



Exploring the Effects of Classroom Interactional Competence on EFL Students' Ideal L2 Self and Engagement in English Communication Classroom: Insights from tertiary EFL students

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Abstract

Research on Classroom Interactional Competence (CIC) has drawn considerable insights towards its functions in second language acquisition. Previous studies have inspired language scholars to probe its effects on different learning variables in various English as Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. This study aimed to explore the effects of CIC on EFL students' ideal L2 self and engagement in English communication classroom, highlighting the tertiary EFL students' perspectives. In this research, a mixed research method design was employed using of qualitative and quantitative approaches. Quantitatively, the researchers gathered the data using a questionnaire distributed three times, pre, middle, and post the 15-week course on communication skills involving a total of 36 participants. This questionnaire consisted of three sections, including firstly, demographic information questions, secondly, 10 items to assess students' ideal L2 self, and thirdly, 17 items to measure student engagement. Qualitatively, data were collected through conducted focus group interviews with two groups of four students at the end of the semester. While quantitative data was analyzed statistically using SPSS,



qualitative data was analyzed utilizing thematic analysis. The results of ANOVA demonstrated significant differences ($p < 0.001$) in EFL students' ideal L2 self and engagement before and during the implementation of CIC over 15 weeks. Additionally, the majority of students expressed positive insights towards the role of CIC in progressing their motivation to be involved in all English-speaking opportunities. Adopting CIC in an English-speaking classroom has extended a more in-depth understanding of its significant functions in enhancing various learning factors. Thus, the findings of this study provide valuable insights that might be encompassed in future studies.

Keywords: Classroom interactional competence, ideal L2 self, student engagement, speaking classroom.

استقصاء تأثير الكفاءة التفاعلية الصفية على الذات المثالية لطلبة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية
ومشاركتهم في الصف الدراسي للتواصل بالإنجليزية: رؤى من طلبة جامعيين يدرسون اللغة الإنجليزية
كلغة أجنبية

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الخلاصة

لقد أتاح البحث في الكفاءة التفاعلية الصفية (CIC) رؤى قيمة حول دورها في اكتساب اللغة الثانية. وقد دفعت الدراسات السابقة الباحثين في مجال اللغات إلى التعمق في دراسة تأثيراتها على متغيرات تعلمية مختلفة ضمن سياقات متعددة لتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية. لقد ألهمت الدراسات السابقة الباحثين في مجال اللغة لاستكشاف آثارها على متغيرات تعلمية مختلفة في سياقات متعددة لتعلم الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى استقصاء تأثير الكفاءة التفاعلية



الصفية على تصور الذات المثالية لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، وعلى مستوى انخراطهم في صفوف المحادثة باللغة الإنجليزية، مع تسليط الضوء على وجهات نظر طلاب المرحلة الجامعية. وقد استخدمت هذه الدراسة تصميمًا بحثيًا مختلطًا، يجمع بين المنهجين الكمي والنوعي. من الناحية الكمية، جمع الباحثون البيانات باستخدام استبيان تم توزيعه ثلاث مرات: قبل الفصل الدراسي، وفي منتصفه، وبعد انتهائه، حيث استمر الفصل الدراسي لمهارات التواصل لمدة 15 أسبوعًا وشارك فيها 36 مشاركًا. تألفت هذه الاستبانة من ثلاثة أجزاء، الأول يحتوي على أسئلة المعلومات الديموغرافية، والثاني يحتوي على 10 فقرات لقياس الذات المثالية للطلاب في اللغة الثانية، والثالث يشمل 17 فقرة لقياس مدى تفاعل الطلاب. من الناحية النوعية، جمعت البيانات من خلال إجراء مقابلات مجموعات تركيز مع مجموعتين، كل مجموعة تضم أربعة طلاب، في نهاية الفصل الدراسي. تم تحليل البيانات الكمية إحصائيًا باستخدام برنامج (SPSS)، بينما جرى تحليل البيانات النوعية بواسطة التحليل الموضوعي. أظهرت نتائج تحليل التباين (ANOVA) فروقًا معنوية ($p < 0.001$) في الذات المثالية لطلاب الدارسين للغة الثانية ومشاركة طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية قبل وأثناء تنفيذ منهجية الكفاءة التفاعلية الصفية على مدار 15 أسبوعًا. علاوة على ذلك، عبّر معظم الطلاب عن رؤية إيجابية تجاه دور الكفاءة التفاعلية الصفية في تعزيز دافعيتهم للمشاركة في جميع الفرص التي تتطلب التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية. إن تطبيق نموذج الكفاءة التفاعلية الصفية في صفوف اللغة الإنجليزية أسهم في تعميق إدراك الوظائف الحيوية في تعزيز عدة جوانب من عملية التعلم. لذا، فإن نتائج هذه الدراسة توفر رؤية قيمة يمكن أن تُدرج في الدراسات المستقبلية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الكفاءة التفاعلية الصفية، الذات المثالية في اللغة الثانية (L2)، تفاعل الطلاب، صف التحدث.



