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SOUTH EAST EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY

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Faculty of Languages, Cultures and Communication

POSTGRADUATE STUDIES-SECOND CYCLE

THESIS:

**Decisive Factors Influencing the
Effectiveness of Interaction Activities
Integrated in the Online English
Classroom in the Course of a Global
Pandemic**

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Tetovo, December 2021

“Decisive Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Interaction Activities Integrated in the Online English Classroom in the Course of a Global Pandemic”

“Faktorët Vendimtar që Ndikojnë në Efektivitetin e Aktiviteteve Ndërvepruese të Integruara në Klasën Online të Gjuhës Angleze gjatë Pandemisë Globale”

“Решавачки Фактори кои Влијаат на Ефективноста на Интерактивните Активности Интегрирани во Онлајн Училницата по Англиски Јазик во текот на Глобална Пандемија”

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my mentor, Prof. Dr. Brikena Xhaferi, for her support, guidance, and motivation. Without her, I would not have been able to pursue my dream in getting a Master's degree.

Dear professor Brikena, I could not have imagined anyone else as my mentor, but you.

I owe a debt of gratitude to my professors Maja Muhic, Elena Spirovska, Agim Poshka, Andrew Goodspeed, Arta Toci, Jeta Hamzai, and Veronika Kareva, for contributing to the most memorable years of my life. A heartfelt thank you for shaping me into becoming an English teacher.

My warmest thank you goes to the principals of Mosha Pijade and Nikola Shtejn for allowing me to conduct my research in the schools. Thank you to the teachers of the high schools for helping me conduct the research by having me observe their classes. I will incessantly be thankful.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge and express my deepest appreciation to my family for the encouragement throughout my studies, the patience, and never-ending support. Without you, none of this would have happened and for that I am forever thankful.

Abstract

With the rapid emergence of Covid19 came the profound need for shifting education from the traditional face-to-face classrooms to online classes conducted from the convenience of our homes. Being a process, which is rather new to most teachers and students, it includes tentative difficulties that may or may not appear throughout online education. As such, it can negatively impact the overall learning process. This thesis aims at analyzing some of the factors that can influence the effectiveness of interaction activities in the online English classroom in the course of a global pandemic. Supported by research of various scholars, the study involves analysis of age and gender being treated as factors that can impact the success of such activities online. Furthermore, the research comprises examination on students' confidence in terms of taking part in interaction activities online or in a traditional face-to-face classroom. The highlighted works of other scholars are followed by results derived from classroom observations, student questionnaire, and book analysis in order to recognize whether age and gender can be the biographical factors that have an impact on the effectiveness of interaction activities, and comprehend whether students feel more confident in the role of partakers in interaction online or in the traditional classroom.

Keywords: *age, gender, effectiveness, interaction activities, online education, confidence*

Предговор

Брзата појава на Ковид-19 доведе до голема потреба за префрлање на образованието од традиционалните училници на училиште, во онлајн наставни платформи во кои се спроведуваат часови од удобноста на нашите домови. Бидејќи е процес кој е прилично нов за повеќето наставници и ученици, тој вклучува можни тешкотии што може или не мора да се појават во текот на онлајн наставата. Поради тоа, може негативно да влијае врз целокупниот процес на учење. Оваа теза има за цел да анализира некои од факторите што можат да влијаат на ефективностa на интерактивните активности во онлајн училницата по англиски јазик во текот на глобална пандемија. Поддржана од истражувања на различни научници, студијата вклучува анализа на возраста и полот кои се третираат како фактори кои можат да влијаат на успехот на таквите активности за време на онлајн наставата. Покрај тоа, истражувањето опфаќа испитување на самоувереноста на учениците во однос на учеството во интерактивните активности онлајн и во традиционалната училница. Нагласените дела на други научници се проследени со резултати добиени од опсервации во училници, студентски прашалник, и анализа на учебници со цел да се препознае дали возраста и полот можат да бидат биографски фактори кои имаат влијание врз ефективностa на интерактивните активности и да се разбере дали учениците чувствуваат поголема сигурност во улогата на учесници во интеракција преку интернет или во традиционалната училница.

Клучни зборови: *возраст, пол, ефективност, интерактивни активности, онлајн настава, сигурност*

List of Acronyms

MP – Moshā Pijade

NS – Nikola Shtejn

MOE – Ministry of Education

ESL – English as a Second Language

EFL – English as a Foreign language

OC – Online classroom

TC – Traditional classroom

B – Both

N – None

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Chapter I: Introduction

With the never-ending technological developments come the opportunities for shifting education from the classrooms to one's personal computer. As a result, many educational institutions have been providing its students with the option of attending courses online. Despite the convenience that this type of teaching and learning offers, it does require certain preparation that will help, both, teachers and learners to develop skills compulsory for transferring and acquiring knowledge successfully. However, the need for such preparedness has not been seen as a necessity up until the emergence of Covid-19 in 2020.

The global pandemic has led to the incorporation of alternatives to teaching that will open on to education conducted by means of the internet, as successful as the one in schools. Yet, it appears to be rather apparent that teachers may come across certain difficulties such as how to better the productivity of lectures administered from the convenience of their homes. Having said that, one of the issues that arises would be the effectiveness of interaction activities administered in the online English classroom in the course of a global pandemic. This can, undoubtedly, have an impact on learners' overall performance, which is why it is being seen as a concern. It is necessary to state, however, that "the nature of online education during the pandemic differs from that before the pandemic" (Wen, & Tan, 2020, p. 388). Even though this particular issue lacks sufficient research, Wen and Tan touch upon the conclusions of other scholars stressing that:

The created online courses are not meant to comprise a long-term program in the education system. Therefore, educators and policymakers must not view ERT (emergency remote teaching) as parallel to online distant education, which is implemented before the pandemic as designing the learning system with the incorrect assumption will cause the system to be vulnerable to errors along the way. (Bozkurt & Sharma, as cited in Wen & Tan, 2020, p. 388)

With this, it is safe to say that the educational system created to serve a purpose in online education isn't necessarily applicable for the online courses shifted from the traditional classroom as a result to the current outbreak. Therefore, the effectiveness of interaction activities in the present is yet to be examined.

1.1 Interaction versus Interactivity

In order to further-elaborate on the effectiveness of interaction activities integrated in the online English classroom and some of the factors that largely impact such effectiveness, it is inevitable to decide upon an appropriate definition regarding interaction. At the most basic level, interaction can be described as “a fragmented, inconsistent, and rather messy notion...” (Rose, as cited in Su et al., 2005, p. 2). This means that interaction itself can be seen as a process that involves more than one participant or thing. Wagner supports this previous statement by explaining the process of interaction. He implies that the mutual influence of different kinds of events which tend to involve two or more objects and actions are recognized as interactions (Wagner, as cited in Su et al., 2005, p. 2). These particular objects that are obligatory for an interaction to take place are introduced in the literature review of the thesis. One may question whether there really appears to be a difference between interaction and interactivity, especially because they seem to be used interchangeably when it comes to the process of teaching and learning. Wagner attempts to distinguish between the two by implying that “interactivity appears to emerge from descriptions of technological capability for establishing connections from point to point (or from point to multiple points) in real time” (Wagner, as cited in Su et al., 2005, p.2). From this definition, one can draw a conclusion that interactivity is mainly connected to technology as means of interaction between objects or participants. While some scholars strongly believe that the concept of interactivity is yet to be examined, others have already set the grounds for its meaning by indicating that it revolves around “the extent to which users can participate in modifying the form and content of a mediated environment in real time” (Steuer, as cited in Su et al., 2005, p. 2). It is further stated that even though views and opinions remain divided, one thing appears to be mutual. That is the fact that interaction is a process-oriented action, whereas interactivity a feature-oriented one (Su et al., 2005, p.2).

1.2 Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Interaction

As mentioned previously, there is a difference when it comes to the rapidly shifted courses on the internet in times of a pandemic and those that have been designed to solely serve a purpose online. That being said, it is rather limiting in time to investigate and comprehend

what some of the necessities online are. So, one fact that does not require any research would be the significance of interaction in the online English classroom as “interaction is the heart and soul of the online course; because interactive activities make the online course come alive, this dynamic quality excites learners to participate” (Draves, as cited in Chang, 2006, p. 34). Taking into account the different types of interaction, which will be mentioned in the literature review, there is no doubt that the online English classes do incorporate such sets. What is questionable, however, is the effectiveness of these interaction activities online. There appear to be a number of factors that can influence the productivity of such activities and one of them would probably be teacher preparedness and familiarity with the use of technology, which is why many scholars come across the results which allude to the fact that teachers who are expected to use technology in the class appear to have negative attitudes towards online education (Panisoara et al., 2020, p.2). Apart from teachers and instructors, students themselves can be the decisive factors impacting the interaction activities online. To be precise, learner personality does influence the effectiveness of communication since there are the different types of personalities that can negatively influence the overall success of online education. That being said, the introverted students who do not feel confident with being active partakers in online discussion can lead to an ineffective online class (Ko & Rossen, as cited in Chang, 2006, p. 32). It goes without saying that introverted students are not the only ones that can negatively impact the effectiveness of interaction. Ko and Rossen highlight that disruptive students who very often tend to distract their peers during the class by contradicting their teachers can also be the reason why effective interaction may fail (as cited in Chang, 2006, p. 32).

The above-mentioned challenges may be seen as crucial. However, there tend to be a plentiful of factors that can influence the productivity of exercises which aim for a successful interaction. Shifting the focus on learners themselves, there seem to be elements on which there hasn't been a sufficient research conducted. Those factors that may or may not influence the effectiveness of interaction activities in the online English classroom in the course of a global pandemic are learners' age and gender. These particular factors are seen as the major circumstances regarding the effectiveness of interaction activities and are, therefore, investigated in the thesis.

1.3 Purpose and Significance of the Study

Ever since the end of 2019, when the outbreak struck, the whole world has been trying to adjust to the new “normal”. Such normality has had an impact on our day-to-day habits and lifestyles. More importantly, it strived for immediate measures to be taken regarding the education on a global level. Academic institutions were shut until further notice which meant that schooling was to be shifted online. Educators had no choice but to incorporate methods to online teaching which will serve best in achieving the intended effectiveness of interaction activities online.

When it comes to the effectiveness of these particular interaction activities that take place in a rather different surrounding, this study aims to investigate some of the factors that can appear as the major determinants of the productiveness regarding such exercises. Apart from the many different influences, learners’ gender can be seen as crucial. Therefore, what impact does gender place on the effectiveness of interaction activities integrated in the online English classroom? One can easily argue about the importance of such factor, as online classrooms with a predominant number of female students tend to deliver better results in interaction activities than those classrooms with a predominant number of male students. What can be seen as another tentative concern, apart from gender, would be the impact that learners’ age can place. Yet, how does age influence the productivity of interaction activities online? It goes without saying that senior students who take part in online classes show better involvement in interaction activities than freshmen students in high schools. Apart from these two rather specific characteristics which tend to aim at particular groups, learner attitudes can be critical determiners when it comes to the particular issue of effectiveness in interaction. As such, are students more confident participating in interaction activities online or in the traditional classroom? Quite often, students appear to be more confident in being active participants in interaction activities online than they are in the traditional classroom.

With the technological and educational advancements come the need for further improvement in the online education as a current method to teaching and learning. Therefore, it is safe to say that the findings of this thesis will help contribute to a better interaction among teachers and learners over the internet. It includes analysis and aspects discovered regarding online teaching which will better the process of education in times of a global pandemic. Due

to the lack of research on the matter, this study will serve as a guide which may or may not be influential for further-improving the interaction activities that are incorporated in classes over the internet. To add, it will highlight the importance that learners' age and gender carry when it comes to the effectiveness of the interaction processes in the online English classroom. It will also serve as a guide in which learners' attitudes and preferences of a particular age group have been taken into account. This means that the study involves a conclusion which represents whether learners' themselves feel more confident to actively take part in online interaction rather than in a traditional classroom. Last but not the least, the study can serve as a foundation to further investigate this particular aspect to teaching that may seem to be the future of education as we know it.

1.4 Structure of Thesis

This study follows a rather simple flow and is consisted of six chapters in total. These chapters are the following: Introduction, literature review, methodology, results/findings, analysis/discussion of findings, and conclusions. In order to get a better idea of what this study has incorporated, each chapter below consists of a brief description.

Chapter I highlights the introduction of the topic and is followed by a brief explanation of the relevance of this particular Master thesis.

