. Using online tools as a resource greatly impacted on student learning. Online resources such as quizzes including Kahoot, Blooket and Edpuzzle also acted as a form of assessment for students' mid-way through chapters to check their learning. Both practices encourage student engagement in more meaningful and fun ways.

4.3 Key Challenges to SLA

4.3.1 Student Motivation, Class Sizes

Numerous challenges have faced the participants throughout their teaching, especially when implementing interactive teaching methods. A major challenge facing teachers is student motivation and self-esteem. Students have shown unwillingness to participate in classroom activities, especially oral presentations in front of their peers, in fear of mispronouncing words or making mistakes. Research participants set to improve both student oral communication, confidence and reduce student anxiety in speaking in the target language. In accordance with their school departmental guidelines, offering

students the opportunity to practice their oral communication skills in an oral assessment that increases in length per year has greatly benefited students' language proficiency. Participants noted they were seeing *“less anxiety and more confidence around attempting to speak in the target language (P2)”* as a result of these implementations. Other challenges include class sizing. Due to the continuous growth of the population, class numbers continue to increase with most at peak capacity. As a result, classroom management may be a struggle for teachers. When organising group or pair work, many teachers recalled how the balance between stronger and weaker students may be off when organising group dynamics. It is imperative to mix students of different abilities within group dynamics. Setting ground rules and pairing students together who are slightly above the other's level of ability continues to foster student language acquisition. Half of the participants identified giving roles to students when working in group settings to ensure all students were focused on the task at hand. This also gave students responsibility for their learning.

4.3.2 Student Engagement & The Learning Environment

Student engagement also emerged a key challenge to SLA as this essential in all lessons but especially language lessons. Students can become bored very quickly which is why varying activities using the four key skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing is imperative in each lesson, as identified by half of the research participants. Student engagement was identified to peak by the participants when students followed a routine; *“Students like to know what is happening and what will happen next. (P3)”* Research participants implemented starter activities as learning aids for students engaging them with prior learning materials as well as using classroom screens to display the information for visual learners. Consistent repetition of materials and knowing students are crucial factors in student engagement as acknowledged by two research participants also. The use of timers throughout lessons also ensures that students remain focused on the task and are aware of the time limit they have to complete the task in a group setting or independently. Research participants also identified the correlations between learning outcomes and student engagement. A variance in lesson delivery methods to teach students material maintains engagement as students are exposed to different approaches throughout the lesson. A positive and respectful student learning environment where students feel welcomed and unafraid of making errors is also essential to student learning outcomes.

4.4 Finding Solutions for Effective SLA

4.4.1 Technology Integration

Technology is a great asset to fostering second language acquisition. Research participants have identified that the use of technology offers *“limitless opportunities and resources online for both students and teachers alike. (P4)”* Integrating technology into lessons is beneficial in engaging students and giving them a break from textbook learning. This also offers an opportunity to formatively assess students using

different forms. Using multimedia tools is also an aid to students who are visual learners and acts as a form of differentiation. Many students feel shy and uncomfortable when speaking in front of their peers which is why technology can be valuable. If students are tasked with oral presentations, those who have increased anxiety may not feel comfortable presenting it in front of the class. By using online platforms such as Microsoft Teams, students can record their presentations and send it to their teacher. This helps students who are nervous of the language to gain confidence with speaking in the target language. However, students have been identified as being computer illiterate and having difficulties when logging in to computers. Students have reduced computer awareness because of reduced exposure to laptops and computer technology. The integration of technology must also have clear guidelines to ensure students follow classroom procedures. Implementing technology requires continuous supervision to ensure students do not go on social media which is not permitted in school.

4.4.2 Catering for Individual Learning Styles

Research participants agreed that catering to the individual learning styles of students is important to maintain student engagement in language learning. However, due to growth in class sizes this become difficult to uphold. Each participant acknowledged knowing their class and students' abilities is crucial to inform their teaching and planning. The use of seating plans encourages students to work with others outside of their friend group as many of the seating plans are created pairing stronger and weaker students together. A multi-sensory approach is required with a variance of delivery methods to foster students' language acquisition. The continued use of questioning and differentiation best accommodates to the learning styles of students. Participants provided examples of differentiated class work and homework including menu boards where students all complete the same work but in different ways that best expresses their learning; *"it gives them (the students) a bit of ownership for what they are doing. (P1)"*