1. Introduction

We are fully aware of the fact that English language learning has become vital as it is essential for achieving the globalized world's demands. There is a general consensus among different scholars that this global language has become the language of education, business, international tourism, international law, technology, internet communication, and many more aspects and of fields life (Ginsburgh & Weber, 2016). For these reasons, across the last three decades, most of the Middle East countries changed the compass point of education to include English language in the key school curricula, introduced to pupils from the first grade instead of the fifth grade. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that many EFL students from the Middle Eastern countries face challenges in their English language abilities, particularly speaking proficiency. This deficiency can hinder their academic and professional success in an increasingly globalized world (Al-Issa & Dahan, 2011; Mohammed, 2020). They are still unaware that speaking is one of the essential language skills that requires special attention and intensive efforts to be fostered. It determines the linguistic ability, and fluent speakers are viewed as skilled language learners (Ghafar & M. Amin, 2022). Besides, to date, some teachers have adopted traditional approaches to teaching English-speaking and have taken the dominant role in the language classroom in most universities (Barzinji, 2024; Mamin, 2020; Amin, 2017). This instructional style attenuated teacher-student interactions, failing to maintain students' engagement in the classroom instruction, discouraging interaction and collaboration, and



Kirkuk University Journal
of Humanities Studies

مجلة جامعة كركوك للدراسات الإنسانية



عدد خاص بنشر وقائع المؤتمر العلمي الثالث (العلوم الإنسانية أساس الارتقاء الفكري للمجتمع للمدة 2-1 - حزيران 2025)

consequently decreasing the number of EFL students' authentic opportunities and potential to practice speaking English inside and outside the classroom (Al Hosni, 2014; Danli, 2011). For these reasons, EFL students in Iraq lack an encouraging, inspiring, and interactive classroom environment that allows them to communicate actively and take responsibility for their learning process instead of being passive.

Additionally, the negligence of the substantial need to develop oral language, using only the coursebook to teach speaking English, and maximizing the use of the Arabic language (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012), have caused rigorous challenges for EFL students, such as speaking anxiety, absence of self-confidence, and unwillingness to communicate (Al Hosni, 2014; Ali & Hameed, 2020). Al-Mahrooqi and Denman (2014: 117) also reported in the findings of their study that "the lack of good teachers who are inspiring, encouraging, and qualified, and who employ interesting techniques in their classes was one of the most commonly occurring demotivating factors." Moreover, Dincer (2017) found that outdated coursebooks, limited course hours, and the lack of language activities have diminished students' motivation to speak English and reduced their tendency to be engaged in class activities.