Chapter II includes the literature review. This section of the thesis encompasses various books and literary articles relevant to the topic of the thesis that have been reviewed throughout the research. It contains analysis and interpretations of other scholars that have conducted a research in the field.

Chapter III foregrounds the methodology of the thesis. As a deductive (quantitative) research, the methods that are incorporated in this study include a student questionnaire. This is followed by classroom observations and textbook analysis.

Chapter IV underlines the findings of the research. In this particular chapter, the gathered results from the questionnaire, classroom observations, and textbook analysis are presented as findings. The results assist in approving or disproving the previously-mentioned hypotheses.

Chapter V gives prominence to the analysis and interpretations of the gathered results. At this stage of the study, collected results from the used methods are analyzed and discussed. Apart from these findings, a reflection upon the literature review and comparison to the results gathered from the research is intended.

Chapter VI is the concluding part of the thesis. It draws upon the limitations that may or may not appear throughout the research. This is followed by recommendations in terms of the topic that will be helpful for those who wish to conduct a further research in the field.

Chapter II: Literature Review

The contemporary issue in education caused by the global outbreak has led to countless research on the topic that will help better the online education, and influence greater interaction. The key to a virtually successful environment in education is, undoubtedly, communication, as it “is notably one of the most crucial elements to an effective online course” (Gilbert, 2015, p. 9). Educators may misinterpret the importance of interaction and, as such, take it for granted. Yet, this can have a profoundly positive impact on the learning process since scholars tend to conclude that “the degree of instructional emphasis on learning through interaction significantly influenced students’ perception of learning” (Jiang & Ting, as cited in Aydin, 2013, p. 1339). Excluding the current situation, this can largely highlight the two teaching environments we are familiar with, since interaction can be rather crucial for, both, online and traditional classrooms. One can doubt the effectiveness of such interactions when it comes to the virtual classes. However, Woods and Baker (2004) compare the effectiveness of interaction in the traditional and online classroom. Considering all different types, they state that the interaction seems to be increased in the online classroom (p. 5).

2.1 Types of Interaction

The influence interaction places on learning and on education is being accented throughout this whole study. Even though the amount of interaction mainly depends on the teachers themselves, the success of interaction which takes place in the online classroom are influenced by the different dimensions of interaction throughout the class (Krishnamurthi, 2000, p. 5279.2).

As a result, there seem to be three basic types of interaction that have been coined by Moore. Those types are: learner – instructor; learner – learner; and learner – content interaction. Even though self-explanatory, these terms require certain explanation.

Learner – instructor interaction occurs between the student(s) and the instructor. This type of interaction is quite common and it seems to be interconnected to the learner – content interaction as it “encourages learners to understand the content better” since it is being explained by the instructor (Su et al., 2005, p.3). Moore (1989) describes this particular

interaction by indicating that it is the preferable one by, both, teachers and learners (p. 2). Apart from him, other scholars argue that research “regardless of the type of online environment used for online courses, described high level of interaction with the instructor and this type of interaction was found to have a significant and positive effect on learning perception” (Means et al., as cited in Aydin, 2013, p. 1348). Additionally, this kind of interaction can contribute to having “a smaller transactional distance (i.e., a physical separation that results in a psychological and communicative gap)” (Moore, as cited in Su et al., 2005, p. 2).

Learner – learner interaction is another form of interaction that can be crucial for encouraging critical thinking in the online classroom. Moore (1989) describes this particular type as “inter-learner interaction, between one learner and other learners, alone or in group settings, with or without the real-time presence of an instructor” (p. 3). It can be done in numerous ways that will not only influence an effective interaction, but also change the teacher’s role from being an instructor to becoming a mediator.

Learner – content is the third type of interaction coined by Moore. Being seen as crucial for education itself, he sees it as “the process of intellectually interacting with content that results in changes in the learner’s understanding, the learner’s perspective, or the cognitive structures of the learner’s mind” (1989, p. 2). Other scholars support the importance of this particular type of interaction as learners are always exposed to the content in an online environment. This includes reading, lectures, preparing presentations, taking notes, the list goes on.

Apart from these three basic types of interaction which can take place in, both, traditional and online setting, scholars accentuate another kind of interaction that has emerged as a result to the continual presence of technology in learners’ lives. Learner – interface interaction appears to be the fourth kind as:

Hillman, Willis and Gunawardena (1994) point out that this type of interaction occurs between the learner and the technology used for online education. She further points out that it can be one of the most challenging types of interaction due to the fact that people have not experienced having learner-interface interaction in their traditional classroom education. (Su et al., 2005, p. 3)

Occurring research has contributed to formulating terms for additional processes which allude to other types of interaction. A kind, that is being called vicarious interaction describes those learners that are only participating by silently responding to the questions that have been raised in the class (Devries, as cited in Su et al., 2005, p. 3). This type of interaction is incorporated by introverted learners who do not feel comfortable in taking part in classroom discussion, or those who choose to be silent participants in class. Learner – self interaction is a type that strongly supports the process of self-talking in an online environment, and it can appear to be interconnected to Moore’s learner – content interaction (p. 3).

Being familiar with the different types of interaction is rather essential for educators who tend to strive for achieving effectiveness in the online environment in which education takes place. Effectiveness appears to be achieved with learner satisfaction through the above-mentioned types of interaction as they are there to serve teachers to encourage their learners by boosting their motivation and ensure they enjoy the process of learning (Holmberg, as cited in Chang, 2006, p. 32).

2.2 Influencing Factors in the Success of Interaction Activities Online

The immense need for a successful remote learning, with a speedy preparation regarding the materials and platforms used throughout the outbreak, can undoubtedly lead to tentative factors which are accountable for the effectiveness of interaction activities. According to Krishnamurthi (2000), “To interact constructively, students need clear and specific instructions. They need to know why, how, and how often they should participate and what the incentives are” (p. 5279.5). As a result, clear instructions by the teacher can be seen as a crucial factor relating to the success of online interaction. Apart from that, learner motivation can additionally have an impact on learners’ participation in interacting activities, which brings us to the conclusion that there can be a plentiful of factors that may or may not conclude the effectiveness of online interaction. Such factor is the learners’ age.

2.2.1 Age

Throughout the years of studies, educators come across age as a significant element in different aspects of language learning. To begin with, the age groups are an important constituent of biographical variables which are taken into account when it comes to the different ways of learning a language (Nunan, 1999, p. 56). That being said, different age groups incorporate contrasting learning ways that is, therefore, a fundamental facet of the language learning process. One may question the importance of such factor as it does not necessarily determine learners' preferences. In order to comprehend the significance age places, it is necessary to take a step back from language learning and analyze a segment of language acquisition. Chomsky has coined a term for a certain biological mechanism named critical period hypothesis (Nunan, 1999, p. 41.) This particular hypothesis is in favor of the fact that, at a certain age, the human brain reaches its maximum plasticity leading to neurological changes which make acquiring a language extremely difficult, if not impossible (p. 42). Even though acquiring and learning a language are two varying processes, they both highlight the importance of age as a factor. For instance, age can contribute to the success in terms of the rate of learning, communicative fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation (Nunan, 1999, p.41). The processes of, both, acquiring and learning a language contain all of the above-mentioned points to which age contributes regarding language, making it a rather influential factor.

In order to support the hypothesis which underlines that senior students outperform freshmen students when it comes to taking part in interaction activities online, it is necessary to take a look at another term in relation to the age of learners. Coined by Malcolm Knowles, andragogy is a "formative concept in adult learning and it is also referred to as adult education" (Kennan et al., 2018, p. 164). This undoubtedly proves that age can, and should, be seen as an important factor that can contribute to the effectiveness of interaction activities in the online classroom, as youth and adult education are created based on the different age groups. Malcolm Knowles, followed by other researchers, has come up with five assumptions regarding andragogy, so as to differentiate between youth and adult education expressing that:

Adults need to know the "why" of what they are asked to learn; adults wish to be treated as capable of directing their own learning (self-direction); adults bring greater life experiences to their learning; adults view learning as a means to inform their immediate real-life situations; and potent motivators

for adults are intrinsic (although some extrinsic motivators are important, too). (Kennan et al., 2018, p. 164)

It is questionable whether these same assumptions created for adult education can be applied to young learners, but it is not impossible.

When it comes to technology, today's young learners are expected to achieve better results in learning through online platforms, as they are known to be the generation of the internet. With that said, recent literature finds young learners to be more tech savvy as they are the ones that are more capable of various things, such as multitasking, retrieving information online, taking part in online interaction with their peers, the list goes on (Bennet, Maton, and Kervin, as cited in Kennan et al., 2018, p. 165). Even though this can seem as a valid argument, it is rather false. Young learners being the tech savvies of the present tend to fail to participate in interaction activities online as much as adult learners. In his work, Johnson supports this statement by indicating that despite the millennials being digitally literate, they tend to not be as confident when it comes to incorporating their technology use in an educational context (as cited in Kennan et al., 2018, p. 165). Hence, is it safe to say that senior students taking part in online ESL classes show better involvement in interaction activities than freshmen students? How does age influence the productivity of interaction activities online? There is countless research conducted on the matter of online education. Yet, very little encompasses age as a decisive factor impacting the effectiveness of interaction activities in the online classroom. Due to insufficient research, scholars appear to have divided opinions on the matter. Some believe that age does not seem to indicate any effects on the overall process of learning. For instance, Einarsson and Granström (2002) infer that students' age appears as a factor without any particular effect on online interaction in the class (p. 122). However, they still go on to say that "teachers interact more frequently with their pupils at the upper level than at the intermediate level" (2002, p. 122). That being said, it seems as upper-level students tend to participate in interactions with their teachers more than the ones that are at an intermediate level, no matter what causes such interaction to take place. Other researchers also agree about the ineffectiveness age places on the success of interaction activities. Koh and Lim designate that "as the age of the student decreased, the student's performance for

tools that allowed for more online means of communication increased” (as cited in Simonds & Brock, 2014, p. 4). Nevertheless, this chapter highlights the fact that learners’ performance in terms of technology and tools does not necessarily indicate that such knowledge would bring effectiveness to the interaction activities which take place in an online environment.

In a research conducted by Simonds and Brock (2014), results point out that older students who were part of their study preferred asynchronous learning (p. 11). This includes pre-recorded classes. However, younger learners preferred the opposite, such as live chats and other types of interactive learning (p. 11). Yet, learning preferences may or may not appear to be important elements that make age be one of the decisive factors in terms of the effectiveness of interaction activities implemented online.

As mentioned previously, scholars tend to have their opinions divided when it comes to the thought that age can be a rather crucial factor, which can impact the overall learning process, specifically the effectiveness of interaction activities in the online English classroom. While some of them disagree, as the ones mentioned previously, there are others who tend to largely believe in the significance age brings to the productivity of interaction activities. Having said that, some preferred pedagogical activities that are part of teaching and learning are influenced by learners’ age (Simonds & Brock, as cited in Morin et al., 2019, p. 308). Since interaction falls under pedagogical activities, it is safe to say that age is, indeed, an important element leading to effective communication. Once the significance of age has been highlighted, one may question whether senior students perform better than freshmen students when interaction activities take place. Fortunately, there appears to be research which supports this hypothesis. In their study, Ke and Kwak examined the influence of age in online education and concluded that the older students were the ones who appeared to be more active partakers in activities implemented online, by more frequent posting and checking messages than younger students (as cited in Kennan et al., 2018, p. 167). Being aware of the fact that online messages fall under teacher – student interaction and/or student – student interaction, it is safe to say that older students were using a tool for communication more frequently than younger ones, which led to an effective interaction online. Other research supports this statement as well, since:

The literature indicates that older students spend more time on course related learning, spend more time using asynchronous learning tools, and

report that they have very positive learning experiences in online course. On the other hand, younger students devote less time to course work ... and initially find online courses challenging. (Simonds & Brock, 2014, pp. 4-5)

From this, one can draw a conclusion that even though young learners are more familiar with the technology and certain tools, using them in an educational context can be rather challenging. As such, they spend less time than adult learners who tend to invest their time in bettering their knowledge and use learning tools. This will, therefore, lead to an online class with interaction activities that are rather effective and promote learner satisfaction.

Simonds and Brock (2014) support the literature with their findings which point out that adult learners took part in online communication more frequently than younger learners did (p. 3). This indicates that adult learners take part in interaction activities more than the younger learners do, which undoubtedly supports the hypothesis regarding age. Morin et al., (2019) support this particular hypothesis in their study by concluding that the mental readiness and better self-efficacy contribute to the fact that older students are those who deliver better results regarding the participation in online discussions (p. 314). This also designates the factuality that senior students who take part in online classes show better involvement in interaction activities than freshmen students do. Einarsson and Granstörn (2002) also support this theory by stating that students of both genders seem to be more active partakers in interaction activities at an older age compared to those students who are at a younger age (p. 124).