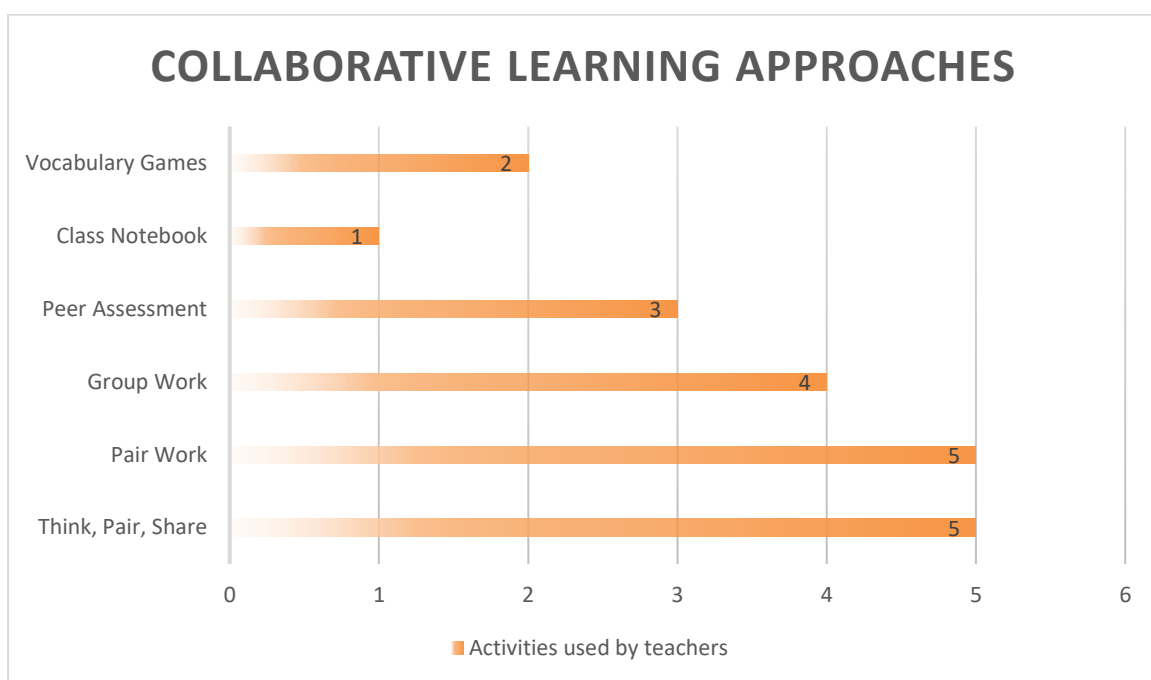
4.4.3 Cultural Sensitivity

The incorporation of cultural elements into interactive teaching increases students' awareness and respect for many diverse cultures and their value systems. Half of the participants concluded that language is culture and that they are not two separate entities. The integration of cultural elements of the target language engages students as they are able to draw comparisons from the country of their mother tongue to the second language (T2) country. Students continuously enjoy learning about the differences which increases student engagement. Learning environments have become more diversified with students from different backgrounds forming the classroom setting. Ensuring all students feel incorporated into the classroom setting is vital; *"An inclusive environment that values diverse ways of speaking is essential. (P4)"* The use of authentic materials from the target language country also adds to the immersive experience for students to enrich themselves in both the language and the cultural. Small details such as

train tickets from the country immerse students in culture and language alike.

4.4.4 Collaborative Learning

Participants identified collaborative learning on having positive impacts on student engagement in fostering second language acquisition. Giving students the opportunity to work with their peers further enhances student learning by using activities such as group or pair work as well as think, pair, share. Participants agreed however that for group activities to work that simple instructions, selected groupings and teacher monitoring is essential to ensure students remain on task. This will also allow teachers to become facilitators to student learning as they take a more centralised role to their own learning. The below table identifies multiple activities where teachers acted as facilitators to student learning.