In the same vein, Dörnyei (2009) hypothesized that EFL students' willingness to communicate is determined by their levels of ideal L2 self, which is one of the three main primary sources of second language (L2) motivation. The ideal L2 self



refers to the person's ambition or wish to possess specific attributes (Siridetkoon & Dewaele, 2018), learners' intrinsic tendency to become an efficient L2 user (Lee & Lee, 2020). Moreover, Šafranĵ et al. (2021) suggested that EFL students' ideal L2 selves is powerful motivator to increase the level of speaking English. More recently, Derakhshan and Fathi (2024) found that the ideal L2 self directly affected students' engagement and confirmed its significant role in fostering their expectations and self-perceptions in the process of language learning. The notions of the ideal L2 self and engagement directly influence the students' performance in English-speaking as they bridge the gap between students' existing abilities and aspirations. When they promote a high level of ideal L2 self, they are more likely to engage actively in speaking practices, considering communication as a step toward achieving their aims. Concurrently, Classroom Interaction Competency (CIC) fosters a supportive and comfortable learning environment that allows students to take risks and make mistakes, which are necessary for oral language development (Kanat-Mutluoĝlu, 2016; Walsh, 2012). These two elements create a dynamic interplay: a vivid ideal L2 self inspires motivation. At the same time, robust engagement provides the needful context for students to practice and enhance their speaking skills, ultimately leading to improved performance in English communication (Abdullah, 2011a).

Despite the growing body of previous studies on challenges EFL students encounter in developing their English-speaking proficiency, only few studies to date have addressed these challenges. Moreover, until recently, no previous



studies in the Iraqi EFL context have explored the effects of adopting CIC on Iraqi EFL students' ideal L2 self and engagement in an English-speaking classroom. In view of this research gap, this study aims to examine the effects of CIC on EFL students' ideal L2 self and engagement in the English-speaking classroom, highlighting the tertiary EFL learners' perspectives. Thus, this study seeks to address the following specific research questions:

1. To what extent does the adoption of CIC impact on EFL students' ideal L2 self and engagement in the English-speaking classroom?
2. How do the tertiary Iraqi EFL students view the implementation of CIC in the English-speaking classroom?

2. Literature Review

Over the past decades, enhancing EFL students' communicative skills, which is still seen insufficient, has become essential to meet the prospective social and economic requirements allied with growing globalization. Therefore, it seems to be a requisite need in Iraq, as elsewhere in the world, for EFL students to speak English proficiently. A large number of previous studies in the broader literature have investigated the factors that contribute to the challenges students encounter when developing their English-speaking abilities. However, several questions regarding the best strategies to improve their English-speaking proficiency remain to be addressed. Accordingly, this study aims to examine the effects of CIC on students' English-speaking abilities by fostering their ideal L2 self and engagement, and to highlight the significant role that CIC plays in shaping



students' perceptions of a positive communication environment. More specifically, the current research seeks to thoroughly examine the extent to which the implementation of CIC features in the course of communication skills impacts students' levels of ideal L2 self and engagement via a set of various speaking activities designed in alignment with these features and the course objectives. To this end, the researchers hope to contribute valuable insights into practical instructional approaches for boosting language acquisition. By investigating these dynamics, it can be better comprehended how to boost the language learning experience for Iraqi EFL students.

The majority of the previous studies emphasized that using conventional instructional techniques expanded the teacher's dominance on language classroom, which discouraged collaboration and interaction and lessened students' opportunities to practice the target language negatively impacted their oral language development (Al Hosni, 2014; Jiang & Gao, 2020; Thao & Nguyet, 2019). Prior research conducted by Al-Issa and Al-Bulushi (2012) pointed out that the exam-oriented culture and large English classes contributed significantly to creating a discouraging class and environment that hinders the EFL learners' development of their speaking proficiency, as it negatively influences students' perceptions, attitudes, and motivation for learning English, as they consider it a fact-based subject. Additionally, Al-Jamal and Al-Jamal (2013) revealed that factors such as the insufficient time allocated for teaching speaking skills in classes and the absence of English speaking activities, which was code-switched



with communication in Arabic, should be added to the long list of reasons that stand behind the weakness of EFL students' speaking proficiency. A later study carried out by Abedini and Chalak (2017) found that factors like instruction quality, linguistic knowledge, and negative evaluation contributed to decreasing students' self-confidence and increasing their anxiety to communicate effectively in English. The researchers concluded that psychological factors significantly hinder Iranian EFL learners from speaking English fluently.