Last but not least, Chyung concluded that the older students “posted more often on a discussion board than younger students ... [and] were more active in the asynchronous web-based discussion board” (as cited in Simonds & Brock, 2014, p.2).

As mentioned previously, there seems to be an insufficient number of research when it comes to the age as one of the major determinants in the effectiveness of interaction activities online. Yet, the above-mentioned studies assisted in drawing a conclusion. Even though different studies indicate varying findings, age assuredly is a decisive factor influencing the success of interaction activities. To add, the literature emphasizes the truth that older learners show better involvement in interaction activities online than younger learners do.

However, this is not the only tentative factor with a huge impact on the success of online interaction. Another component could be learners' gender.

2.2.2 Gender

Many are certain that "In an educational setting, interaction through communication and collaboration is the most central mechanism educators use to encourage students to become active learners" (Chang, 2006, p. 9). So, what does it take for an effective interaction through communication to take place? Different studies indicate contrasting factors. Not many, however, focus on gender.

Just like age, gender falls under the term known as biographical variables. As a result, it may or may not be a significant factor when it comes to learning preferences. Anyhow, does it have an impact on interaction? Some say it does, some say it does not.

Before examining the literature, which supports and/or contradicts the importance of gender when it comes to the effectiveness of interaction activities in the online English classroom, it is necessary to highlight the different tone in interaction between male and female students. Blum points out that:

Instructors attempting to enhance interaction must also keep in mind that messages from males engaged in threaded discussions tend to be more certain, confrontational, autonomous, controlling, and abstract than messages from females, which tend to be more empathetic, and cooperative. (as cited in Woods & Baker, 2004, p. 6)

Many see this statement as rather contradictory, since females can be and are certain, confrontational, autonomous, and controlling. It is also likely that male students can participate in discussion with empathetic and cooperative statements. Despite the dissimilar attributes which are common for male and female students separately, it is necessary to not leave out that students' preference appears to include the engagement in discussions by exchanging information and share likes (Pawan et al., 2003, p. 127). Yet, it seems as if they do not prefer the types of discussions that influence questioning ones' viewpoint and coming

up with arguments and counter – arguments (p. 127). With this, we can conclude that gender does not have an impact on the type of discussion that takes place in the classroom.

As mentioned previously, the importance of gender, when it comes to language learning and classroom interaction, has researchers divided. There are those who conclude that “gender makes no general difference in the classroom” (Einarsson & Granstörn, 2002, p. 118). This can seem as quite a valid argument. However, there is another research which largely contradicts the above-mentioned statement. As such, “gender is an affecting factor in the process of teacher/student interactions in the classroom. In other words, gender of both teachers and students influences the quality and the quantity of interactions in the classroom” (Rashidi & Naderi, 2012, p. 30). Even though a number of different studies have one thing in common, which is the importance of gender concerning the effectiveness of interaction activities, they still include contrasting conclusions. Therefore, one can question the gender dominance in the online classroom, especially when it comes to interaction. Manifestly, a number of research indicates that male students, indeed, dominate in the classroom and are, therefore, the main contributors to the effectiveness of interaction activities. For instance, Einarsson and Granstörn (2002) come across studies which conclude that the dominant gender in the classroom is male, since boys are the ones who interact more frequently and get more attention in the classroom than girls (p. 118). Yet, male students being dominant and interacting more than girls in the classroom does not necessarily mean that the interaction activities are successful. Although it is stated that boys are more dominant over girls, it seems that there is a rather different reason which helps determine that boys are not the ones who deliver better results in interaction activities, as:

Jungwirth concluded that the strategies used in interactions between boys and their teachers differ from those used by girls in their interaction with teachers. De Voe (1991) found that boys are subject to directing and criticizing comments or justifying statements from their teachers than are girls. Consequently, more attention from teachers does not necessarily imply attention in a positive sense. (as cited in Einarsson & Granstörn, 2002, p. 118)

According to this statement, it seems as if the reason why some of the research alludes to the information that boys dominate over girls, in interaction, is because male students tend

to use provocative comments that are then a subject to criticism by the teacher. However, such conclusion requires further research since it would be inappropriate to generalize all male students as those who receive criticizing comments, and exclude female students from such remarks.

Despite the different explanations, Einarsson and Granstöröm (2002) conclude that it is “obvious that boys have more frequent interaction with their teacher during lessons” (p. 122).

It was previously mentioned that gender as a biographical variable can have an impact on the learning preferences, as well as, on the interaction activities. As much as Einarsson and Granstöröm depict the conclusions of those who believe that male students dominate in the classroom and take bigger part in interaction, there are those who disagree. There is research that is in favor of female students that are the dominant partakers of successful interaction activities. Therefore, it is safe to state that online classrooms with a predominant number of female students tend to deliver better results in interaction activities than those classrooms with a predominant number of male students.

Brunner, Burnham, Ryan and Hicks all agree that “women are more likely to seek supportive communication environments and thus are likely to have significantly different expectations when it comes to frequency and nature of communication online” (as cited in Woods & Baker, 2004, p. 6). As a result to that, female learners are often found to be the frequent communicators in interaction activities. Other studies support this statement, too. To be more precise, Arbaugh contradicts the conclusions which are in favor of male students as the dominant partakers in online interaction activities by simply alluding to the finding that females dominate in classroom discussions more than males by being a more collaborative gender in terms of online interaction (as cited in Woods & Baker, 2004, p. 6). With this, one can simply determine that those online classrooms with a predominant number of female students tend to participate more frequently and, therefore, deliver better results in interaction activities than those classrooms with a predominant number of male students do.

Same like age, gender appears to be quite a decisive factor which can influence the effectiveness of activities that promote interaction, as:

Herring (2000) found that female students participated more when the instructor actively promoted a civil and focused discourse. In other words, both gender and communication style influenced levels of interactivity and immediacy-producing behaviors, and were more consistent with female online communication than with male communication. (as cited in Woods & Baker, 2004, p. 6)

With this, one can judge that gender should not be seen as a valueless element, which is a part of the biographical variables, but rather as an asset quite significant in determining different levels of interactivity in the online classroom. Another judgement would be that female learners are in control of interaction in the online classroom, making such activities successful and effective.

Rashidi and Naderi (2012) also agree that “teachers and female students seem to form stronger cooperative units than teachers and male students: teachers were reported to be more likely to call on female students; female students more than their male peers enjoyed interaction with the teacher” (p. 31). As a result, female students take part in interaction activities more often than male students.

It is rather obvious that opinions on the matter are divided. Some scholars conclude that male students are the influential partakers leading to the effectiveness of interaction activities online. Others strongly disagree and point out that female learners are the ones who dominate the classroom and ensure successful interaction. Further research is needed as the contradicting findings aren't necessarily wrong, since Rashidi and Naderi (2012) highlight the fact that gender is part of one's culture and can, therefore, be seen differently in different parts of the world (p. 31).

Apart from that, the literature is in favor of the hypothesis which specifies that online classrooms with a predominant number of female students tend to deliver better results in interaction activities than those classrooms with a predominant number of male students.

2.3 Learner Participation

The internet has been providing us with so many easier replacements for a convenient life at home. As a result, education was among the many institutions which switched online

when the outbreak began. Many educators, with a background experience, found this shift rather easy. However, it seemed as it was quite difficult for other educators, as well as, some students. Ensuring a successful learning meant only one thing, which was figuring out methods to teaching that are most applicable in such environment. Consequently, one may wonder what the keys to an effective online education are. Undoubtedly, achieving pleasing results in the online classroom is done through “interactions among students themselves, the interactions between faculty and students, and the collaboration in learning that results from these interactions” (Palloff & Pratt, as cited in Aydin, 2013, p. 1339). The quality of online interaction, however, tends to be questionable, as many people believe that the best interaction can be achieved in a traditional classroom. Research points out that the ratio of student – teacher interaction and student – student interaction in the online classroom was the same as in a traditional face-to-face classroom (Chang, 2006, p. 42). With this, it is safe to say that effective learning and interaction can be facilitated through the computer. Yet, are students more confident participating in interaction activities online or in the traditional classroom? As every other research, opinions tend to be divided. These conclusions are based on different types of students, since:

Student perceptions vary when it comes to the importance of the interaction in online learning. Such differences in perceptions seem to be associated with differences in the individual personality traits or learning styles. Compared to faculty’s views, students seem to vary in their perception of online education. (Su et al., 2005, p. 12)

From this, it is visible that learning styles and personalities can play a crucial role when it comes to taking part in interaction activities, both, online and in a traditional classroom. Looking at the issue from a different perspective, it can be said that interaction in the online classroom is achieved faster than in a traditional classroom as a result to the introverted learners who may find actively taking part in interaction online safer than in a traditional classroom. Those are the students who find the traditional classroom not to be as safe for expressing opinions and preferences (Chang, 2006, p. 12).

As mentioned previously, there is some research that alludes to the fact that learners are not as confident partakers in online interaction as they are in the traditional classroom. One

of the reasons would be how challenging learners found online interaction to be. They highlight the reasoning for such statement by referring to the fact that “the absence of face-to-face contacts among the students in online setting” led to finding such interaction demanding and, therefore, not having as positive attitudes towards that specific type of activity (Aydin, 2013, p. 1347). Another research done by Su et al. (2005) has concluded similarly, expressing that online classes promote a lowered interaction by students as they have expressed the difficulty of a rather natural interaction with the impracticality of seeing their classmates and teachers (p. 13). This issue could easily be resolved by using cameras that would contribute to the sense of taking part in a more contributive communication among peers and their teacher.

Taking a look at different ways of interaction, Chang (2006) points out that “the chances for students to discuss questions with other students were limited in the virtual online classroom environment” (p. 1). However, it seems that the contemporary tools meant for interaction through the computer are countless. Different platforms such as Google Meet, Google Classroom, Zoom, ClassIn, Skype, Schools, provide teachers and learners with the opportunity of interacting in different ways. They have available options for live interactions, posting comments, writing private messages, attaching files and presentations, the list goes on. This gives the students chances for increased interaction and enhancing productive education through the computer, since:

Computer-mediated communication facilitates group discussions through threaded virtual bulletin boards and chat rooms, enabling students to develop a sense of community and receive clarification regarding their understanding of the course material. The instructor can use the discussion board, the chat room feature, and many other tools provided by the course management system to facilitate online discussion and establish a learning community. (Chang, 2006, p. 11)

With a constant use of these tools, teachers can ensure a class with effective interaction activities online.

There appears to be an additional reason why some studies have found that learners are not as confident in taking part in online interaction as they are in a traditional face-to-face classroom. A survey conducted by Wyatt involved students who “indicated that online instruction was more academically demanding than traditional courses” (as cited in Chang,

2006, p. 42). Those who have had an experience in either teaching and/or learning in an online environment may agree with this statement, since online education usually includes a greater amount of homework; preparation; and paperwork (for educators), compared to a traditional classroom environment. This, too, can be improved through a successful needs analysis that can lessen the amount of homework, and possibly time of preparation for the class.

Even though online education has been existent for a longer time, online education in the course of a global pandemic is seen as rather recent. That being said, it surely requires further research to be conducted so that online lectures can be improved. Yet, students still tend to be more confident in taking part in interaction activities online than they are in a traditional face-to-face classroom, despite this being a contemporary way of teaching and learning. To begin with, learners spend a big amount of their time on the internet. Even if it mainly incorporates the use of social media, it is safe to say that they find using the internet rather enjoyable. From this, it would be easy to conclude that learners deliver better results participating in online interactions simply because they find themselves being more confident in communicating online. Aydin (2013) declares that “In online interactions, the level of student engagement increases, giving them the drive to excel in their craft of studying and to develop their opinions on a wide array of thoughts” (p. 1343). The reason why learners’ engagement increases, in the online classroom, would be the fact they feel more confident in forming and expressing their own opinions on the topic in class. Aydin (2013) goes on to support the hypothesis which declares that students are more confident when it comes to active participation in interaction activities online by stressing that learners’ level of satisfaction in the online classroom was undoubtedly increased and was followed by positive attitudes towards learning (p. 1347). Therefore, it can be said that online interaction activities are effective, if not more successful than the ones in a traditional face-to-face classroom.