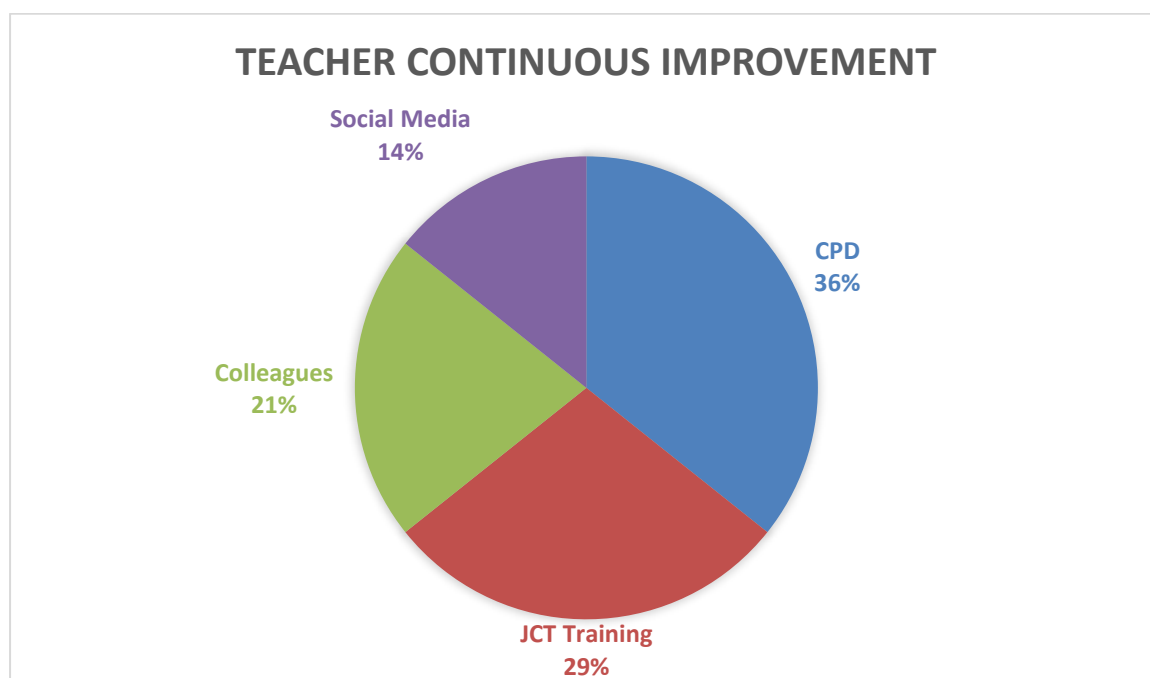
4.5 Assessment and Feedback:

Participants of this research acknowledged using a variety of assessment tools in accordance with their subject planning department to evaluate student learning. An assortment of online games such as Kahoot and Blooket were used among each of the participants to formally assess student learning in the middle of chapters as well as vocabulary games to check for understanding. This aided the research participants with planning and teaching to student language proficiency. Other areas of assessment acknowledged by teachers was using success criteria. All teachers used this in their classes especially when completing Classroom Based Assessments (CBA), conducted at Junior Cycle level. Participants recalled giving success criteria to their students when completing the oral assessment section of their CBA. This helped students when producing their own oral assessment. Research participants also outlined the importance of “not just offering students a numbered grade on their assessments but also written feedback. (P1)”.

This allows students to identify key areas where more focus is required for future assessments. Two participants mentioned using bookmarks or generating a “common mistakes area” where students could recognise consistent errors made by themselves and others in the class and look back on those for future assignments or assessments. Different means of feedback were distinguished amongst participants with the two stars and a wish method being used to offer two areas where students did well and another area where students needed to work on further. Participants declared *“Giving feedback that is frequent or regular, very specific and easily understood is key. (P3)”*

4.6 Continuous Improvement:

Participants linked their continuous improvement with multiple different sources, including those of their departmental colleagues. The below table identifies the most common forms of how teachers are constantly learning from new materials to benefit their own teaching as well as the learning of their students. However, all participants also commented that being a teacher makes them *“lifelong learners”*, but they also know there is always room for their own improvement! Participants also identified that with more experience, they are *“more willing to allow students to be independent and creative language learners rather than simply imparting knowledge. (P2)”*



4.7 Conclusion

The findings of this research have found challenges and solutions to implementing interactive teaching methods using materials such as technology and culture to foster collaborative learning and catering for individual learning styles of students. Participants also acknowledged the importance of their assessment and feedback in student learning. Teachers own continuous improvement also added to planning and

teaching.

In the next chapter, the findings of this research will be discussed alongside previous research conducted on fostering students' second language acquisition.

5 Discussion Chapter

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the findings of the research data in conjunction with previous peer-reviewed research. It will highlight the importance of a multi-modal approach using interactive teaching methods to foster second language acquisition among students. This chapter will identify the importance of using a communicative language approach in second language acquisition (SLA). It will also discuss student motivation and engagement in the SLA process within their learning environment. This chapter will also seek to answer the research questions identified from the literature review as follows:

1. How does a more interactive, communicative approach help students acquire an additional language at Post Primary level?
2. What are the challenges to implementing a more interactive approach to language acquisition in comparison with more traditional teaching methods?