It is worth noting that the serious need to develop EFL students' oral proficiency has led to a demand for paying more attention and making greater efforts to address the challenges mentioned above by employing different teaching techniques that provide more interaction and allow students to have sufficient time to practice speaking English with their teacher and peers (Abdullah et al., 2019). Fauzan (2016) utilized the technique of debate along with peer assessment to stimulate classroom interaction and develop students' critical and problem-solving skills. A key result of Fauzan's study indicated that practising the debates and peer assessment allowed students to increasing their self-confidence level and improving their English-speaking proficiency. Ginaya et al. (2018) suggested that using the scaffolding technique principles in speaking classroom could be the ideal solution for the EFL students who suffer low self-confidence and high anxiety while they are speaking in English. The researchers concluded that applying this technique has a potential role in promoting EFL students' speaking efficiency. In the same vein, Yeh an Lai (2019) assumed that



encouraging meaning negotiation and sharing peer feedback via various activities using blogs as means of communication should show observable progress in EFL students' speaking proficiency.

Most of the recited studies as well as the current ones focus on examining the profound influence of the ideal L2 self and engagement of EFL learners speaking ability, more specifically by applying various modern instructional techniques. However, the current study investigates the potential role of adopting the features of CIC proposed by Walsh (2011) to enhance ideal L2 self of EFL students and promote their engagement in the in-class speaking activities. According to these features, interaction should be at the centre of teaching and learning processes. In contrast, teachers provide learning opportunities by developing their CIC and making appropriate interactional decisions. The concept of CIC includes a group of pedagogical skills applicable in all classroom contexts. CIC comprises several essential features. First, it involves employing language aligned with the pedagogical objectives of the moment and suitable for the students. Second, it aims to maximize interactional space inside the classroom by allowing for increased wait and planning time and encouraging students to engage in extended speaking turns. Third, it focuses on actively engaging with students' responses by building on their answers rather than simply accepting them. Lastly, it employs effective eliciting strategies, such as asking and encouraging students to initiate their questions (Walsh, 2011). In consideration of the objectives and nature of this study, the researchers adapted three of the previously mentioned features:



specifically, the first, second, and last features. The third feature was ruled out because of the specific nature of the speaking activities designed for this study.

Furthermore, a number of previous studies of ideal L2 self and engagement also well acknowledged that these factors positively associated with developing EFL students' language achievement, particularly speaking proficiency (Al-Hoorie, 2018; Derakhshan & Fathi, 2024; McKellar et al., 2020; Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2022; Saeed, 2017; Zhan et al., 2023; Zhang & Zhang, 2024; Zhou et al., 2023). For example, Šafranĵ et al. (2021) suggested that the ideal L2 self plays a powerful role in motivating students to learn a second language and increasing their willingness to communicate in EFL classes. Likewise, students' engagement has been well- documented to highlight its significant impact on students' language experiences and outcomes (Derakhshan & Fathi, 2024).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

A mixed research method design was employed to address the research questions of this study. By means of qualitative and quantitative approaches, this design was utilized to obtain a profound understanding to the phenomenon under investigation. According to Plano Clark and Creswell (2015), the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches is crucial for a study based on its research questions and the situational and practical requirements of the researchers. This sort research design allows to depict a comprehensive image about the study and



comprehend the whole story of the phenomenon under investigation (Abdullah, 2011). Additionally, its characteristics help in strengthening the validity and reliability of the research findings (Abdullah et al., 2021).