Even though unknown to many, online education provides different ways of interaction that students seem to be extremely confident with. A study has found that “participants were satisfied with the course content and the student – instructor and student – student interactions” (Barker & Beckner, as cited in Chang, 2006, p. 39). This means that learners are quite confident in being involved in interaction activities online. Moreover, it seems that

most of the students who haven't had the chance to take part in online classes appear to be quite sceptic towards the effectiveness of interaction activities incorporated in the online classroom. A study has found that "students who had taken online courses thought they learned more in online courses, had more interactions with their peers in online courses, and thought the quality of online courses was very good compared to traditional on-campus courses" (Simonds & Brock, 2014, p. 4). This hypothesis is proven by Chang (2006), as well, since his study concluded that most of the participants who had taken online courses have positive attitudes towards enrolling in additional classes that are taught online (p. 40).

Clow, Philips and Peters, Roblyer, Hacker and Wignall, all, follow up on Chang's statement by referring to the fact that "student's perception of sufficient interaction with instructors and other students is positively correlated with ... the overall online learning experience" (as cited in Woods & Baker, 2004, p. 6). With this, it is safe to say that once students have been exposed to online education and become familiar with the process and tools, they tend to feel more confident in taking part in online interactions rather than interactions which take place in a traditional face-to-face classroom. A survey conducted in 2014 has found that more than half of the people who have taken part in online courses believe that online classes are as effective as traditional face-to-face classes and that those students who are a part of traditional colleges would prefer more classes over the internet (Moreillon, 2015, p. 43).

Literature proves that students appear to be more confident in being active participants in interaction activities online than they are in a traditional classroom. Even though, some scholars have found that the lack of face-to-face interaction leads to a lower interaction, with the advancement of technology and the use of cameras, teachers can ensure that learners get to enjoy interaction in which they can all see each other, just like in a traditional classroom. Furthermore, this type of learning provides introverted learners with the ability to take part in interaction activities in which they feel more confident and, therefore, enjoy learning. In addition, students who have taken part in online classrooms tend to be profoundly satisfied and agree that online education positively influences the interaction activities.

Chapter III: Methodology

This study was conducted in order to get a better idea and understand some of the decisive factors influencing the effectiveness of interaction activities integrated in the online English classroom in the course of a global pandemic. To be more precise, the study analyzed age and gender as important factors impacting the success of online interaction. Also, it covered learners' preferences in terms of taking part in online communication with their teacher and peers.

3.1 Aims and Objectives

With the constant spread of the coronavirus, educational institutions were forced to close the buildings and shift classes from face-to-face classrooms into virtual classrooms. These sudden measures led to the need for additional research on the matter of online education. Being a profoundly critical issue for bettering virtual interaction, this kind of research can contribute to effective interaction activities online.

This research aims to:

- 1.Examine how age can influence the effectiveness of interaction activities in the online English classroom.
- 2.Investigate the significance gender places on the success of interaction activities in the online English classroom.
- 3.Find out if students feel more confident in taking part in interaction activities virtually than they do in a traditional face-to-face classroom.

3.2 Research Questions

The popularity of online education has been rising ever since the end of 2019. As a result, different studies have been conducted in order to give objective answers to questions that

are connected to the issue of effective online education. The main questions that were raised at the beginning of this research are:

1.How does age influence the productivity of interaction activities online?

2.What impact does gender place on the effectiveness of interaction activities integrated in the online English classroom?

3.Are students more confident participating in interaction activities online or in the traditional classroom?

3.3 Research Hypothesis

The three research hypotheses of this study have been formulated as the most appropriate answers to the above-mentioned research questions. Their authenticity will be approved or disproved later on in the study.

Hypothesis I:

Senior students that take part in online classes show better involvement in interaction activities than freshmen students in high schools.

Hypothesis II:

Online classrooms with a predominant number of female students tend to deliver better results in interaction activities than those classrooms with a predominant number of male students.

Hypothesis III:

Students appear to be more confident in being active participants in interaction activities online than they are in the traditional classroom.

3.4 Participants

The participants of this study were senior and freshmen students from two different high schools in Tetovo. The first school whose participants were observed was “Nikola Shtejn”, and the other one was a vocational high school called “Mosha Pijade”. It was important that these two schools are involved in the research as it would be of crucial help in determining the gender hypothesis, since as a vocational school “Mosha Pijade” consists of a predominant number of male students. In contrast, “Nikola Shtejn” as a medical high school consists of classes with a predominant number of female students.

In total, 72 students were observed in class. The number of students is adequate when it comes to determining whether senior students show better involvement in interaction activities online than freshmen students, as the observations were conducted based on the age difference.

When it comes to approving or disproving the gender hypothesis, 29 male students and 43 female students were observed in class. This will help unveil whether effective interaction takes place in classrooms with a predominant number of female students.

In terms of the questionnaire, 81 students, both male and female, engaged in answering questions that will help understand if learners feel more confident in participating in online interaction than they do in traditional face-to-face interactions.

3.5 Instruments

This study includes three different instruments which were critical for collecting the appropriate data.

Classroom observations were conducted in the two high schools mentioned previously. With this instrument, sufficient data was collected that will help determine the impact age and gender have on the overall effectiveness of interaction activities in the online ESL classroom. That being said, the classroom observations, as one of the instruments used in this study, will help approve or disprove the age and gender hypotheses.

A questionnaire was put together for students to answer anonymously. The purpose of this second instrument would be to investigate whether students are more confident in being

active participants in interaction activities online than they are in the traditional face-to-face classroom.

In order to come up with more authentic findings, a textbook analysis was conducted. The third instrument used in this study, contributes to approving or disproving the three hypotheses.

3.6 Procedure

This study has taken a deductive approach to research in order to contribute to results that are adequate and in connection to the three hypotheses. A link to the questionnaire was sent to freshmen and senior students in “Nikola Shtejn” and “Mosha Pijade”. The questionnaire was available to student for two weeks after which responses were no longer accepted. In total, 81 students took part in expressing their thoughts and opinions by answering to the questions.

Classroom observations were conducted once responses to the questionnaire were no longer accepted. The duration of this particular process was two weeks and it included 10 classroom observations. In order to ensure that all the significant data is collected, classroom observation sheets were used in each monitoring.

Once the classroom observations were completed, textbook analysis was conducted. This procedure included three books, two of which used by freshmen students in both schools, and one used by senior students in two of the institutions that were part of this study.

Data was collected through a method of descriptive analysis by using three different instruments. Subsequently, summarized results were presented through charts and figures in order to achieve an objective introduction to data.

Chapter IV: Results

Throughout the process of research, data was collected by handing out questionnaires to students, classroom observations, and textbook analysis. This particular chapter involves the gathered results from the above-mentioned instruments that have been used. The outcome will, therefore, assist in approving or disproving the hypothesis of this study.

4.1 Student Questionnaire

The first instrument used in this study is the questionnaire that has been assembled for students. There are a total of 14 questions which students were expected, and managed, to complete within 5-7 minutes. It includes a variety of questions most of which are multiple choice. Apart from that, it consists of linear scales, checkboxes, and paragraphs. Students were made sure that taking part in answering the questionnaire is extremely autonomous so that answers can be as objective as possible. It was written in three languages (English, Macedonian, and Albanian) in order to make sure that students completely understand the questions. To add, only those students who have given consent took part in completing the questionnaire.

4.1.1 Student Questionnaire Results

Answered by 81 students, it was handed out to freshmen and seniors in the medical high school “Nikola Shtejn” and the vocational high school “Moshja Pijade” in Tetovo. The two schools will further be referred to as NS and MP. The purpose of the questionnaire was to see whether students find themselves being more confident as partakers of online interaction activities than in a traditional face-to-face classroom. It also serves as a guideline into understanding whether age and gender can influence the overall effectiveness of interaction activities.

In order to answer the research questions of this study, the results are presented through figures and are followed by a discussion.

1. Gender

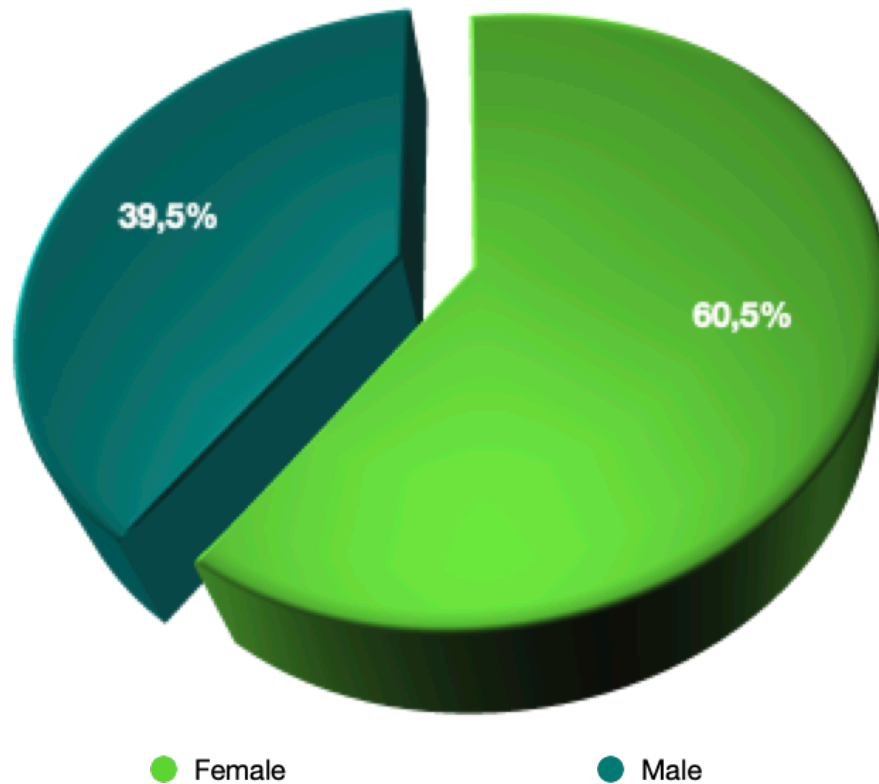


Figure 4.1: Gender Ratio of Questionnaire Participants

Figure 4.1 describes the first question that was part of the student questionnaire. As shown, it gives detailed report on the gender ratio of participants that were answering the questions. Therefore, 49 female students from MP and NS make up the majority of answers. That being said, 60% of participants were girls from the ages of 15 to 18. As one can see, there is not a big difference in the gender ratio since males take up 40% of partakers in this particular questionnaire. In other words, 32 male students from MP and NS answered the previously prepared questions.

Even though quite general, this question is one of the more important ones as it gives a better picture of how the gender can influence the effectiveness of interaction activities integrated in the online English classroom in the course of a global pandemic.

2. Age

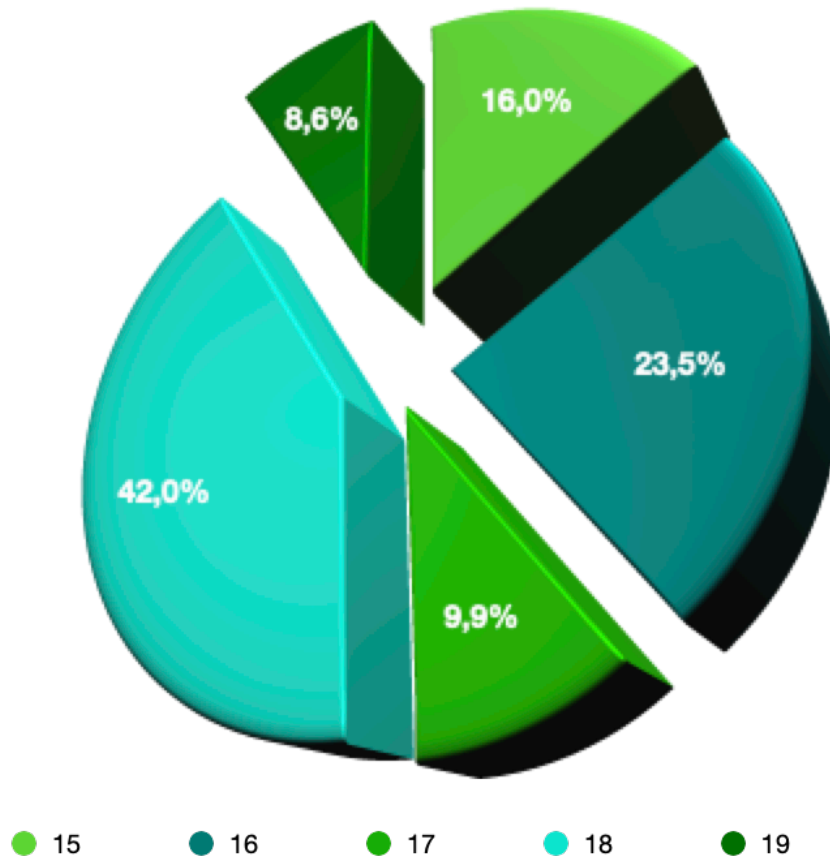


Figure 4.2: Participant Age Group

As shown in Figure 4.2, the age ratio is not as balanced as the chart with the gender. It is visible that the participants' age varies from 15 to the age of 19. To be more precise, 16% of participants were at the age of 15 and 23,5% were at the age of 16. In other words, 13 of the partakers were 15 years old, whereas 19 of the partakers were 16 years old. It goes without saying that 39,5% of questionnaire participants, or 32 students, were freshmen from MP and NS.

