Student Communication Opportunities During a Teacher Planned ESL Class

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ABSTRACT

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A classroom that implements Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) or Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) emphasizes the importance of student-centred learning that provides opportunities for students to learn from each other (Rahmatillah, 2019; Thorne, 2000; Chinyamurindi, 2018; Bruner, 1986). To explore student interaction in TBLT, this study investigates the opportunities students receive in an English as a second language (ESL) classroom to communicate about their personal experiences that are not directly related to the classroom topic. Transcripts from the House of Friendship, a Montreal community-based organization staffed by volunteer teachers and preservice teachers from Concordia's BEd program in TESL, were analyzed for both teacher-to-student communication and student-to-student communication. The coding identified how many opportunities students had to discuss their own ideas, feelings and experiences as compared to information about the teachers' planned topic. The findings indicated that students spend more time discussing the lesson topic than talking about unrelated personal experiences. The implications are discussed in terms of the distribution of student communication across different activity types and strategies for increasing opportunities to talk about personal experiences in ESL classrooms.

Keywords: ESL classroom interaction, Teacher-student discourse, Student Talk, Peer interaction

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Contribution of Authors

The classroom interaction data analyzed in this thesis came from a research project at the House of Friendship carried out by Kim McDonough and Teresa Hernandéz González. My role was to analyze transcripts of student and teacher interaction to determine the number of words the students and teachers spoke and categorize them into five coding categories. After completing the analysis, my role was also to present and interpret the findings and assess the information to answer my research question in terms of prior research and its importance to educators, linguists, and researchers.

Contents

Chapter 1

Most people enjoy talking. Whether it be at the grocery store, at a friend's house or in class, people will find a way to start a conversation. Often, these conversations will lead to personal experiences being shared due to a connection the listener picked up on. But if there is one thing people can talk about for an extended amount of time, it is themselves. Whether it be about their ideas, experiences or feelings, people usually always have something to share. When both interlocutors are interested in the topic, then the conversation becomes engaging. As I reflected about this, I started to wonder whether any learning occurs when we share personal experiences.

This question can be answered by drawing on second language (L2) acquisition theory related to Vygotsky's work about Sociocultural Theory (1978, cited in Loewen, 2020). Sociocultural theory emphasizes the importance of social learning; for example, learning occurs when one individual can provide scaffolding for a novice (Loewen, 2020). This scaffolding can also be implemented by anyone with expertise; they do not need to be your teacher or relative. The ability to learn from a more expert interlocutor shows the relevance of socializing for learning (Loewen, 2020). In addition, there are some benefits to sharing experiences with others; it can create a close relationship with other people, boost your academic performance, maintain your mental health, and promote development (Ibrahim et al., 2015; Chinyamurindi, 2018; Bruner, 1986). Basically, sharing experiences with others can be an interesting and beneficial learning opportunity (Ibrahim et al., 2015).

As I learned about this theory and thought about my past teaching experiences, I remembered my student's socializing and talking about their ideas during their fifteen-minute break. This is when I started wondering about the opportunities teachers provide to students for

sharing their own ideas, feelings, or experiences inside the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom. As I reflected, I realized that I did not offer my students the opportunity to share their ideas or feelings during classroom time because I was always preoccupied by my lesson. From the readings I gathered, I realized I was not the only teacher who felt as though I was bound by my lessons.

Conner (2022) emphasized the difficulty teachers experience when deciding between listening to students or completing curriculum requirements. After all, people are bound to reflect on the lesson topic and talk about their experiences which is why I thought, if talking about our experiences, ideas and feelings is beneficial to learning as Vygotsky (1978) and Ibrahim et al. (2015) mention, then my research should explore this idea. Keep in mind, I am not saying that ESL teachers are doing the wrong thing, but I want us to have an understanding that sharing personal experiences during class is bound to happen and teachers will benefit if they can take the time to listen to these ideas and interact with them.

This led me to find plenty of research on pedagogy; however, not much has been written in relation to student communication opportunities or personal experiences inside a planned ESL classroom. The lack of research on this topic led to my research question: How many opportunities do students receive to talk about their experiences, ideas, or feelings inside a planned ESL classroom? If we can understand how often students talk about their ideas and experiences, then we can start identifying those communicative opportunities and benefit from the spontaneous learning it entails. This would help us to see where we can be flexible during our lessons. In simpler terms, it permits teachers to notice opportunities for student experiential communication during class. Overall, my goal for this thesis research is to see how much time

students are permitted to share so that instructors can reflect on the information and make use of it during their classroom practices.

Chapter 2

Classroom ESL teaching has been around for a long time; therefore, over the years teachers have acquired multiple tools and techniques to ensure students are learning appropriate language and communication skills inside the classroom. Traditional ESL teaching often follows the school's curriculum and assesses students' acquisition of grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary while also facilitating students' skill development in speech and writing. Because the curriculum must be completed before the end of the year, this can leave teachers with little to no time to give students opportunities to discuss their interests or experiences inside the classroom.

However, it is known that giving students opportunities to talk about their personal interests can support school engagement and student learning (Smyth, 2007; Cortazzi et al., 2001). Creating spaces for student voices inside school can prevent students from feeling alienated, which could help address the current 50% drop out rate among secondary students (Smyth, 2007). When students share their ideas or experiences with others, they may realize that they are not the only ones who may have experienced similar feelings (Smyth, 2007). By having their experiences validated by peers, student classroom engagement may increase (Smyth, 2007; Maunder et al., 2012). Basically, when they are in control of their learning and have a space to communicate, students may be less at risk of leaving school (Smyth, 2007).