3.2 Participants

The participants of this study comprised 36 tertiary students majoring in English language and enrolled in the communication skills course at the English Department, College of Arts, University of Anbar. These students were selected based on the purposive sampling technique, which aimed to determine the participants who could provide relevant data for this research study (Çalık, 2023). The participants included male (n=13) and female (n=23) students, aged between 19 and 22 years old.

3.3 Data Collection Procedures

In this research, quantitative and qualitative methods were utilized to examine the effects of CIC on students' ideal L2 self and engagement in the English-speaking classroom, highlighting the tertiary EFL learners' perspectives. Quantitatively, the researchers gathered the data using a questionnaire distributed three times, pre, middle, and post the 15-week course on communication skills involving a total of 36 participants. This questionnaire consisted of three sections, including firstly, demographic information questions, secondly, 10 items to assess students' ideal L2 self, and thirdly, 17 items to measure student engagement. The 10-item Ideal L2 Self-scale is part of a questionnaire developed by Dörnyei and Taguchi



(2009) to assess the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS), which consists of three constructs, including ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and L2 learning experience. The 17-item Student Engagement Scale was designed by Reeve and Tseng (2011), then developed by Reeve (2013), and recently validated by Derakhshan and Fathi (2024). To ensure the validity and reliability of these two scales, all necessary methodological procedures have been performed. In this regard, the Cronbach's alpha test recorded 0.89 for the questionnaire in this study, signifying a high level of reliability over the estimated facets.

On the other hand, qualitatively, data were collected through conducted focus group interviews with two groups of four students at the end of the semester. The questions of the focus group interviews were designed, grouped, and arranged to address the second research question of the study. The interviewer (researcher) started the interviews with more general questions, open-ended questions, then to more specific ones. Besides, leading questions were avoided, and Yes/No questions were minimized during the interviews. The gathered data were organized prepared for the analysis procedures.

3.4 Data Analysis Procedures

The quantitative data obtained from the Ideal L2 Self Scale and Student Engagement Scale were analysed statistically using SPSS version 29. The researchers carried out one-way repeated measured ANOVA to measure the CIC impact on the participants' levels of ideal L2 self and engagement in English-



speaking classroom at three phases, including pre, midway, and post the

communication skills course. The ANOVA test was conducted to determine the changes in mean scores at three points in time over the course. Concerning qualitative data collected from the two focus group interviews were coded, categorized, and then analyzed thematically following the methodological steps proposed by Creswell (2015).

4. Results

The primary goal of the present study was to examine the effects of CIC on students' English-speaking abilities by fostering their ideal L2 self and engagement, and to highlight the significant role that CIC plays in shaping students' perceptions of a positive communication environment. Over the 15-week course on communication skills, the instructor has adopted the features of CIC, including using language aligned with the pedagogical objectives of the moment and suitable for the students, enlarging the interactional space in the classroom, encouraging students to engage in extended speaking turns, and employing effective eliciting strategies by involving students actively in a set of various speaking activities that designed to provide students with authentic opportunities to practice English-speaking individually, in pairs, and groups. By examining these dynamics, it can be better comprehended how to enhance Iraqi EFL students' speaking proficiency. Consequently, this section presents a detailed analysis and elaborated answers to RQ1 and RQ2, showing the impact of CIC on



the levels of EFL students' ideal L2 self and engagement the 15-week course on communication skills, and demonstrating students' insights towards the role of CIC in establishing a positive communication environment. The following is a comprehensive demonstration of the results for each research question.

RQ1. To what extent does the adoption of CIC impact on EFL students' ideal L2 self and engagement in the English-speaking classroom?