Furthermore, 9,9% of participants were at the age of 17; 42% were at the age of 18; and 8,6% were at the age of 19. As a result, 60,5% of students which were involved in implementing this research instrument were seniors in MP and NS.

The figure also illustrates that candidates at the age of 18 were most involved, compared to other age groups.

Figure 4.2 is considered critical, since it will be of great importance when it comes to determining whether age influences the effectiveness of interaction activities online.

3. You participate in online English classes:

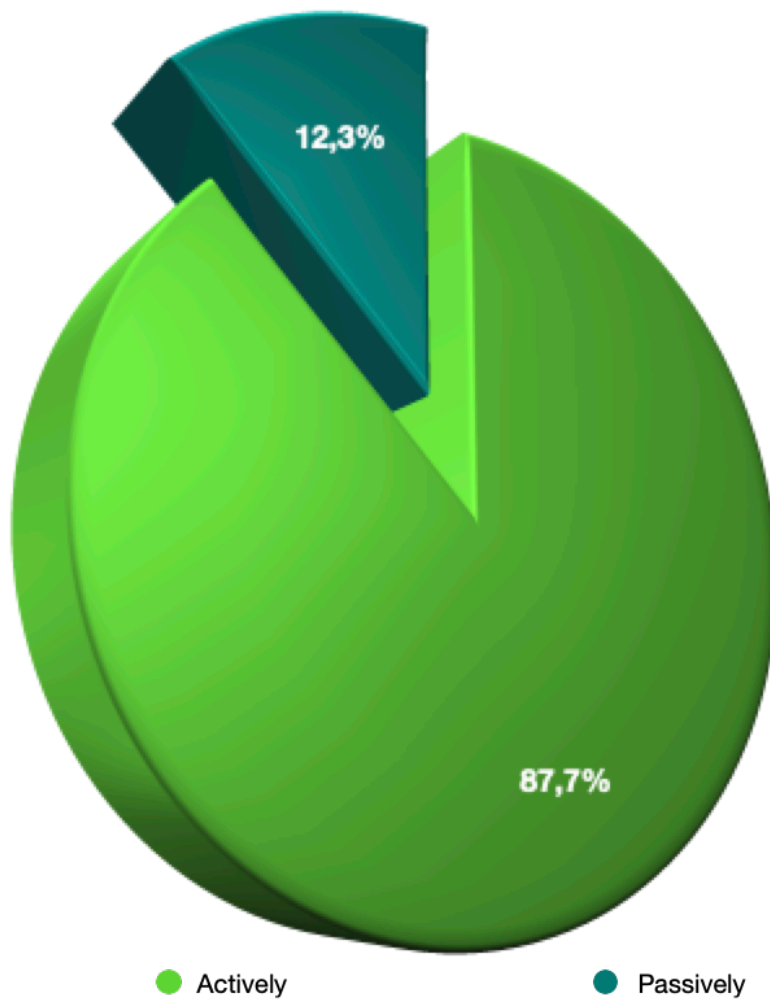


Figure 4.3: Learner Frequency of Participation in Class

Figure 4.3 illustrates the frequency of learner voluntary interaction in the online ESL classes. It is quite visible that 87,7% of the questionnaire's participants actively take part when it comes to participating in class. On the other hand, only 12,3% of students passively participate during their classes. In other words, 71 students feel rather confident in actively participating online, whereas 10 students prefer to passively participate by listening to the teaching and engage through completing activities in a timely manner.

In order to understand the figure better and draw authentic conclusion, it is necessary to provide more details. As a result, the 12,3% of participants who tend to passively participate in class can be distributed into the following numbers: 5 male and 5 female students from MP and NS.

4. How often do you ask questions in class?

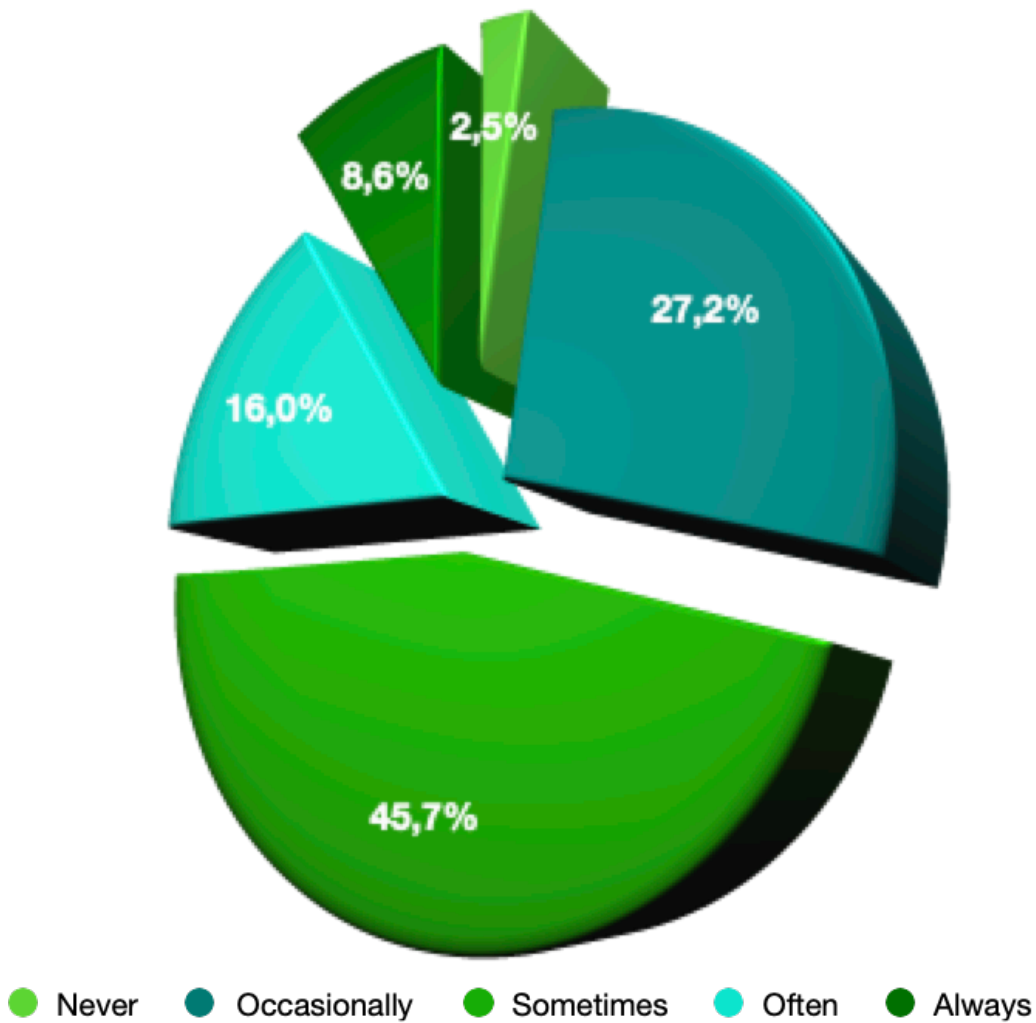


Figure 4.4: Frequency of Questions Raised by Students

As demonstrated in Figure 4.4, freshmen and seniors from MP and NS have divided opinions and preferences when it comes to the frequency of raising questions in class. On one hand, only 2,5%, or 2 students out of 81 participants answered that they never raise questions in class. On the other hand, 8,6%, or 7 partakers, indicated that they tend to always raise questions in class. However, the majority of students taking part in the questionnaire, more specifically 45,7%, answered that they sometimes raise questions throughout the online lectures. Following were 22 students, or 27,2%, who answered that they occasionally manage to raise questions in class. Lastly, the number of students who responded that they often raise questions in class was 13. In other words, that makes up 16% of the participants.

5. How interactive are the online English classes?

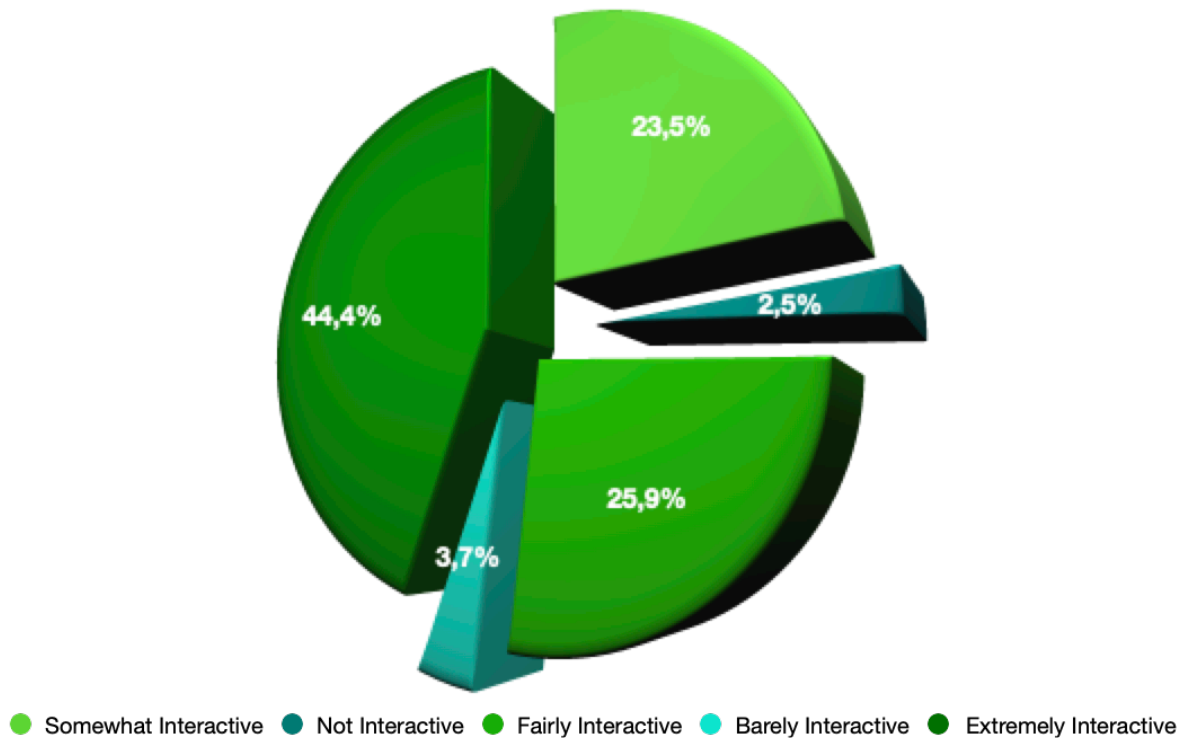


Figure 4.5: Students' judgement on the level of interactivity in the online English classes

Students' judgment on the level of interactivity in the online English classroom, in the course of a global pandemic, has been illustrated in Figure 4.5. In this question, they were expected to answer on a linear scale. As a result, 36 students, out of 81, responded that online English classes are extremely interactive. In other words, 44,4% of partakers found the classes to be with a profound flow between the teacher and students. Only two of the questionnaire participants found online English classes to be non-interactive at all. This takes only 2,5% of the overall number. Three other participants, or 3,7%, believe that the online English classes in MP and NS are barely interactive. Furthermore, 19 participants have responded that online English classes are somewhat interactive. This takes 23,5% of the total answers to the question. The rest of the students, or 25,9% of the respondents found the classes in MP and NS to be fairly interactive.

As a result, the majority of respondents, or 93,8%, from MP and NS believe that online English classes are somewhat, fairly, or extremely interactive.