5.2 A Communicative Language Approach to SLA

The communicative language approach was identified by research participants as a necessity in fostering student second language acquisition (SLA). Continuous exposure to the target language for students offered more significant interaction where their language acquisition can be both exposed and enhanced, as per research findings. The Communicative Language Theory centres itself around second language (L2) interactive and communicative situations. This theory caters for more meaningful fluency among students where creativity is catered for more than accuracy (Dörnyei, 2013). However, the beliefs of Chomsky (1990) stated that “exposure to a language is not enough for language efficiency. (p.627)” This coincides to research participants’ findings who recognised that many factors are required to maintain student language efficiency. Simplistic instructions and realistic targets set to the students’ own standards were found to increase student language competency as they were not only exposed to the target language but using it to complete activities during language lessons. As per participants of this research, many identified that communication supports students to develop their reading and writing skills that further enriches student abilities to acquire a second language as per the *Action Plan for Education 2016-2019* (DES, 2017). Research participants acknowledged that portraying their own love for the language acted as an aid to maintaining student interest in the language acquisition process also which will be further discussed in this chapter. Participants admitted to having students use one another as a resource further benefitted their communicative abilities in the target language and in the SLA process. Pairing students of differing abilities with one another increased their knowledge and abilities to a higher level. Teachers and students alike used scaffolding and sentence structures to enhance understanding and language

awareness. This increases students' capabilities of communicating in the target language which could be a daunting task without scaffolded sentence structures as an aid. In keeping with other research on the matter, research conducted by Faraj (2015) highlighted the significant impact scaffolding had on student learning. The findings recalled how students were more confident to share their ideas with the use of scaffolding to aid their language acquisition. Participants also acknowledged the role of reflective practice in SLA that will enhance student learning and teacher planning for the future. This offers students the opportunity to voice concerns over unfamiliar material covered in the lesson. This also encourages students in their language learning journey while also showing them respect.

5.2.1 Factors impacting SLA

Both participants and researchers alike acknowledge that many factors influence student language acquisition by using a more interactive teaching approach. Some of these factors can be seen as barriers to their language acquisition (Frederick, 1986). Gardner and Lambert (1972) outlined the role of attitudes and motivation in second-language learning where their findings acknowledged that SLA can be influenced by both integrative and instrumental motivation. Findings also found that student's attitude to acquiring a second language was also influential to the SLA process and use of interactive teaching approaches (Gardner and Lambert, 1972). The growth of the population has seen an increase in class sizing with most now catering for thirty students in all classes as identified by research participants of this study. The implementation of interactive teaching approaches in these settings can result in students misinterpreting material if not explained in a coherent manner and may result in classroom misbehaviour (Schumann, 1986). This mirrors the findings of research participants who acknowledged such behaviours occurring due to large class sizing and student disengagement from the lesson, which will be discussed further. Participants agreed that classroom management may be weakened as a result. However, participants also identified that offering students simple and clear instructions when completing work had removed this barrier for students' language acquisition. The use of groups or pairs by participants offered the opportunity for students to work collaboratively with others, increasing their abilities by grouping students with others of higher abilities. Participants of this research found giving students roles when working in groups ensured they stayed focused on the task. This also allowed students to interact with one another, an approach that was frowned upon in traditional teaching methods. Traditional approaches of language teaching took a direct approach where students were required to memorise pieces of writing for oral communication from a teacher who used a lecturer style position (Al-Mubireek, 2021). Teachers of this style focus on imparting knowledge and skills requiring students to recall material without understanding. This style reduces students' ability to communicate fluidly and can create competitiveness in a grade race among students. In modern teaching approaches, utilised by research participants, teachers act as facilitators to learning where student interactions and participation in

activities is continually encouraged. The data from the conducted research compliments the findings of other researchers including Al-Mubireek (2021) where offering students an active role in their learning aided student language acquisition using modern teaching methods.

5.2.2 *Student motivation is key to successful SLA*

Student motivation is a crucial factor that has been accepted by both research and teachers alike to influence the rate of success for student SLA (Anjomshoa, & Sadighi, 2015). Research participants outlined factors such as low self-esteem, confidence and peaked anxiety have become factors in recent years that have reduced student motivation to interact in the target language. Research participants highlighted student reluctance to participate in classroom activities when oral communication was required in fear of making errors. This compliments the findings of Schumann's Acculturation Model for Second-Language Acquisition (1986). Schumann believed that language shock played a major role in students' motivation and self-esteem in SLA. Participants have noticed in recent years how students are afraid to make mistakes when speaking orally in class, in fear that classmates would mock them for mispronunciation. This mirrors the findings of Schumann on student motivation in SLA. This has psychological impacts on students, reducing confidence in their abilities as well as their language learning development. As per Kornell and Moser et al (2009) making mistakes is inevitable and has been seen to improve students' retention of material. However, student language progression is embedded in low-anxiety and high-motivation from the positive learning environment created by teachers. Motivation determines the level of active and personal involvement in L2 learning for students (Wang et al, 2015). Participants of this research highlighted progression of students' linguistic abilities in SLA in accordance with in-school departmental guidelines that has seen a reduction in student anxiety and increased their confidence as well as their motivation when communicating in the target language. Continuous exposure to the target language was viewed by the participants as a key factor in decreasing students' anxiety and increasing their motivation when communicating in the target language. Although motivation poses a challenge to student SLA with the use of both interactive and communicative teaching approaches, the creation of a positive and welcoming learning environment is pivotal to SLA. Students' language acquisition is influenced by the environment in which they learn (Kiatkheeree, 2018). Promoting students' achievement through teacher-student interactions builds an effective learning environment that greatly impacts on students' motivation in the SLA process. Continuous support for students interests in the classroom increases student interactions in comparison to previous lecture style traditional teaching methods.