In addition, as described in Vygotsky's Social Cultural Theory (1978), students can learn from each other by hearing the experiences of others by challenging their viewpoints (Loewen, 2020; Maunder et al., 2012). However, Cortazzi et al. (2001) mention how learning occurs when individuals share their experiences by analyzing their experiences and retrieving the important aspects of it. This exchange creates learning opportunities because the students are reflecting on the experience and are validated through questions and peer interaction which eventually

becomes a learning experience (Cortazzi et al., 2001). Thus, asking students to talk about lesson content is important however teachers should also create opportunities for students to talk about their personal experiences because it promotes experiential learning, stronger relationships, increased academic performance and enables students to expand their knowledge (Cortazzi et al., 2001; Ibrahim et al., 2015; Chinyamurindi, 2018 Crow & Smith, 2005).

To increase the likelihood that students have talking time, teachers can implement Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). Unlike traditional teacher-centred instruction, these approaches provide a student-based approach that emphasizes communication about student experiences. As described by Rahmatillah (2019), when teachers use CLT activities such as role plays, students experience less fear about making mistakes when speaking the target language. As an example, they noticed that when talking to peers the students did not focus entirely on their mistakes, which caused less stress and helped them engage in the conversation (Rahmatillah, 2019). Furthermore, she pointed out that students experienced more motivation and enjoyment as they shared their experiences with peers (Rahmatillah, 2019). However, it is important to keep in mind that teachers following CLT and TBLT approaches may face similar constraints about needing to follow school curricula and assessments. Even in these more communicative approaches, teachers need to ensure that students have time to talk to each other about their personal experiences as opposed to simply discuss lesson content.

Providing students with opportunities to talk about their personal experiences in the L2 classroom has numerous benefits such as feeling closer to peers, maintaining good academic performance, psychological well-being, and encouraging student self-development (Thorne, 2000; Chinyamurindi, 2018; Bruner, 1986). Besides promoting student well-being, giving

students time to talk can also help teachers and institutions better understand and support their students (Stone, 2008) as well as build trust and equity with them (Banwo et al., 2021). Furthermore, providing students the opportunities to talk about their personal experiences can help diversify classroom discourse which creates meaningful and interesting interactions during group work (Hohti & Karlsson, 2013; Ibrahim et al., 2015). For example, by having opportunities to talk about issues like racism and religious discrimination, students can express support for peers who have experienced discrimination and create a space for student reflection (Housee, 2010). As students discuss and work together, they will create an environment for themselves to be a part of which helps them support each other during tasks and provide opportunities to manage their discussion together (Ibrahim et al., 2015). Despite the potential benefits of creating spaces for students to talk about their personal experiences, some teachers may find it challenging to provide them with open communication time.

Turning to the challenges with allowing students to exchange personal experiences, teachers need to manage the classroom, complete the required curriculum, keep the students focused, and maintain a safe space to work. Considering these expectations, teachers frequently maintain control of conversational topics to ensure that the curriculum requirements are fulfilled. However, maintaining topic control to ensure coverage of the required curriculum can prevent teachers from seeing the benefits of listening to student ideas (Conner, 2022). Student communication about personal experiences might be seen as "unimportant," or "bothersome" from the teacher's perspective because it can take time away from their instructional goals and plans (Hohti & Karlsson, 2013; Conner, 2022, p. 58).

Prior research in ESL classrooms has examined the extent to which teachers provide students with talking time during different phases of their lesson (McDonough & Hernandéz

González, 2013). They categorized ESL classroom discourse into four categories (i.e., communication, content, explicit language, and management) to see how many opportunities students had to talk. Their category of communication, which they defined as topics unrelated to the lesson theme or content, most closely resembles personal experiences. They found that the teachers produced 2,093 words in communication episodes (64%) while the ESL students only produced 1,176 words (36%). There was similar advantage for teachers in management and explicit language, but the ESL students had more speaking opportunities during content episodes, which were related to the lesson topic. In sum, although the teachers created opportunities for students to talk about lesson content, the students had fewer chances to talk about topics of their own interest.

Even if teachers prioritize giving students opportunities to talk about their own personal interests, they may be concerned that students might bring up difficult topics, such as Islamophobia or racism (Housee, 2010; Conner, 2022). Teachers might feel pressured to provide their opinion on such matters because students might expect the teacher to lead the classroom on these topics, especially if the teacher has a shared background with some of the students such as gender, culture, nationality, and religion (Conner, 2022; Housee, 2010). Furthermore, teachers may not believe that they have the knowledge and training to discuss potentially charged topics or may not believe that their students could handle such conversations (Conner, 2022; Housee, 2010). However, teachers may find that students are willing and able to talk about emotionally charged topics in sensitive and supportive ways.

In summary, despite the benefits of students engaging in conversations about their ideas, feelings, and experiences, some teachers may prioritize completing the curriculum and preparing students for assessment tasks. Teachers who value the exchange of personal experiences may feel

unprepared, afraid, scared and worried to discuss certain topics in class (Conner, 2022, Housee, 2010, Palmer, 2009). As a result, students may not be provided with the opportunity to discuss what they feel or experience inside the ESL classroom. Therefore, the current study examines the opportunities that ESL students have for discussing personal experiences, during both teacher-fronted interaction and pair/small group discussions. The research question is: how many opportunities do students have to talk about their personal ideas, feelings, and experiences inside an ESL classroom?