To answer RQ1, which sought to investigate the impact of CIC on EFL students' ideal L2 self and engagement in the English-speaking classroom, a one-way repeated measure ANOVA was run to explore how these variables differ across the semester (15-week) with a statistical test at phase 1 (Week1), Phase 2 (Week 8), and phase 3 (Week 15 i.e. at the end of the semester). The results of CIC influence on EFL students' ideal L2 self are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Results of one-way repeated measured ANOVA for ideal L2 self

Ideal L2 Self Tests	Mean	Std. Deviation	N. of students
Phase 1	1.8805	.50134	36
Phase 2	2.4467	.47228	36
Phase 3	3.4772	.21476	36



As can be seen in Table 1, the total mean of students' ideal L2 self (n=36) in the phase 1 was (M =1.880; SD = 0.501), then after 7 weeks, an obvious rise appeared in the total mean of ideal L2 self (M = 2.446; SD = 0.472).

Interestingly, a significant increase occurred in the total mean at phase 3 (mean = 3.987; SD = 0.214), compared with phase 2. The findings demonstrate that the levels of EFL students' ideal L2 self considerably increased across time. Figure 1 picturizes the continual growth of EFL students' levels of ideal L2 self during the adoption of CIC features.

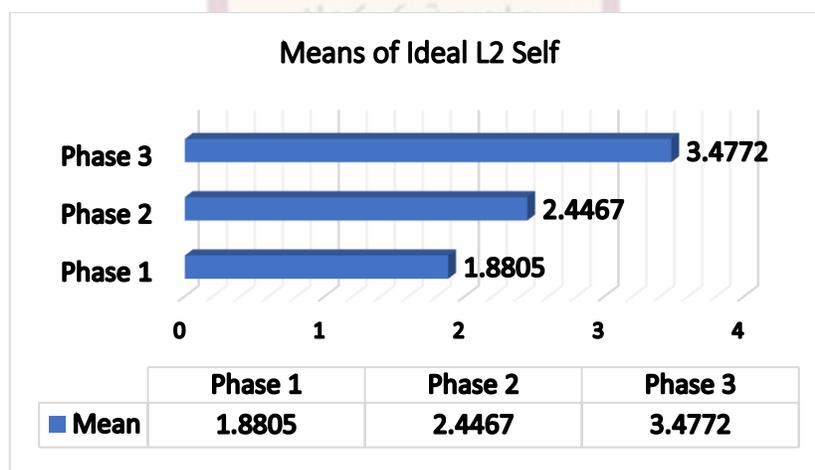


Fig. 1 Means scores of ideal L2 Self over time

To explore whether these changes in total mean scores were significant, the researchers performed the test of Bonferroni post hoc to compare the mean scores statistically. As shown in Table 2, the results reported that the difference among all tests was very significant ($p < 0.001$).



Table 2 Pairwise comparison of ideal L2 Self across three phases

Measure	(I) Phase	(J) Phase	Mean Difference e (I-J)	SE	P value
Phase	1	2	-.566*	.10	<0.001
	1	3	-1.596*	.13	<0.001
	2	3	-1.030*	.10	<0.001
				.094	1

As for students' engagement, results demonstrated in Table 3 indicated that a noticeable gradual progress accrued on students' engagement over time. The total mean of students' engagement (n=36) in phase 1 was (M =1.897; SD = 0.510), After 7 weeks, a noticeable increase has been observed in the total mean (M = 2.391; SD = 0.477). Remarkably, a significant growth recorded in the total mean at phase 3 (mean = 3.716; SD = 0.213), compared with phase 2. These results reveal that the levels of EFL students' engagement significantly improved over



time. Figure 2 illustrates the notable progress occurred on the levels of EFL students' engagement throughout the implementation of CIC features.