6. What type of interaction takes place in the online English classroom?

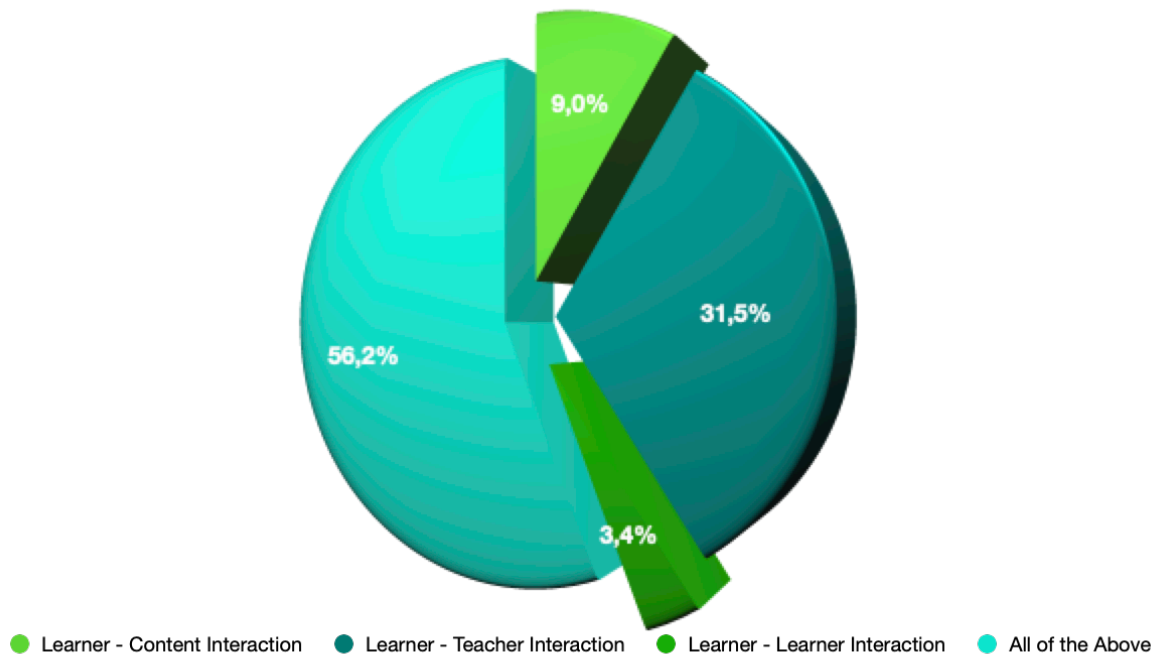


Figure 4.6: Different types of interaction in the classroom

Figure 4.6 demonstrates the different types of interaction which can take place in the online English classroom. A big number of the questionnaire respondents, or 28, answered that the type of interaction that took place in class the most frequently was learner – teacher interaction. In other words, 34,6% of the questionnaire partakers responded that the interaction between the teacher and students was the most frequent type of interaction in class. Some disagreed, as eight students, or 9,9% of participants, indicated that learner – content interaction was the most recurrent form of interacting in the online English classroom, in the course of a global pandemic. Only 3 respondents said that the most persistent form of interaction online was learner – learner interaction. To put it in another way, 3,7% of the total number stated that learners interacted among each other the most. However, 50 students, from MP and NS, that took part in answering the questionnaire stated that all different types of interaction took place in the online English classroom in the course of a global pandemic. As such, 61,7% of questionnaire respondents answered that learner – content; learner – teacher; and learner – learner interaction were all frequently used in class.

7. Do you feel confident participating in classroom discussions online?

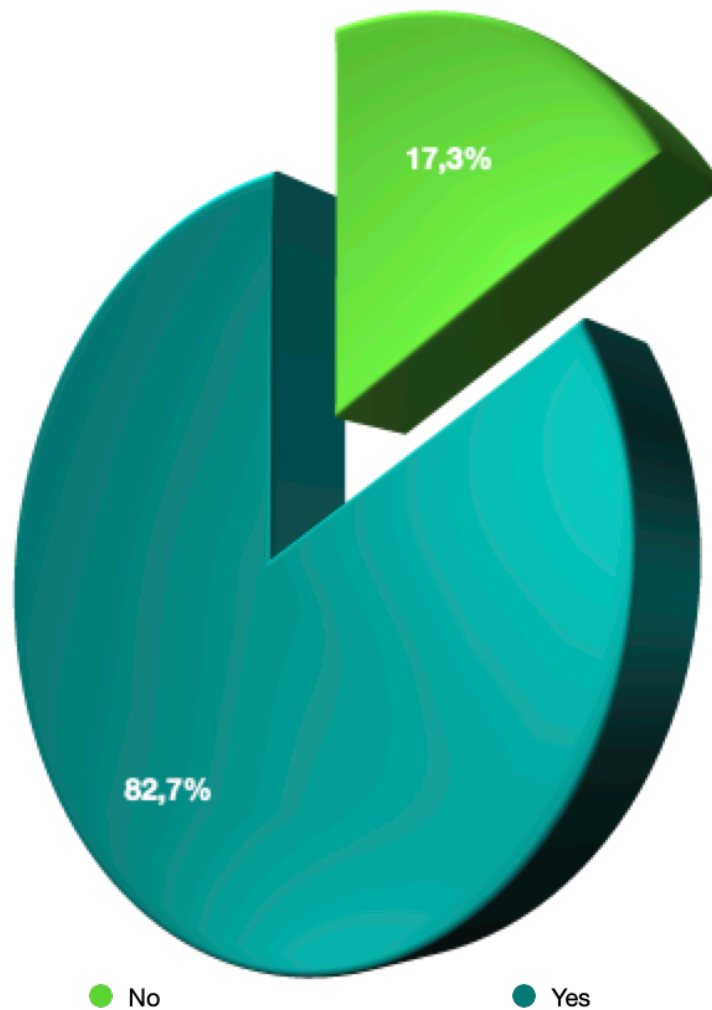


Figure 4.7: Learners thoughts on taking part in classroom discussion online

As seen in Figure 4.7, the majority of respondents have positively answered the seventh question in the questionnaire. When asked if they feel confident in participating in classroom discussions online, 67 students answered positively. Notably, 82,7% of the total number of students, from MP and NS, who took part in the survey feel rather confident and do not mind actively participating in classroom discussions which take place online.

The figure also highlights the number of respondents that have negatively responded to the question. Namely, 14 of the partakers do not feel confident in being involved in classroom discussions and would prefer not to participate. That being said, eight male and six female students, or 17,3% of the participants, from MP and NS do not feel comfortable in actively taking part in classroom discussions that take place online.

8. How often do you participate in classroom interactions online?

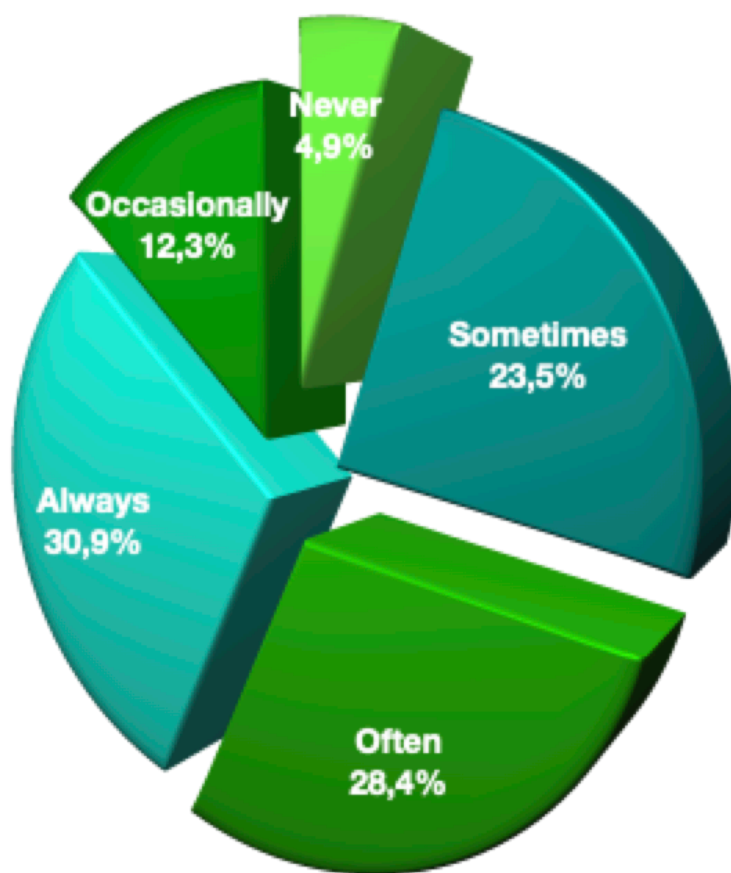


Figure 4.8: Frequency of learner participation in classroom interactions

Depicted in Figure 4.8, questionnaire participants were expected to answer about how frequently they tend to participate in classroom interactions online. As a result, 30,9% of students from MP and NS responded that they always take part in classroom interactions which take place virtually. That being said, a total of 25 learners responded positively regarding the frequency of participation. Followed closely, a total of 23 students, or 28,4% indicated that they often participate in classroom interactions. Apart from them, 19 students answered that they sometimes engage in such classroom interactions. In other words, 23,5% of questionnaire participants shared that they sometimes participate in classroom interaction which take place in the online English classroom, in the course of a global pandemic. Only 10 participants, or 12,3%, reported that they occasionally take part in classroom interactions online. Finally, 4 students from MP and NS indicated that they never engage in classroom interactions. Particularly, 1 male and 3 female students.

9. In your opinion, how effective are the interaction activities online?

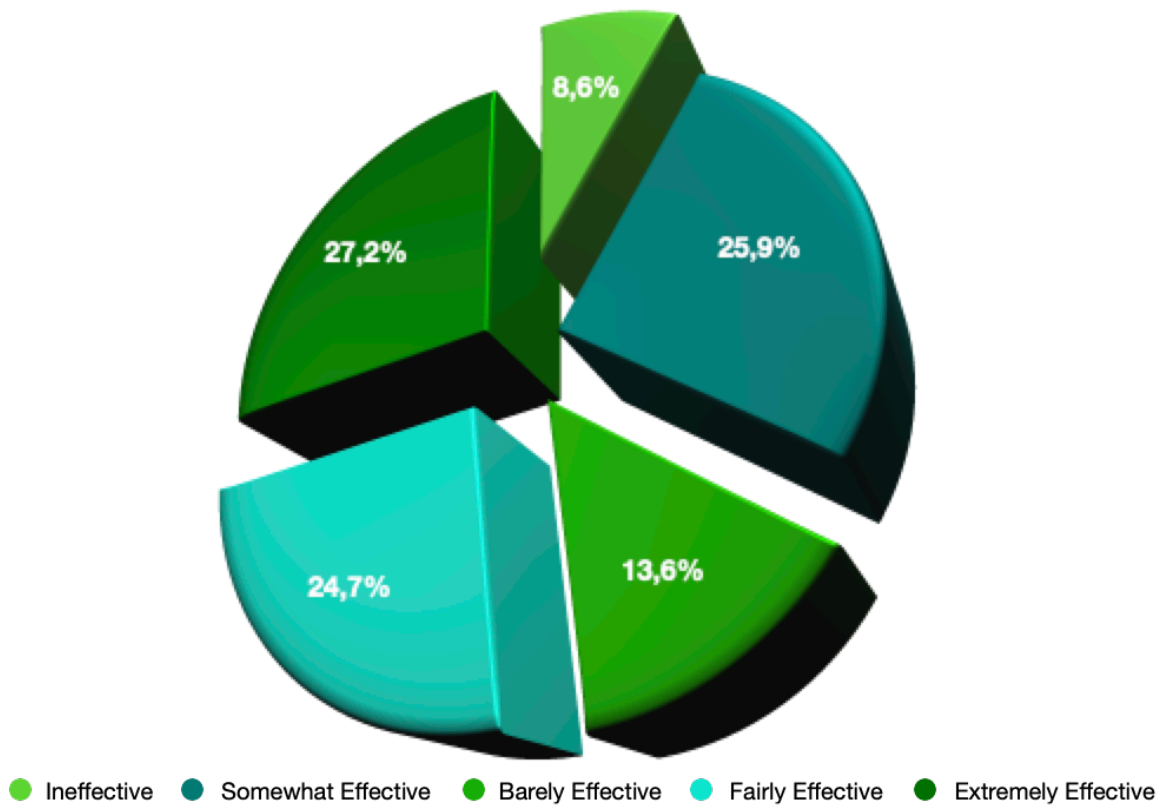


Figure 4.9: Learner opinion on the effectiveness of online interaction activities

Figure 4.9 illustrates learners' opinions on how effective online interaction activities appear to be, in the course of a global pandemic. It can be seen that such views seem largely divided, as 7 participants, or 8,6%, evaluated online interaction activities as ineffective. Followed closely are 11 students who find the activities barely effective. In other words, 13,6% of questionnaire participants believe that interaction activities online are barely effective. However, 21 students from MP and NS find interaction activities somewhat effective. That is 25,9% of the total number. What comes next is 20 students, or 24,7%, whose response indicated that online interaction activities seem as fairly effective. Finally, a total of 22 questionnaire participants from MP and NS believe that interaction activities in the online English classroom are extremely effective, which is 27,2% of the total number of respondents.