Method

Participants and Instructional Context

The participants' data comes from transcripts of classroom interaction from a prior research study at the House of Friendship (McDonough & Hernandéz Gonzaléz, 2019), which is a Montreal community-based organization staffed by volunteer teachers and preservice teachers from Concordia's BEd TESL program. The transcripts involved interaction between 14 ESL participants (9 women, 5 men) who ranged between the ages of 23 and 61. They spoke various first languages such as Korean, Spanish, French, Albanian and Portuguese. Some of the participants had been in Canada for only a couple of months, one had been in Canada since birth and some for multiple years. They were all living in Montreal at the time. The students were enrolled in a task-based, integrated skills ESL class that met twice per week (three hours per meeting) over a six-week period. The classroom English students were categorized as level four, which targeted understanding topics, talking spontaneously, and understanding familiar topics. The teacher was a fourth-year student in a TESL undergraduate program who had previously taught at the community centre during an internship. Another student in the TESL program acted

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as an assistant to help with the data collection tools (such as audio-recordings and checklists). All the interactions during the whole-class and peer activities were audio-recorded.

Target Lesson

The target lesson (Lesson 9) was titled "Advertising and self-image: the impact various advertising stereotypes have on youth and the parents who educate them." The goals were to practise text comprehension, oral skills, and critical thinking and the language focus was about yes/no questions including question-word formation. The main task was an oral presentation about the theme of hypersexuality. The lesson was segmented into the following eight stages.

Knowledge activation: The lesson began by activating the student's prior knowledge about the topic of advertising and its effect on culture and society by having the teacher ask questions such as "Have you ever been impacted emotionally or personally by an ad you saw?" The teacher introduced the concept of *hypersexualization* and elicited students' opinions about how women are portrayed in advertisements.

Video watching: The students watched a TED talk and took notes about how women in advertisements were presented as objects and the effects on beauty standards (YouTube, 2014). After the video, the students shared their notes with peers to check their comprehension.

Post video discussion: The teacher directed the student's attention to the main arguments in the TED talk video and discussed the influence of advertising on young girls. Then, the students were asked to provide suggestions for parents and young girls about advertising. Afterwards, the students had to work in pairs; they received a sheet of paper which had either category 1A (young girls) or 1B (parent) and had to write what girls or parents can do to raise awareness of advertising and hypersexuality (see Appendix A and B). Students were then instructed to validate their written ideas with a partner who had the same handout. Then they

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paired up with a student with a different sheet than theirs and had to exchange information. Once the information was exchanged, the students had to reach a consensus about the best advice for both their handouts.

Advice: Following this was a whole-class discussion of the advice students had come up with. After eliciting advice from all the groups, the teacher asked the students to decide which advice was best. The students were then asked to reflect on the advice based on the targeted audience and gender. Afterwards, the students provided advice for boys based on the TED talk. The students discussed their ideas afterwards and the teacher pointed out the issues with hypersexualization in the media.

Grammar focus: A short grammar lecture was provided about writing questions, after which the students practised creating questions. Then the teacher asked the students to look at questions with different question words on the board. The teacher elicited the rules for the question-word examples and how the rules changed into reported speech. The students were then directed to practise by using the handout they already had previously used (see Appendix A and B) to rewrite the direct questions into reported speech. The teacher provided help by giving the beginning structure to the students.

Poster task: The students were then told they would do a poster task in which they created a poster with advice for either girls, boys, or parents. The teacher paired the students and told them to create an advice poster. The students were then provided a time to work on their poster based on the criteria the teacher wrote on the board: "attractive, easy to read, highlights the main arguments visually, pertinent visual examples of the main argument (i.e.: women being cut up into parts, or women being turned into objects). Avoid: clutter, random pictures (pictures that are unrelated to the ideas), too much text, spoken presentation: well-rehearsed and within the time

limit, refers to and expands on the arguments in the poster, is interesting and catches audience's attention, starts more generally and finishes with specifics (examples), has an intro, body, and conclusion, is persuasive" (See Appendix C). The students had approximately seven minutes to create and practise their two-minute poster presentation. Then the pairs had to choose whether they would be the presenter or the observer and then the pairs switched roles.

Language review: Then the teacher directed the student's attention to the sentences with errors on the board and asked them to correct it as a whole class. The teacher provided corrections, clarifications, and reviewed everything they learned.

Task evaluation: The teacher ended the class with a task evaluation for the students to complete and give back to the teacher. The evaluation consisted of self-reflections about the activity of the day, what they learn had learned, and what aspects of the lesson they had enjoyed or disliked.

Data Coding

As part of the larger study, one audio-recording of the teacher and five audio-recordings of pairs/groups were transcribed and checked for accuracy by research assistants. First, the transcripts were verified with the audio recordings to determine the length of the TED talk video. The transcripts were also edited to remove coding conventions that indicated overlap, interruptions, and parenthetical comments from the original study that were not relevant for the current analysis. Next, the transcripts were coded to classify conversations as occurring during whole-class discussions or pair/small group activities. Conversations during whole-class discussions were defined as occurring when the teacher guided all the students' attention to a common task. During the coding process, the research assistant and the teaching assistant were included in the count of words since they were also teaching the students during the lesson.

Conversations during pair/small group activities involved students only which also included the segments when the students were on break; any teacher input was in response to questions or reminders about the task or time. Using the time stamps on the transcripts, the amount of time spent during whole-class discussions and pair/small group activities were summed. The number of words spoken by the teacher and students during whole-class and student pair/small group conversations were counted by using Word.