Table 3 Results of one-way repeated measured ANOVA for students' engagement

Student Engagement Tests	Mean	Std. Deviation	N. of students
Phase 1	1.8977	.51042	36
Phase 2	2.3916	.47715	36
Phase 3	3.7168	.21333	36

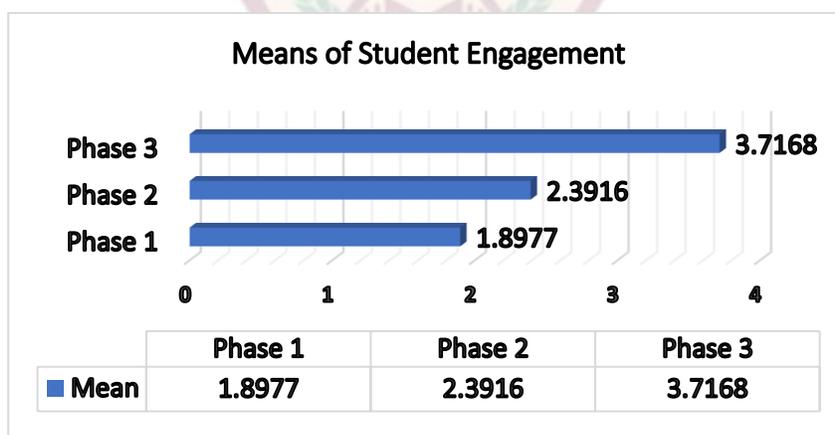


Fig. 2 Means scores of students' engagement over time

Furthermore, to measure the extent of the changes in the total mean scores, the



researchers performed the test of Bonferroni post hoc to compare the mean scores statistically. As demonstrated in Table 4, the results revealed that the difference among all tests was highly significant ($p < 0.001$).

Table 4 Pairwise comparison of student engagement over three times

Measure	(I) Phase	(J) Phase	Mean Difference e (I-J)	SE	P value
Phase	1	2	-.493*	.105	<0.001
	1	3	-1.819*	.142	<0.001
	2	3	-1.325*	.126	<0.001
				.06	1

Q2. How do the tertiary Iraqi EFL students view the implementation of CIC in the English-speaking classroom?

To answer RQ2, which aimed at exploring participants' perceptions about employing CIC features in their English-speaking classroom, the researchers conducted focus group interviews with two groups of four students at the end of



the semester. The obtained data from the focus group interviews were analyzed manually using thematic analysis procedures suggested by Creswell (2015). The findings obtained from the qualitative data analysis showed clear consistency with the quantitative results discussed above. Most of the participants perceived positively and showed obvious satisfaction with the general classroom environment. They found it as interactive, engaging, encouraging, and comfortable environment that increased their willingness to participate in all class activities confidently. The following excerpts show high levels of learning satisfaction reported by FG1S3, FG2S1, FG2S4:

FG1S3: Yes, in your class, I had many opportunities to speak English with my teacher and classmates. I feel confident to speak English and no more fear but I think I need more time to develop my speaking skills.

FG2S: If I want to compare this course with other courses, I can admit that got big number of participations that allow me to express my opinions and speak English without fear of making mistakes. The teacher was always positive and encouraging to continue speaking.

FG2S4: I am satisfied with my speaking level. I feel I can speak English with my friends outside classroom without fear of making mistakes. This course really helps me to be more good and avoid making negative things or bad things and I try to make it better in the future.

Data also revealed that employing the features of CIC in the course of



communication skills not only helped students to recognize the importance of developing their English-speaking abilities but has also contributed to their personal development and enabling them to see themselves positively, being more confident, and promoting their tendency to engage actively and compete with one another. The following extracts illustrate respondents' views:

FG1S1: In the first three weeks, I was feeling hesitant and ashamed to engage in the speaking activities because I see myself unable to talk in English but then after many participations everything changed. Now, I have great desire to participate in any speaking activity.

FG1S2: I can do anything that make me speak English fluently. In this course, I found myself able to develop my language skills like speaking. I can say that in this course I discover myself as a student who can develop herself. I only need to increase my vocabulary.

FG2S4: I feel I am good but I still need a lot of efforts to be like a native speaker. In fact, this course helped me to engage in many speaking and discussion opportunities. I will not ignore any opportunity to practice English-speaking in all courses.