10. Online education has made interaction:

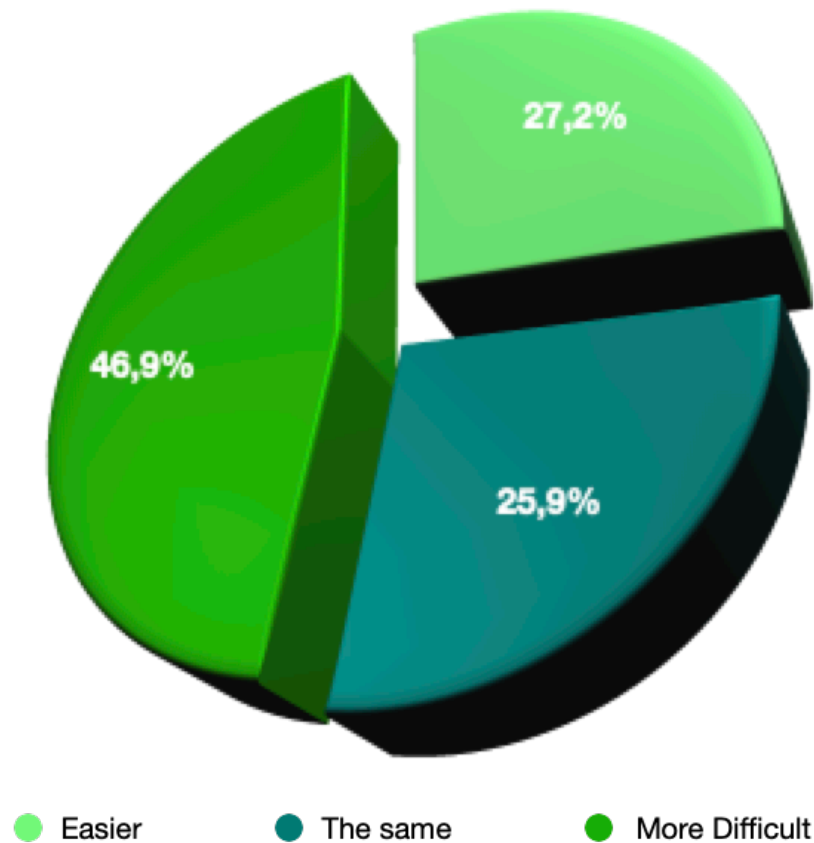


Figure 4.10: Learner attitude on the difficulty of interaction in online education

As shown in Figure 4.10, almost half of the participants who responded to the questionnaire, or 46,9%, believe that online education has made interaction more difficult. The rest of the participants disagree with this statement. For instance, 21 students indicated that interaction in online education is the same as in a traditional face-to-face classroom, or 25,9%. Finally, 22 students from MP and NS responded that online education has made interaction easier. In other words, 27,2% of the total survey participants find online education and interaction easier than traditional face-to-face education in which interaction occurs.

This figure serves to point out that freshmen and seniors' perspectives on the difficulty of online interaction is quite divided. Learners largely disagree on the answer to this particular question compared to the previous ones.

11. Where do you feel more confident to take part in interaction activities?

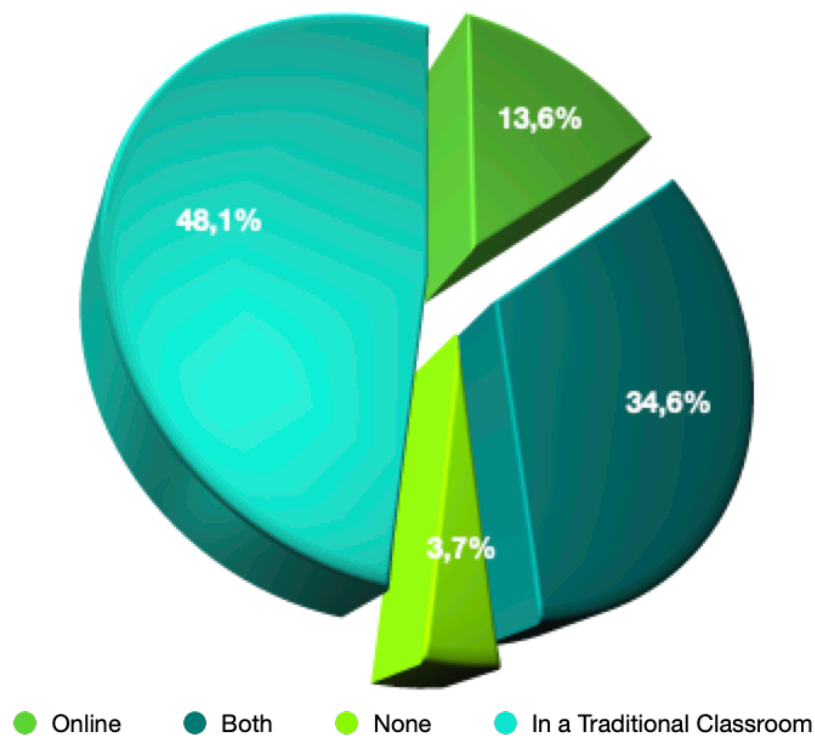


Figure 4.11: Learner preference and confidence in different learning environments

Figure 4.11 demonstrates the answers given by participants in regards to where they appear to be more confident when it comes to engaging in interaction activities. Surprisingly, 39 participants from MP and NS stated that they feel more confident when it comes to engaging in interaction activities in a traditional face-to-face classroom, rather than online. When it comes to the virtual classroom, 11 students, or 13,6%, responded that they feel more confident participating in interaction activities online. There were many students who had no actual preference on the matter. For instance, 34,6% feel confident when it comes to engaging in interaction activities, both, online and in a traditional face-to-face classroom. Those are 28 students from MP and NS. Lastly, only 3 students, or 3,7%, stated that they do not feel confident in engaging in interaction activities online nor in a traditional face-to-face classroom. That number is constituted of 1 male and 2 female students from MP and NS.

12. State the reason for your answer to the previous question

In question 12, questionnaire participants were asked to express the reasons behind their answer to the previous question. In other words, they were supposed to indicate why they feel more confident participating in, either, virtual or traditional classrooms. In the following table, traditional classroom will be referred to as TC, online classroom will be referred to as OC, whereas B will stand for both and N will stand for none.

#	Student Answers	Preference:
1.	<i>I feel more confident at school.</i>	TC
2.	<i>From an unknown reason it's easier online.</i>	OC
3.	<i>Because there's more discussion and interaction in a traditional classroom.</i>	TC
4.	<i>Because it's better.</i>	TC
5.	<i>We should adapt to the current situation.</i>	B
6.	<i>It is the same.</i>	B
7.	<i>Because of the situation with Covid19.</i>	OC
8.	<i>I am shy.</i>	N
9.	<i>Because it is easier to interact face-to-face when we are physically present.</i>	TC
10.	<i>I feel more comfortable.</i>	OC
11.	<i>Because it is easier to learn.</i>	TC
12.	<i>I am communicative.</i>	B
13.	<i>I feel the same, it doesn't matter at all.</i>	B
14.	<i>It's easier in person.</i>	TC
15.	<i>I feel free and better.</i>	TC
16.	<i>Personally, I think this is a temporary situation and it won't remain forever. Because of that, there are many advantages and disadvantages for both students and teachers. The effects are that everything is within our reach, while there are more side effects such as headaches, loss of concentration and so on.</i>	TC
17.	<i>It's always better in the classroom! And it depends if students are open or not.</i>	TC
18.	<i>I feel equally safe.</i>	B
19.	<i>Because it is much easier to see the reaction of those in class so that I know whether I'm on the right track. If not, I can change the course of the conversation.</i>	TC
20.	<i>Personally, I think that interaction in a traditional classroom is better, as it is easier to express your opinions when talking face-to-face.</i>	TC
21.	<i>You can learn much better in a traditional classroom.</i>	TC
22.	<i>I've always felt more confident at school.</i>	TC
23.	<i>Because we pay more attention and are more active in class.</i>	TC

24.	<i>Because it's a matter of habit.</i>	TC
25.	<i>I am confident about talking in English, online or in the traditional classroom it's the same for me because I think I can speak English quite well and I don't have a problem with talking. Nothing changes if I'm online I still have my knowledge no matter where we are.</i>	B
26.	<i>Well, I have no problem in taking a part in the activities in school or online I feel that I know English and I do feel confident in myself about the subject.</i>	B
27.	<i>In both places, because online or traditional education is not a problem for me, as I feel equally confident.</i>	B
28.	<i>It's better to go to school because things can be explained better if someone doesn't understand.</i>	TC
29.	<i>I feel confident about my knowledge surrounding the English language anyway so online classes are not a problem.</i>	B
30.	<i>Traditional education is much better than online education.</i>	TC
31.	<i>In both, but sometimes if I don't know something I don't take a part in it but I try to understand it.</i>	B
32.	<i>We as students want physical presence, not online because it's difficult to learn.</i>	TC
33.	<i>I feel good in both ways of interactive activities because I think that in this moment, we need to adapt to the circumstances in which we find ourselves. However, I think that in a traditional classroom the interaction is at a much better level, but in any case, we should help each other in these conditions in which we are now.</i>	TC
34.	<i>I choose both because I am fine with online classes from home but traditional classroom would be more efficient.</i>	B
35.	<i>At school is better than online.</i>	TC
36.	<i>Because classroom discussions cannot be replaced online.</i>	TC
37.	<i>It's better in a traditional classroom because there is more socializing between students and the given learning material is better mastered.</i>	TC
38.	<i>I feel confident both online and in a traditional classroom because I'm protected.</i>	B
39.	<i>I pay more attention at school because there are no distractions.</i>	TC
40.	<i>Because we have bigger freedom.</i>	OC
41.	<i>Discussion and learning in a traditional classroom are more effective than online.</i>	TC
42.	<i>If we have knowledge, we can feel confident both online and at school.</i>	B
43.	<i>I feel more confident interacting in a traditional classroom because of physical presence, face-to-face discussions, interest or lack of interested is noticeable, and I can express myself much better.</i>	TC
44.	<i>I feel confident participating both online and in a traditional classroom because classes are held the same, there is student – teacher interaction and topics for discussion.</i>	B
45.	<i>I am more active online because it's easier for me to function virtually.</i>	OC

46.	<i>We only need traditional face-to-face education.</i>	TC
47.	<i>There's more time for everything in a traditional classroom.</i>	TC
48.	<i>The same material would be use online and in a traditional classroom.</i>	B
49.	<i>Online education is ineffective.</i>	TC
50.	<i>It feels the same for me either way.</i>	B
51.	<i>I think it's easier and more effective.</i>	OC
52.	<i>There isn't a big difference.</i>	B

Table 4.1: Learner statements for class type preference

In question 11, questionnaire participants were expected to choose whether they feel more confident participating in interaction activities online, or in a traditional face-to-face classroom. As a result, they had to state their reasons for the option chosen in question 11, in question 12. Therefore, those students that feel more confident in being partakers in interaction activities in a traditional face-to-face classroom indicate that at school there seem to be no distractions, learning is more effective, an easier discussion is facilitated, the list goes on. Others who find online education better state that it is easier and more effective, they can function better virtually, and have bigger freedom in making decisions. On the other hand, there were many questionnaire participants that feel equally confident in an online classroom and in a traditional face-to-face classroom. The reasons for that is the fact that they find themselves to be communicative and can, therefore, adapt to any kind of situation. To add, they state that the material is not different, which means that it would be equally easy to participate.