To answer the research question about students' opportunities to talk about personal experiences, the transcripts were coded for categories of classroom talk identified in previous research using MAXQDA (VERBI Software, 2021): Lesson Topic, Language, Task management, Related personal experience, and Unrelated personal experience. The coding categories are defined and illustrated with examples in Table 1.

Table 1

Coding Categories

Category	Definition	Example
Lesson topic	Talk about ideas related to the lesson theme, talk about information or ideas in an oral or written source	S2: yeah their self their low esteem self-esteem S1: self-esteem, they learn self-esteem. And uh and the f—and the food and S2: and uh that the um, the big problem is that, even the

		women see themselves as sex objects
Language	Talk about any aspect of language including vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation	S9: what's mean uh knowledgeable? T: knowledgeable so you see any any word in here? Do you do you recognize any words in here
Task Management	Student talk about how to carry out activities, such as task role or managing time	S1: okay write more, bigger S2: oh it's for this part, so I don't know if uh we put an image or?
Related Personal Experience	Sharing a personal experience related to the lesson content, such as giving a reason, supporting their opinion, or disagreeing with a position	S2: advertising, advertising agency, the biggest one in uh, and on TV maybe two-three years ago, he said uh it was an interview about him, and he said during the interview if at 50 years old you don't have your uh Rolex, you have

		failed your life. And it was a big big big scandal
		T: he said that?
		S2: yes, on TV! So it was a big big scandal people say
Unrelated Personal Experience	Sharing a personal experience that does not have a content link to the lesson topic	S2: no uh I think the parents uh never finish their job yeah
		S1: job yeah it's a job for the life
		S2: until the until the kids uh are I don't know uh 40 years old the parents always do their

To check intra-rater reliability of the coding, the researcher coded all the transcripts again after an interval of eight days. Comparison of the initial and subsequent coding indicated 99% agreement (384 words differed out of 29,161). To check inter-rater reliability, 10% of the transcripts were coded by a doctoral student at the same university following training by the researcher. Comparison of the researcher's and independent coder's transcripts showed 97% agreement (79 words differed out of 29,161). Any disagreements or doubts were resolved by

revising and asking each other's opinion and then clarifying the choice made. Then, both segments were compared with each other and concluded with an agreement.

Results

Overall, the total amount of time for whole-class interaction was 80 minutes. The time for student/pair work varied by pair from 43.33 to 58.15 minutes with a mean of 51.42 minutes (SD = 5.29).

The research question asked how many communication opportunities the students had to talk about their experiences, ideas, and feelings inside an ESL classroom. Therefore, the sum of words that the student and teachers spoke across the coding categories along with the percentages is provided in Table 2.

Table 2

Student and Teacher Talk Across Coding Categories

Category	Student words		Teacher words		Total	
	Sum	Percentage	Sum	Percentage	Sum	Percentage
Lesson topic	10,816	63	882	11	15,342	53
Language	2,871	17	4,526	54	7,397	25
Task management	643	4	2,671	32	3,314	11
Related personal experiences	1,613	9	21	0	1,634	6
Unrelated personal experiences	1,223	7	251	3	1,474	5
Total	17,166	100	8,351	100	29,161	100

For the total words (both student and teacher), 53% of their talk was about the lesson topic and 5% was in the unrelated personal experiences category. However, when considered separately for the students and teachers, lesson topic accounted for 63% of the students' talk and 11% for the teacher talk. Turning to the language category, for students and teachers combined, it accounted for 25% of the classroom talk. But when examined separately, the teacher's language talk was 54% and the students' language talk was 17% of the total talk. For the main categories which answer my research question (related/unrelated personal experiences) the total amount for each category is of 6% and 5%. Although when they are viewed separately the students-related personal experience is of 9% and the unrelated personal experiences is of 7%.

To summarize, the sum of the total words (both teacher and student) demonstrated a higher percentage of talking time for the lesson topic; the second-highest category was language while unrelated personal experiences was lowest.

To illustrate the finding that students tended to talk about lesson content and rarely spoke about personal experiences, Example 1 shows how students would redirect their conversation back to the lesson topic. In this example, students were discussing the poster activity in which they were required to provide advice for the girls. At one point, S1 brought up the topic of her daughter's new job, and discussed it for 8 turns (you can see these 8 turns from the bold text). However, eventually in turn 26, S1 returns to the lesson topic of giving advice to girls by trying to say another piece of advice and says: the people the only thing person and it's uh it's not uh it's not good.

Example 1: Return to topic after unrelated discussion

S1 (1): **my daughter**, when I try to discuss it, she uh tell me uh oh no no no, it's not the

problem, I understand I understand that you want to say and uh it's not easy necessary

but she has 27 years old

S2 (2): ah okay

S1 (3): **she's adult**

S2 (4): okay

S1 (5): but sometimes I'm surprise by uh the influence of the advertising and the and the

meaning of the of **her life**

…

S1 (9): **she likes the marks**, she likes uh the the the dress and uh big influence on on her

life

S2 (10): (*laughs*)

S1 (11): but now **she's adult**, I finish I think I finish my job but uh not necessary

(*chuckles*) it's uh I think it's not finish

…

S1 (17): yes yes **my daughter** begins a new job

S2 (18):   okay

S1 (19): **she's a** [psychologue]

S2 (20):   okay

S1(21): okay and **she heard** different story, big story and she finds it's difficult too uh and she will say uh that like uh it's difficult for uh but I try to support but I can't do his job—her job it's special uh but um very important to try to have uh

S2 (22): (*No answer*)

S1(23): to to achieve their goals and develop until they're adult yes

S2 (24): yes

S1 (25): very important, this conversation for the women and women are it's good

S1 (26): the people the only thing person and it's uh it's not uh it's not good

Although, the students did have a chance to talk about their personal experiences, they resumed talking about the lesson topic when they felt it was inappropriate to talk about unrelated topics during the activity.