The results also demonstrate two more things. First, the positive role of teacher's and peers' feedback. The participants acknowledged that their teacher's immediate feedback helped them develop their speaking accuracy and fluency and increased their desire to be engaged in the extended speaking turns. For



example, FG1S3 mentioned “I believe that my teacher feedback was very helpful because it helped me correct my mistakes and make me feeling mmmm, confident to participate in all speeches about different topics.” Similarly, FG1S4 confirmed this result saying “teacher feedback had supportive role to avoid making mistakes and speak fluently.” Likewise, they viewed peers’ feedback as supportive as teacher’s feedback but differently. They mentioned that one another’s feedback helped them to break the wall of fear and overcome the challenge of feeling shy and hesitant while they were speaking. Supporting this point, FG2S1 stated that “sharing my feedback with classmates and receiving their feedback helped me overcome the fear of speaking in front of them.”

Second, the students also confirmed that teacher’s use of simple and clear language that fits their levels enabled them to be involved interactively and encouraged them to request participation in all opportunities, particularly low-level students. Interestingly, this enlarged the interactional space in the classroom, allowing all students to participate regardless of their speaking performance level. This point was mentioned by FG1S2 and FG2S3.

FG1S2: I think the language was very simple and clear. I can understand every word and any question the teacher asked. This helped me to participate in answering questions or give my opinion.

FG2S3: Regarding the English language used by teacher was very clear and simple. I think everyone in the class can understand him and participate in the



discussion.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

It is worth discussing these interesting facts uncovered by the results of the current study. Based on the overall quantitative and qualitative results, adopting CIC features contributed significantly to creating an interactive, encouraging, engaging, and comfortable classroom environment, enabling EFL students to improve their levels of ideal L2 self to become more willing to speak English fluently, and boosting their engagement. These results are partially similar with pattern of results was obtained in studies conducted by (Derakhshan & Fathi, 2024; Ghasemi et al., 2020; Oz, 2015). Oz (2015) confirmed the significant positive relationship between the ideal L2 self and CIC, contending that the ideal L2 self is a significant predictor of CIC. Similarly, Ghasemi et al. (2020) found that students' ideal L2 selves are associated considerably with strategies of CIC, contending that students who constantly reflect on their learning experience and rate their academic performances are more prone to have a higher level of classroom interaction and learning engagement. The qualitative data analysis found evidence for the constructive role of CIC features in helping students increase their ideal L2 selves' levels through developing their traits. The intensive participation in speaking activities within the interactive, engaging, encouraging, and comfortable learning environment contributed significantly to enabling them



to see themselves positively. Similarly, the results of a study conducted by **Sorić et al.** (2017) confirmed the crucial role of developing personal traits to improve learning outcomes and academic achievement. Furthermore, the qualitative results cast a new light on the importance of using simple and clear language that fits students' level, allowing them to engage actively in all English conversations. This has left a positive impact on expanding the interactional space in the classroom. This is consistent with what has been found in previous study carried out by Makhlouf (2022). Makhlouf revealed that the numerous conversational practices inside classroom provided more opportunities to have better interactional space through extended students speaking turns. The researchers highlighted the importance of balancing the students' talks amount, which were associated with more questions raised by the instructor.

Regarding the current study's limitations that should be acknowledged, the main apparent limitation is the size of the class, which involves 36 EFL students. Such a large number of participants can hinder individual student engagement and limit their opportunities for practicing speaking skills meaningfully. Undoubtedly, receiving sufficient feedback and support from the teacher and peers becomes more challenging for each student. Additionally, the course duration poses another limitation. Spanning just 15 weeks, the course may not provide the required time for students to improve their speaking proficiency. This relatively short timeframe may restrict the depth of exploration into speaking strategies and



may not allow for substantial improvement in students' language proficiency. These issues should be considered in future studies.

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