5.2.3 *Student Engagement*

Student engagement represents the time and effort invested by students into interactive and educational activities which often relates to positive learning outcomes in accordance with Kuh (2001). Research participants recalled student boredom during passive language lessons. As a result, participants revealed

that using a variety of the four key skills is a necessity in maintaining student engagement. A variance in lesson delivery methods maintains student engagement as they are exposed to multiple different approaches throughout the lesson. A peak in engagement was also identified when students followed routine as many preferred knowing what was and will be happening during lessons. Participants revealed they implemented starter activities as learning aids for ensuring student engagement in lessons where their prior knowledge was required. Using visual displays of the information, consistent repetition of materials as well as knowing their students were crucial factors identified by participants in maintaining student engagement. In keeping with other recent research on the matter, some research has indicated that technology integration as an educational tool can also lead to an increase in student engagement (Junco, 2012). Research participants harmonised this research indicating the use of technology offers limitless opportunities for teachers and students alike. Technology stimulates active student participation and interaction in the target language (Akbari et al., 2016). While this research study is a small sample, the research findings match other researchers such as Akbari (2016) and Junco (2012). Participants recalled using technology on a regular basis in their classroom proved beneficial to students where they could be formally assessed using methods outside of their textbooks. The use of online tools such as Kahoot, Blooket and Edpuzzle facilitated student language learning and assessment also monitored their prior-knowledge and understanding. Using multi-modal tools also acted as a form of differentiation for visual learners, further engaging students in the language learning process. However, maintaining student engagement with technology created challenge to interactive teaching approaches. Clear guidelines are required when using technology in the classroom in relation to GDPR protocols as well as the school's data protection guidelines. Without clear instruction, student engagement is minimised as they fail to follow procedures set out. Prior to using technology, research participants also identified computer-illiteracy among students due to a lack of exposure to laptops and computer technology.

SLA: A Differentiated Approach to Teaching & Learning

Research participants identified the importance of catering for the individual learning styles of students to maintain their engagement in the SLA process. Learning styles indicate how a learner observes, interacts and responds to their learning environment according to Moenikia (2010). Similar ideas were found Anderson and Elloumi (2004), where the idea of matching individual learning styles is an aid to educational planners and teachers to allocate the necessary educational supports and supplies to students. This mirrors findings of the research participants who acknowledged the importance of knowing their students and students' abilities to inform their teaching and planning. The use of a multi-modal and sensory approach that includes a variance in delivery methods was accredited by all participants to foster students' language acquisition. Participants also recalled using seating plans encouraged students to work with others outside of their peer group, but it also created pairings for both stronger and weaker students.

This coincides with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (1998). Vygotsky's ZPD believes that students being paired with others above their level of ability will increase their level of understanding than what they will be able to achieve independently in consequential lessons. Although the risk of students misinterpreting material is increased, it caters for students to be facilitators of their own learning. To overcome this barrier, participants highlighted the continuous use of questioning and differentiation best accommodates student learning styles and checks for student understanding. Differentiated class work and homework ensured that students with different learning styles could present their comprehension of material in a way that best expressed their learning. Participants also recognised the importance of culture in the SLA process. Learning environments have become more diversified with students of different backgrounds forming the classroom setting. Schumann (1986) believes that to obtain a second language in a group setting, students do not need to adopt the lifestyle of the target language. This contrasts with participant findings who believed language is culture and they are not separate entities. Although students do not require full immersion in the culture of the target language country, they do enjoy finding differences between the country of their mother tongue and of the target language.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the findings of this research in comparison with peer-reviewed research on the second language acquisition process. From the above discussion, that a communicative approach is essential to students acquiring a second language. The continued growth in class sizes has influenced teaching approaches including an increase in the use of pair or group work but clear guidelines and rules are required for its implementation. Student motivation and engagement are also key factors in this process to ensure students language proficiency develops to students' true potential. A differentiated approach is also key for student language acquisition as tiered exercises to meet student abilities caters for students of different levels of learning styles and abilities.

In the next chapter, a conclusion will be formed on this research project sighting the use interactive teaching methods in fostering second language acquisition with regards to research findings conducted as well as peer-reviewed research used on this topic.