To further understand the interaction opportunities in this classroom, the quantity of student talk across the coding categories was considered separately for whole-class interaction and pair/group work to determine if the students' chances to talk about personal experiences differed. The results can be seen in Table 3, which presents both interactional contexts (whole-class and pair/group) and the coding categories: lesson topic, language, task management, related personal experience, unrelated personal experience.

Table 3

Talk in Whole-Class and Pair/Group Work Interaction by Coding Category

Category	Whole-Class		Pair/Group	
	Student		Student	
Lesson topic	1,987	63%	8,829	63%
Language	554	18%	2,317	17%
Task management	0	0%	643	5%
Related personal experiences	626	19%	987	6%
Unrelated personal experiences	14	0%	1,223	9%
Totals	3,167	100%	13,999	100%

The most frequent category of talk, lesson topic, was similar across the two interactional contexts accounting for 63% of the student talk in whole-class and pair/small group interaction. The second most frequent talk was language as it accounted for 18% during whole-class and 17% during pair/group interaction. Lastly, related personal experience had a higher percentage in whole-class interactions (19%) as compared to pair/group interaction (6%) and unrelated personal experiences only had one result for the pair/group coding category (9%).

From the data accumulated, there were 4 main results that clearly show themselves in Table 3:1) the student lesson topic remained the same regardless of the interactional type (whole-class and pair/group work), 2) student language had no significant change from whole-class to

pair/group interaction, 3) related personal experience had a higher percentage during whole-class interactions and 4) unrelated personal experiences only had results for pair/group interaction.

First, as mentioned earlier, Example 1 demonstrated how the students remained on task during pair/group interactions; basically, during their unrelated discussion the students eventually shifted their conversation back to the lesson topic. However, during whole-class interactions the teacher skillfully directed the students focus to the lesson topic by asking open-ended questions which had S3, S5 and S7 answer the teacher (see Example 2). In addition, as seen on lines 3 and 5 the teacher strategically asked a question in order to have S5 expand their explanation. Shortly after S5's answers the teacher once again asked another open-ended question about the lesson topic and S7 interjected on line 16. All the students' answers were in relation to the lesson topic; hence, knowing this strategy worked the teacher repeated the technique for the following lines until S3 deviated the conversation by sharing a personal experience with the class (see line 24).

Example 2: Teacher interaction strategy

T (1): okay okay! What about other ads, what—like can you think of uh, can you think of any ads, any advertisements

S5 (2): but the most part of all advertising is for me, is uh 75% is not true

T (3): it's not true?

S5 (4): yeah

T (5): okay! What do you mean it's not true?

S5 (6): because uh all the information they give us is just for the only—the main objective, the main goal is just sell something

…

T (13): okay, okay. And do you think, okay do you think adds affect everybody the same way?

S5 (14): no

T (15): no? Why not?

S7 (16): uh is depends the the target the wants to uh, for example, for children, I I hear that – I don't it's uh in uh in uh radio here in Canada uh they say for example for the children uh you know uh all the product for the children for example, um for uh how do you say cereals?

…

S3 (24): actually in Canada

Second, within the data, another surprising pattern occurred for the language category, it remained the same for both whole-class interaction and pair/group work. To demonstrate the students speaking about language during pair/group work, I have provided an example of S1 and S2 writing and talking about the advice they would give boys. As, S1 struggled with word choice on line 1, S2 interjected and provided language guidance (line 4). Then, the students' conversation goes back to the lesson topic and they correct their sentence as seen in line 8.

Example 3: Student language correction

S1 (1): do you use—I think "the" or "a"? No, the

S2 (2): (*Does not answer*)

S1 (3): the

S2 (4): I think I think advertising without "the"

S1 (5): advertising

S1 (6): why? It's not necessary to put the "the"?

S2 (7): I think that no, but I'm I'm not sure

S1 (8): (*reading what's written*) I think advertising is not a good model because it doesn't give a self-esteem, okay.

Thirdly, in Table 3, the whole-class interaction was higher during personal experience as compared to pair/group. To illustrate this, an example of the TA asking an open-ended question to the students during whole-class interaction is illustrated in line 1. This question provided an opportunity for students to share their experiences and S7 proceeded to share a related personal experience as seen on lines 2 and 4. S3 also joined the conversation and shared their personal experiences during lines 7 and 9. Shortly afterwards, S3 links their experience back to the lesson topic by saying: but now young young young people want to be like them but just like uh like a model.

Example 4: Diversified conversation

TA (1): what about the influence of sports of getting children involved in in sports as well. Have you heard about um uh for example for young girls getting them involved in soccer or karate or something and and what that can do for self-esteem?

S7 (2): you know uh maybe it's my own story but uh I have a daughter and uh she's 8 years old and uh about the sport it's completely opposite what you talk about now you know uh, the she's not girly at all, you know, she loves sports and all the time she love—

she like playing soccer and uh for example, in sports, you know she wants the clothes, she wants Macy you know the the shirt of Macy all the time she had it for uh yeah for her birthday but um it's it's very strange because um she wants this one. She like uh Nike hat, I don't know what because Macy wear Nike

T (3): okay that's weird (*chuckles*)

S7 (4): And uh I don't know why she is like that because uh in the family we're not like that, but her I don't know she is in his head all the time she watch the soccer match and uh they want to wear like Macy Macy Macy (*everyone laughs*) my my daughter is—my husband is desperate about that. But in sports she like uh she like uh Nike uh she like all the time wear Nike not Adidas … I don't understand but it's like that you know and the sport influence her a lot, you know, I think it's very uh very important for her

…

S3 (7): I I want to say Monika, about the sports … has changed in the last twenty years because before when I was a kid, I always saw people that were athletes like a model but not, not for fashion or something like that just

…

S3 (9): just because I wanted to be competitive than than they're

…

S3 (13): but now young young young people wants to be like them but just like uh like a model

Lastly, the study showcased how unrelated personal experiences occurred only once during whole-class interaction. The students were initially discussing experiences they had about men wanting to be muscular (line 1) until S5 mentioned the aspect of men cutting off all their hair; the teacher quickly followed up with S5's comment by ending it with an exaggerated sentence (line 5). Also, the "okay!" mentioned by the teacher seemed to have ended the conversation since S5 choose to return to the topic of the lesson as seen on-line 6.

Example 5: Whole-class unrelated discussion

S7 (1): muscular and uh they put cream and uh they want to be nice and uh in my generation the men didn't want uh didn't

…

S5 (4): wow! You have to cut off all your hair, I don't know why but

T (5): but no more hair, that's the that's the new one, okay. Once everyone pulls it off they're gonna bring the hair back. Okay!

S5 (6): but actually the the role of the sport and uh uh fesh fashion and uh jet set, it work and uh the same the same way. They serve things um

However, there were some opportunities for students to share their unrelated personal experiences during pair/group work. For example, one group had a conversation of 51 turns with their partner (S2), the teacher assistant (TA) and the teacher (T). However, the teacher ended the conversation of the students by following up with the students in terms of task completion by saying: are are the conversations finishing? Basically, this teacher management ended the unrelated personal experiences conversation for S1, S2, the TA and the T.

Example 6: Longest unrelated conversation

S2 (1): it's a fake world, yes now we live in a fake world, for everything. For example, do you know that thirty percent of the fish we eat are not the fish we think it was. It's crazy, everything is fake

…

S1 (4): that's why the the better way to … to eat this in your home

…

S2 (13): yeah yes so you have to be sure about the place you go because uh, yeah yes you can Google it uh they say that 30% of the fish you eat are not the fish

T (14): 30% of what?

S2 (15): of the fish you eat are not the fish you think

…

S2 (29): don't buy the filet, because you don't know what it is

TA (30): I bet it's less of a problem in France

…

S2 (50): yes yes consumer yeah

T (51): so they'll they'll the authorities can only see such a small percentage of

T: are are the conversations finishing?

The interaction categories clearly demonstrated that the students either spoke mostly about the lesson topic or the language, had lower opportunities to talk about related personal experiences during pair/group work and had little to no interaction for unrelated personal experiences.

Discussion

This study investigated the opportunities students have to communicate their ideas, experiences and feelings during an ESL classroom. The findings for Table 2 showed that lesson topic and language were among the highest for the total number of words spoken by both teacher and student: however, unrelated personal experience was among the lowest. Similarly, Table 3 demonstrated similar patterns for both lesson topic and language; nonetheless, there were opportunities for student communication about related personal experiences during whole-class interactions. Thus, the findings confirmed the results of prior studies (Hohti and Karlsson, 2013; Conner 2022; Housee, 2010) and showed how students receive fewer opportunities to talk about personal experiences inside the ESL classroom. In addition, a prior study by McDonough & Hernandéz González (2013), has suggested that student talk during pair/small group work would contain more management, explicit language, and content episodes than student talking opportunities, the current findings support the results of this previous research papers. Although the results were low, students had some opportunities to share their experiences with peers which supports Ibrahim (2015), Chinyamurindi et al. (2018) and Bruner (1986) concept of creating links among one another. There were also findings of social learning during pair/group interaction because students scaffolded each other throughout the lesson (Vygotsky 1978; Loewen, 2020). On another note, my results did not provide any insight as to whether students fear of communicating decreased throughout the activity as Rahmatillah (2019) mentioned it

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would; nonetheless, students seemed comfortable having spontaneous conversations with their peers when they had the opportunity to talk about related/unrelated experiences.

Limitations

However, this research had its limitations; hence, future research could expand this research by providing assessment surveys at the end of the class. In addition, because the results demonstrated how students had lower opportunities to communicate about their experiences this could be an opportunity to research lessons which implement more opportunities to talk about student experiences. Furthermore, because my research was closely related to McDonough and Hernandéz González's (2013) research, there could be opportunities to further this research by recreating it in a different language or country. Moreover, future research could use more than one set of classroom data and lesson analysis in order to expand on the analysis of quantity of words over quality of a conversation. Also, involving more than one researcher or a teacher assistant in this field could mitigate coding errors and researcher bias. Overall, future studies will enhance this research as they consider certain aspects of this study and improve its insight.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to understand how many opportunities students have to talk about their personal experiences in a planned ESL class. This research found that students rarely expressed their ideas, feelings, and experiences inside an ESL classroom. After all, it is important to understand that speaking about our experiences is inevitable; whether it be during class or outside the classroom students will share their ideas and feelings with peers. This research showed the distribution of student and teacher communication opportunities and based on these results I believe there needs to be a change in the curriculum which allows teachers the time to stop and let students share their ideas. Hopefully, future research will expand its research

and analyze whether the three-hour course could benefit from a less restrictive lesson and provide freer talk during class.