6 Conclusion

Introduction

This research thesis has thoroughly examined the use of interactive teaching methodologies in fostering second-language acquisition (SLA) in Post-Primary classrooms. The integration of research participants' personal experiences as well as systematic research highlights both benefits and challenges to interactionism during the SLA process which will be discussed in the following chapter.

Table 3:

| Research Question | Key Findings |
|--|---|
| 1. How does a more interactive, communicative approach help students acquire an additional language at Post Primary level? | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Significant increases in engagement and fluency in the 2L• Deeper understanding of the 2L• More use of the target language within the classroom environment |
| 2. What are the challenges to implementing a more interactive approach to language acquisition in comparison with more traditional teaching methods? | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of participation among students to complete group/pair work tasks without clear guidance and instruction.• Maintaining students' active engagements in the classroom environment• Reduced motivation among students• Adapting teaching methods to meet the diverse learning styles of students. |

6.1 Main conclusions

This research has identified numerous benefits of students working with others in the classroom through interaction to acquire a second language. Firstly, a significant increase in engagement and fluency in the target language (TL) among students was clearly identified by research participants when students worked collaboratively (Huang et al., 2017). Activities such as discussions and group work fostered a deeper understanding of the language as well as greater communicative competence in comparison to traditional teaching approaches that focused solely on the four key language skills. This research also found the effectiveness of this approach is heavily dependent on careful planning and classroom management (Oliver et al, 2011). Although interactive teaching methods have been seen to increase student participation and motivation, they also require additional preparation time and attentiveness when managing off-task behaviour and productive interactions.

This qualitative research, that involved semi-structured interviews with language teachers, revealed that the use of interactive methods is highly regarded among teachers. Teachers acknowledge that an improvement in planning and executing interactive language lessons can be found through their continuous professional development and reflective practices. The research data collected emphasised

the necessity of individual feedback and assessment tailored to students' needs also (Leckey and Neill, 2001). Teachers also identified implementing cultural and technological materials provided a richer and more realistic learning experience for students. By integrating these tools, it supported students collaborative learning while also addressing their diverse learning styles and aided the overall SLA process. Furthermore, this research highlighted how a differentiated approach is crucial for effective language acquisition (Ojong, 2023). By tailoring activities to students of different abilities and learning styles it ensures that all students, regardless of their level of proficiency, can benefit from all instructions.

6.2 Limitations of Research

Despite the promising research findings, several limitations of this research were observed. Firstly, the research was conducted on a limited research site. This study was completed in a single school setting, which may not represent the broader educational context of participants using interactive methodologies in the SLA process. As a result of this small sample size, the use of extrapolation would be difficult to exercise. A larger sample size would have aided extrapolation on this study. As well as this, time was also an important variable to the research and became a weakness to the study. The research was conducted over a short period of time due to absences of teachers and school training days. This could have potentially impacted the depths of the insights obtained from research participants due to class timings and last-minute class cover required of participants as a result also.

6.3 Achieved Learning Outcomes

This research accomplished its intended learning outcomes of using interactive teaching methods to foster SLA while also identifying practical strategies for implementation. However, the possibility of generalisation is restricted due to the constraints made in the previous section. This research study successfully underscored the need for continuing professional development and reflective practices to sustain and improve interactive teaching methods.

6.4 Policy recommendations and teacher recommendations

Although CPD courses are readily available through education and training centres, educational policymakers should invest more in teacher training programs on interactive teaching strategies. These programs should provide training and upskilling in classroom management, the use of technology as well as differentiated instruction. Additionally, more funding should be approved to ensure schools are equipped with essential resources, including technology, to facilitate more interactive learning environments. From a practical perspective, teachers should engage collaboratively with colleagues to share best practices and strategies for effective implementation of interactive methods (Swain and

Watanabe, 2013). They should also implement tiered activities and assessments to cater for the diverse abilities and learning styles of students to ensure they are adequately supported in their learning. On top of this, teachers should attempt to implement technology and culture into their lessons to make learning more relevant and engaging for students. By integrating culture of the target language into lessons, students can compare their own heritage and culture to those of the target language country.

6.5 Further Research

From these conclusions and research findings, further research make seek to advance the understanding of student motivation and engagement within the SLA process. This psychological research study would identify and may also seek to highlight the reasoning behind students' actions during the SLA process.

6.6 Conclusion

To conclude, this research underlines the significant benefits of interactive teaching methods in Second Language Acquisition. By tackling the challenges and implementing the above recommendations, educators can enhance the value of these methods that ultimately leads to improved language proficiency and engagement among students. The research findings campaign for changes towards more interactive and inclusive practices to meet the evolving needs of language learners.