Chapter 3

During chapter 1 the benefits of social learning from Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) were highlighted. The findings showed that there were instances of social learning in the data. For example, during conversations the students would help each other find the correct word to use as they wrote a sentence, as shown in this example.

Example 7: Student word choice

S1: musculature it's okay, muscle?

S2: I don't know uh I think

S1: it's your dictionary

S2: yes!

S1: musculature I think musculature

As the students try to help each other out, they are learning to use their resources and are benefiting from this interaction since it is considered a scaffolding technique (even though the word they ended up with was incorrect).

Another benefit found in my research was the sharing of experiences, as Ibrahim et al. (2015), Chinyamurindi (2018) and Bruner (1986) mention, it can help with mental health, development, boost academic performance and create close relationships. As we saw in my research from the smaller percentages for related/unrelated personal experiences, the students still had the opportunity to create close ties with their peers as they discussed similar topics with one another; here is an example of students talking about their children with the TA.

Example 8: Students and TA conversing about family

S2: we were sharing that uh we are we are – we have over passed this uh problem with our kids because my daughter is 30 years old

TA: uh huh

S2: she had a period like but now it's okay

TA: yeah

S2: and I have three boys, they don't care about fashion and uh

S1: they they are too old

S2: they are too old for the topic

TA: ah really?

From this we can understand that the students are creating stronger bonds with the TA which could boost their academic performance since they feel closer to the TA. However, we need to keep in mind that these opportunities do not always arise; as Conner (2022) Hohti and Karlsson (2013) mentioned, there are instances when the teacher may not be able to provide much attention to the student's conversation. This is due to the limited time teachers have to complete the curriculum; an instance of this would be when the teacher redirects the student's attention to the task as shown in Example 9.

Example 9: Teacher classroom management

T: Good. I'm going to stop our conversation (*laughs*) I want to distribute—I'm gonna distribute these to you, these are um these are posters that um the American Psychologica—Psychological Association had created uh that tell parents what they can

do with regards to the effects of advertising on young girls and what the girls themselves can do.

From this example we can see the teacher trying to redirect the attention by laughing as if to capture the student's attention so the student's conversation can be stopped and redirected to her.

The findings of my research suggest that the students are scaffolding each other, but are provided smaller opportunities to create bonds with the teacher because of time and curriculum requirements. From this, there is a clear lack of student communication opportunity for related/unrelated topics; thus, it is important to research strategies which could potentially permit space for students to discuss their ideas without the teacher feeling anxious about classroom time consumption. Hopefully future classrooms will be restructured in a manner which enables the teacher to provide more communication opportunities which are spontaneous and not bound by time. As a teacher myself, I will certainly try to implement student communication opportunities for related/unrelated personal experiences as I believe it can provide spontaneous talk which reflects better our outside world.

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Maunder, R. E., Cunliffe, M., Galvin, J., Mjali, S., & Rogers, J. (2012). Listening to student voices: Student Researchers Exploring Undergra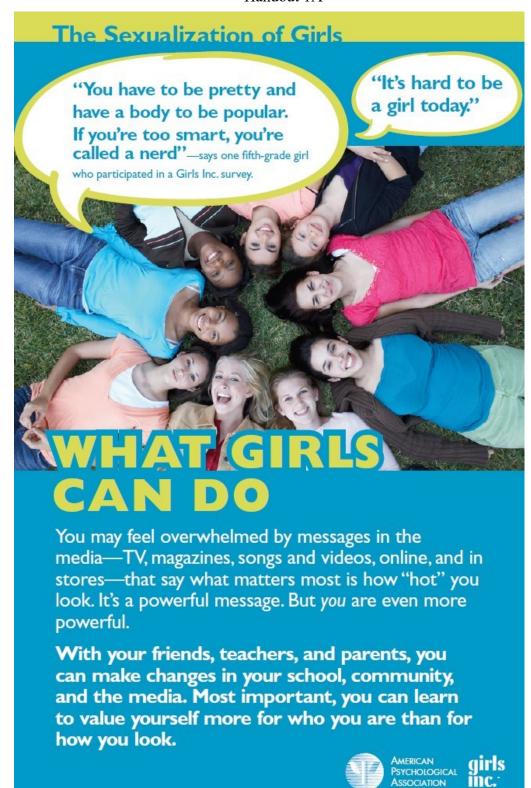duate Experiences of University Transition. *Higher Education*, *66*(2), 139–152. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-012-9595-3

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TUNE IN AND TALK

Ask questions when you watch TV and movies, surf the Web, or go to the mall. "Why is there so much pressure on girls to look a certain way?" "What qualities do I admire in girls other than the way they look or dress?" "What are qualities I admire in adults I look up to?" "Do I see any of those qualities in myself?" "What do I most respect about myself?"

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

Clothes that require lots of checking and adjusting might distract you from school work, friends, and other activities. **Choose clothes that make you feel comfortable. Then you can be your most confident self.**

SPEAK UP

If you see something that makes you or other girls feel uncomfortable, use your voice. For example, if clothing companies, advertisers, TV, and movie producers are encouraging girls to focus too much on looking "hot," you can write a letter to express your opinion. **They listen!**

CHANGE THE RULES

It's natural to want to fit in when you're growing up. But it's never worth giving up who you are just to be accepted by someone else. Try to focus more on what makes you a good and caring person. Recognize your talents and accomplishments and those of the people around you. **You can help to redefine "hot" as being someone who's confident and caring.**
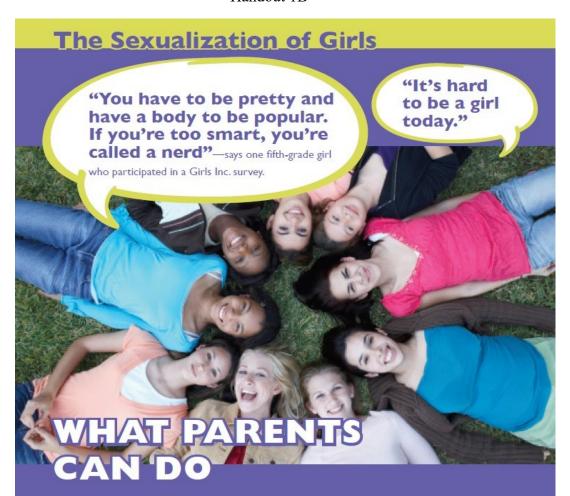
GET INVOLVED

Explore your interests. As you try different activities, you'll find out what you like to do and what makes you happy—and you'll meet other girls who share your interests. As you develop your skills, talents, and abilities, you'll feel proud of your accomplishments.

LEARN TO BE YOU

You're unique and special. You have a whole world inside you. **Explore what you think, feel, and value—and talk about it with your friends.** Develop a habit of setting goals and a plan to reach them. Remember to take time to celebrate your successes!

TUNE IN AND TALK
Watch TV and movies with your daughters and sons. Read their magazines. Surf their websites. Ask questions. "Why is there so much pressure on girls to look a certain way?" "What do you like most about the girls you want to spend time with?" "Do these qualities matter more than how they look?" Really listen to what your kids tell you.

QUESTION CHOICES
Girls who are overly concerned about their appearance often have difficulty focusing on other things. Clothes can be part of the distraction. If your daughter wants to wear something you consider too sexy, ask what she likes about the outfit. Ask if there's anything she doesn't like about it. Explain how clothes that require lots of checking and adjusting might keep her from focusing on school work, friends, and other activities.

SPEAK UP
If you don't like a TV show, CD, video, pair of jeans, or doll, say why. A conversation with her will be more effective than simply saying "No, you can't buy it or watch it." Support campaigns, companies, and products that promote positive images of girls. Complain to manufacturers, advertisers, TV and movie producers, and retail stores when products sexualize girls.

UNDERSTAND
Young people often feel pressure to watch popular TV shows, listen to music their friends like, and conform to certain styles of dress. Help your daughter make wise choices among the trendy alternatives. Remind her often that who she is and what she can accomplish are far more important than how she looks.

EDUCATE
You may feel uncomfortable discussing sexuality with your kids, but it's important. Talk about when you think sex is okay as part of a healthy, intimate, mature relationship. Ask why girls often try so hard to look and act sexy. Effective sex education programs discuss media, peer, and cultural influences on sexual behaviors and decisions, how to make safe choices, and what makes healthy relationships. Find out what your school teaches.

ENCOURAGE
Athletics and other extracurricular activities emphasize talents, skills, and abilities over physical appearance. Encourage your daughter to follow her interests and get involved in a sport or other activity.

BE REAL
Help your kids focus on what's really important: what they think, feel, and value. Help them build strengths that will allow them to achieve their goals and develop into healthy adults. Remind your children that everyone's unique and that it's wrong to judge people by their appearance.

MODEL
Marketing and the media also influence adults. When you think about what you buy and watch, you teach your sons and daughters to do so, too.

Appendix C

Lesson 9 Criteria

10minutes
 	
In pairs
	Handout 2
	
	(Poster
	
	Planning)
	
	Magazines
	
	Poster
	
	board
	
	Glue
		Organize students into pairs and
		
		assigns each pair with girls, parents,
		
		or boys.
		
		     Present the activity:
		
		1. final product – make a poster;
		
		2. peer evaluation – develop
		    criteria as a class;
		
		3. 2 min oral presentation of the
		    poster.
		
		    Brainstorm evaluation criteria.
		    Write criteria on board in
		    order for students to use it in
		    their peer evaluation.
			Elicit evaluation criteria from
			
			students: W*hat makes a poster like*
			
			this effective? What elements should
			
			it contain? What should it avoid?
			
			What about the presentation: what
			
			info should it contain? What makes a
			
			spoken presentation good?
			
			On board:
			
			Ideas here may include:
			
			-Attractive
			
			-Easy to read
			
			-Highlights the main arguments
			
			visually
			
			-Pertinent visual examples of the
			
			main argument (i.e.: women being
			
			cut up into parts, or women being
			
			turned into objects)
			
			Avoid:
			
			-Clutter

			-Random pictures (pictures that are unrelated to the ideas)
			-Too much text
		Allow students 10-15 minutes to get their posters together.	Spoken presentation:
			-Well-rehearsed and within the time limit
			-Refers to and expands on the arguments in the poster
			-Is interesting and catches audience's attention
			-Starts more generally and finishes with specifics (examples)
			-Has an intro, body, and conclusion
			-Is persuasive
		Students begin working on their poster that exemplifies the problem discussed by Jean Kilborne and the advice for either parents, girls or boys.	Circulate and monitor that students use their notes and guidelines. Listen for language to focus on during the debriefing.