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8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1: Letter of Information for Principal and school

Dear

I am writing to you in relation to a research study I will be undertaking in fulfilment of my Professional master's degree in Post-Primary Education. It would like to provide you with information about my study and seek your consent to conduct the research with members of your teaching staff.

As you may be aware, second language acquisition is the process of learning a language that is not native to you. To acquire a language requires students to practice each of the four key skills including reading, writing, speaking and listening. The most vital skill when learning a new language is communication. Students are constantly exposed to communication through speaking. Students who are surrounded by those who are speaking in the target language within the classroom and are submerged in conversations in the target language, will acquire the language quicker. My proposed research will contribute to the understanding of the role of interaction among students to increase their ability to attain a second language.

The objectives of my research are to highlight the importance of communication and interaction to acquire a national and foreign language, outline the improvement in pupil ability to engage in conversation in the target languages, and underline how the teaching and learning process run in harmony as a result of language acquisition and continuous student involvement in the process. It will also hope to emphasise the significance of a positive working environment for students to work in to ensure an advancement in their academic progress. To address these areas, I propose to conduct five short (20 to 30 minute) structured interviews with post-primary school teachers who teach a language that is second to their native language. My project has received ethical approval from the Hibernia College Ethics Committee.

Interviews would be held at the convenience of the school and of the teachers concerned on school premises. With their written consent, interviews will be recorded for transcription and dissemination purposes. Participation in the study is voluntary. Interviewees may refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time. No school, teacher or student will be identified specifically in any publication of the work.

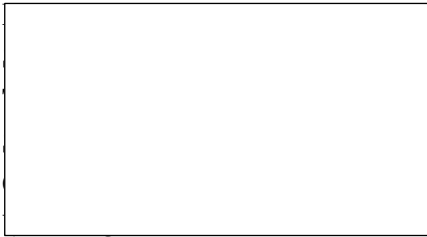
I am writing to you to gain your informed consent that I may request an interview with five members of your teaching staff and that I may hold the interview in your school in (February) at a time convenient for the school and the teachers concerned. Confirmation of your consent can be sent either to me directly via email () or by signature of the attached consent form posted to:

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone or at the abovementioned email address. I look forward to hearing from you and thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Researcher

8.2 Appendix 2: Letter to Principal to conduct research in school.



06/12/23

Dear Principal,

As part of my Professional Masters in Post-Primary Education with Hibernia College, I am investigating the role of implementing interactive teaching strategies in assisting students to acquire a second language. The title of the research project is 'The Role of Interactive Teaching Approaches in fostering Second-Language Acquisition in the Post-Primary Classroom.'

Classroom teachers are key stakeholders in identifying if interaction enhances student learning that can lead to further development in language acquisition. This letter aims to provide you with an introduction to the research project and to seek consent from you for the project to move forward in order to inform my future professional practice as a teacher.

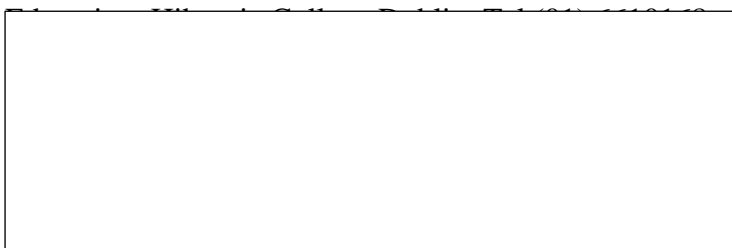
With your permission, I would like to interview five classroom teachers. The staff will be asked to partake in semi structured interviews to gain an insight into the aims of the project. Please find enclosed for your perusal, a copy of the information and consent forms. Only those respondents who return a signed copy of the consent form will be purposely selected to take part in the study. Any data gathering will strictly be underpinned by the school's ethical code of conduct. No students will be interviewed.

Information gathered will be held in the strictest of confidence and pseudonyms will be used to ensure anonymity. The school's name will not appear on any research findings. Interviews will be recorded, and the data will be securely held under Hibernia College Research Ethics guidelines. Participation in the study is voluntary and participants can withdraw from the research at any time. The results from this research study will be reported in my research project and may be disseminated through professional publication.

I would appreciate your cooperation in providing access to the staff at the school over the coming weeks. If you have any queries or require further information on the research study, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Research:
Mobile:
Email:

This research study has received Ethics approval from Hibernia College Dublin. If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent you may contact: School of



_____ Date: 06/12/23
_____ Date: 06/12/23

8.3 Appendix 3: Principal Consent form

I, read and understood the Letter of Information provided to me by Chloe Watson. her to conduct research about “The role of Interactive Teaching Approaches in fostering Second-Language Acquisition in the Post-Primary Classroom,” in the school, she may request an interview with five teachers and upon receipt of their consent may conduct interviews on school premises at times convenient for the teachers and the school. I understand that participation is voluntary and that there are no physical or psychological risks associated with the study. I know that all answers provided during the interview will be used for the purposes of the study only and that all responses will identify no individual or the school itself.

Signed: Date: 06/12/23

8.4 Appendix 4: Research Participants Consent Form

I, have read and understood the Letter of Information provided to me by . I agree that in order to conduct research about “The role of Interactive Teaching Approaches in fostering Second-Language Acquisition in the Post-Primary Classroom,” in the school, she requests to interview me as one of five teachers and upon receipt of my consent may conduct interviews on school premises at times convenient for the teachers and the school. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that there are no physical or psychological risks associated with the study. I know that all answers provided during the interview will be used for the purposes of the study only and that all responses will identify no individual or the school itself.

Signed: Date: 01/03/24

8.5 Appendix 5 – Interview Questions used during interview sessions.

1. General Approach:

How would you describe your overall approach to teaching a second language?

What do you believe are the key factors that contribute to effective second language acquisition?

2. Interactive Methods:

How do you define interactive teaching methods in the context of second language instruction?

Can you provide examples of interactive teaching methods you've found successful in fostering second language acquisition?

3. Student Engagement:

How do you keep students engaged during language lessons?

In your experience, how does student engagement relate to language learning outcomes?

4. Technology Integration:

To what extent do you incorporate technology and multimedia tools in your language lessons?

How do you think technology enhances or hinders second language acquisition?

5. Assessment and Feedback:

How do you assess language proficiency in your students, especially when using interactive methods?

What role does feedback play in the learning process, and how do you provide constructive feedback in an interactive setting?

6. Challenges and Solutions:

What challenges have you faced when implementing interactive teaching methods for language acquisition?

Can you share any strategies or solutions you've found effective in overcoming these challenges?

7. Individual Learning Styles:

How do you accommodate different learning styles in your language lessons?

In your opinion, how important is it to tailor interactive activities to the individual learning needs of students?

8. Cultural Sensitivity:

How do you incorporate cultural elements into interactive language lessons?

How does cultural sensitivity contribute to a more effective language learning environment?

9. Collaborative Learning:

Do you use collaborative learning activities to enhance language acquisition? If so, can you provide

examples?

How do you manage group dynamics to ensure effective language practice in collaborative settings?

10. Continuous Improvement:

How do you stay updated on new developments and research in language acquisition and teaching methods?

Can you share an example of how your approach to teaching language has evolved over time?

11. Conceptual Frameworks or Approaches

Are you influenced by any specific interactive teaching approaches such as constructivist (Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal development), collaborative (Collaborative Learning theory), integrative (Socio-cultural theory), reflective (Reflective Learning Theory)?

Can you explain the key principles of this conceptual framework with regards to its implementation in interactive teaching?

Any Other Comments or suggestions...

Appendix 6 – Sample of line coding used to analyse data from interviews.

165 anxiety in relation to speaking in the target language we created
166 this target based on previous slower facilitator reports and
167 subject department meetings and from our engagement with our
168 students on the ground students are offered a one to one
169 opportunity to talk if they need to be assessed on the unit of
170 learning and we offer the opportunity to students to also send
171 recordings of their all work and communication attempts to their
172 teams page we implemented more pair work and project work in
173 class we scheduled a one minute oral at Christmas for first years
174 and a two-minute oral at Easter and this then reduced over
175 assessment for the summer exams and this was also in a bid to
176 create a normalization of speaking tasks in the NFL classroom
177 from the first year after our last meeting we need we were seeing
178 less anxiety and more confidence around attempting to speak in |
179 the target language as a result of these implementations perfect
180 thank you so if we look at the individual learning styles how do you
181 accommodate different learning styles in your language lessons
182 in your opinion how important is it to tailor interactive activities to
183 the individual learning needs students so every difference is
184 made to make some level for pupils in order to enable them to
185 achieve a degree of linguistic competence in tumor through
186 abilities needs and interests differentiation is important and
187 catering to different learning styles is always considered the
188 seating plan is considered firstly and based on students needs
189 and then I attempt to ensure a multi sensory approach this is
190 anyways best I can I try to include activities that work for the
191 seven different styles of learning for visual aural verbal physical
192 logical social and solitary styles every student learns differently
193 and some activities will speak to them more than others
194 differentiated instructions differentiation questioning scaffolding
195 and differentiated assessment tools such as homework menus
196 and MFL rubrics cannot help in language lessons it is however
197 difficult to cater for all learning styles at times especially when