Finally, there was a small number of students who answered that they do not feel safe in an online classroom nor in a traditional face-to-face classroom. Unfortunately, only one of the students stated the reason why. That particular student that does not feel confident in participating in any type of classroom indicated that he/she is shy to take part in discussions.

12. What are some of the factors that influence the effectiveness of interaction activities in the online English classroom?

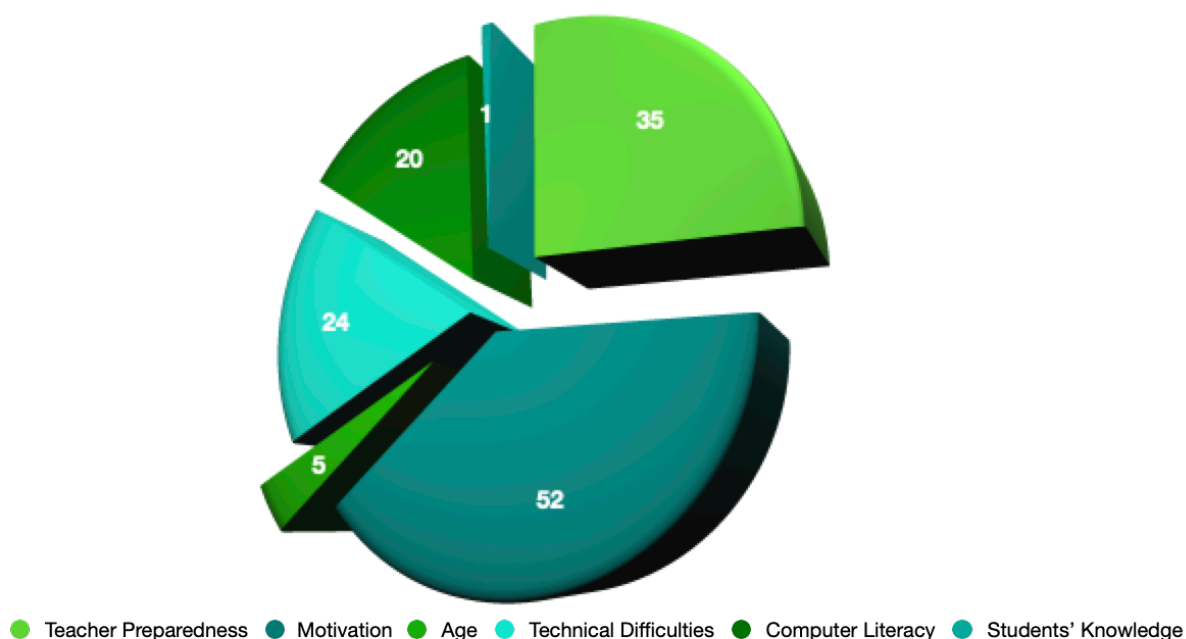


Figure 4.12: Tentative factors that influence the effectiveness of interaction online

Figure 4.12 illustrates what are some of the opinions questionnaire participants have in terms of the tentative factors that can have an influence on the effectiveness of interaction activities in the online English classroom. To begin with, out of all 81 respondents, zero stated that gender can influence the success of interaction activities online in any likely way.

When it comes to students' knowledge and class preparedness, only one student, or 1,2%, responded that it can have an impact on the overall success of interaction activities that are implemented online. In terms of age as a factor, 6,2% of all participants indicate that it can serve as component in positively or negatively influencing the overall effectiveness of online interaction activities. Computer literacy is seen as a critical factor regarding the success by 20 students. In other words, 24,7% of all participants see such literacy as an influence. When it comes to the technical difficulties, however, 24 respondents, or 29,6%, indicated that it can influence the effectiveness of online interaction in any way.

The biggest number of responses received were in terms of teacher preparedness and motivation. In other words, 43,2% of all participants from MP and NS suggested that teacher preparedness can influence the success of interaction online, whereas 52 students, or 64,2%,

found motivation as one of the pivotal circumstances that can impact the effectiveness of interaction activities implemented in the online English classroom, in the course of a global pandemic.

14. Share your views on the effectiveness of interaction activities in the online English classroom.

In the last question of the survey, students were asked to share their views on the effectiveness of interaction activities in the online English classroom, if they have any. Out of 81 students, 37 have expressed their thoughts on the matter. The rest had no comment, or included ideas that were repetitive.

#	<i>Student answers</i>
1.	<i>I think the interaction activities in the online English classroom are effective.</i>
2.	<i>Technical issues lead to ineffective interaction online.</i>
3.	<i>Half the time the WI-FI is down.</i>
4.	<i>Very little effective.</i>
5.	<i>It's very good.</i>
6.	<i>We all cooperate well, but maybe things would be different if we went to school.</i>
7.	<i>The worst thing is that we are seniors and can't master anything.</i>
8.	<i>I prefer online classes when it comes to English language as a subject.</i>
9.	<i>I'm fine with the level of interactivity online as I have difficulties with English.</i>
10.	<i>The effectiveness online is much lower. It is easier to learn and understand in a traditional face-to-face classroom.</i>
11.	<i>Learning English online is not very effective.</i>
12.	<i>Teacher preparedness is the key to effective interaction online.</i>
13.	<i>Interactive activities online tend to be easy and difficult at the same time. It is impossible to achieve a high level of interactivity online as in a traditional classroom because of technical issues.</i>
14.	<i>I am satisfied with the effectiveness of interaction activities online.</i>
15.	<i>We are motivated to participate in the online English classes because it is a matter of being interested and enjoying the process of learning.</i>
16.	<i>The effectiveness of interaction is good.</i>
17.	<i>Students should be allowed to speak more.</i>

18.	<i>Online classes have more discussions in class.</i>
19.	<i>Interaction activities in the online English classroom give great results.</i>
20.	<i>They are very helpful and interesting to us.</i>
21.	<i>Regarding the effectiveness of interactive activities, I think that several factors influence. Of course at this point our computer literacy is most needed because all education is based on computers. In addition, the preparedness of the students during the class is important, but also the preparedness of the teacher. Of course, there is also the motivation that encourages students to work and interact with the professor on a daily basis.</i>
22.	<i>We do well with English, the professor engages us in teaching and has a very good attitude towards us, but it does not work properly online because we sometimes have problems with the network and it is not like with physical presence.</i>
23.	<i>Effectiveness of interaction activities in the English classroom is very helpful and everything is easier to learn as long as the teacher is positive and helps everyone and of course if there is a motivation, otherwise the lack of motivation won't do any good.</i>
24.	<i>I would say that the online class is not as much of a problem, the students who are active in the classroom are also active online.</i>
25.	<i>The effectiveness of interaction is pretty good.</i>
26.	<i>Personally i think that our online English classes are excellent for the conditions we have, we learn stuff the same as we learn at school, and my teacher is very good at explaining and lecturing the stuff that we learn. So yeah i think its very good.</i>
27.	<i>For the students to be active while the classes are active and theres an active discussion they have to feel confident and motivated to be a part of the conversation. The gender doesnt matter. The student has to feel confident to talk in English.</i>
28.	<i>I think we and the professors are doing the best we can.</i>
29.	<i>Online education is inappropriate for learning and acquiring knowledge.</i>
30.	<i>With the opportunities offered in online teaching I think the effectiveness of the interaction is partly good, the concentration is reduced and there is not as much discussion as there would be in the classroom.</i>
31.	<i>It isn't comparable to traditional face-to-face classes.</i>
32.	<i>In my opinion online teaching is not effective for anyone because we do not know what really happens behind the screen.</i>
33.	<i>The effectiveness of English lessons is very high and I like that way of working.</i>
34.	<i>It is very interesting and we have fun.</i>
35.	<i>I think that there is not much interaction because the principle of work of certain teachers is usually just teaching the materials that are assigned to the class without involving students in any conversation.</i>

36.	<i>Better communication, more socializing, language improvement.</i>
37.	<i>I think that it would be better if all the classmates were participating.</i>

Table 4.2: Student overall views on the effectiveness of interaction activities online

All of the questions that were formulated for the questionnaire assist in approving or disproving the three hypotheses of the study. Questions 12 and 14 provide an insight as to why students tend to be more confident in participating in interaction activities in an online English classroom, or in a traditional face-to-face classroom. The answers, too, add up to the comprehension whether age and gender impact the overall effectiveness of interaction activities.

4.2 Classroom Observations

The second instrument implemented in the study was classroom observation. This particular process began on 17.05.2021 and was completed on 28.05.2021. In other words, the observation period took 12 days to accomplish. What was observed in the classes was the influence gender places on the effectiveness of interaction activities online; the influence age places on the effectiveness of interaction activities online; and the interactive materials incorporated in class. However, the aim of the observation was to draw a conclusion and determine whether age and gender can influence the effectiveness of interaction activities integrated in the online English classroom in the course of a global pandemic. Two schools were included in the process and they are “Nikola Shtejn” and “Mosha Pijade” from Tetovo. In order to come up with objective results, 10 observations were conducted, five in freshmen and five in senior classes. The type of observation was passive.

4.2.1 Freshmen Classroom Observation Results

As mentioned previously, 5 observations were conducted in the freshmen classes. To be more precise, two took place at “Nikola Shtejn” and three at “Mosha Pijade”. It is necessary to

indicate that because of the situation at the time, and for the sake of this study, all classroom observations were conducted online.

General Information			
Observer: Natasha Gjorgjevska	Institution: "Nikola Shtejn" - Tetovo		Observation: # 1
Teacher: Natasha Konstantinopolu	Date: 18.05.2021	Time: 10:25h	Length: 35 min
Class Year: I ¹	Student Age: 15	Number of Students: 26	Present in Class: 22
Ratio			
Female Students: 18	Male Students: 4		

Table 4.3: General information about the first freshmen classroom observation in NS

This class was the first in which observation was conducted. The materials used throughout the class were the book "Close – Up B1" and a water sports adventure video, as the topic of that day's lecture was Water Sports Adventure. Two types of interaction took place during the class, and they were: student – teacher and student – content interaction. As a result, the teacher incorporated everyone in the discussion by directly asking individuals. To add, 15 questions were asked during the whole class, and all of them were raised by the teacher. Those questions were striving for interaction since they revolved around students' interest regarding sports. With that said, questions were of variable difficulty as apart from students' interests, they had to extend knowledge when answering about the equipment used in unusual sports mentioned in class.

The observation was found to be successful because of the profound interactivity in class. Even though there weren't many questions raised throughout the class, the answers were rather detailed. Apart from answering, students were also asked to read and complete different kind of activities from the book. They voluntarily interacted in the reading activity, as well as "fill-in the blanks" and "circle the correct word" activities from the book. As mentioned previously, the teacher involved the students in interaction by directly asking them questions. However, those questions that referred to the whole class were mainly

answered by the male students. Last but not the least, the students were not hesitant in being interactive despite being freshmen.

General Information			
Observer: Natasha Gjorgjevska	Institution: “Nikola Shtejn” – Tetovo		Observation: # 2
Teacher: Natasha Konstantinopolu	Date: 21.05.2021	Time: 08:10h	Length: 35 min
Class Year: I ¹	Student Age: 15	Number of Students: 26	Present in Class: 24
Ratio			
Female Students: 20	Male Students: 4		

Table 4.4: General information about the second freshmen classroom observation in NS

The second freshmen observation included the same class that the first observation was conducted in. It was desirable that the same class was observed twice so that results can be more authentic. As it can be seen from the general information, the class was consisted of a predominant number of female students in the first year of studies in NS. The material used in class was “Close – Up B1” book, and the topic that was covered was Deep into the Darkness. Compared to the previous observation, this time there were more questions raised in class. A total of 40 questions were raised by the teacher. Two types of interactions took place in class, and they are student – teacher and student – content interaction. The teacher incorporated everyone in the discussion. The questions raised throughout the class were striving for interaction because they were pointing out to students’ personal preferences, such as their hobbies and interesting leisure activities of someone they happen to know. Also, it is necessary to mention that the questions were of variable difficulty. Apart from answering questions, students were asked to make a list of five things they do in their free time and share it with the rest of the group. They were, also, expected to complete activities from the book and read a text. When it comes to interaction in terms of gender, both female and male

students were actively participating with a ratio of 50-50. To add, this observation, too, showed that freshmen students participate in interaction activities successfully.

General Information			
Observer: Natasha Gjorgjevska	Institution: "Mosha Pijade" – Tetovo		Observation: # 1
Teacher: Elmedina Omeri	Date: 18.05.2021	Time: 11:00 h	Length: 35 min
Class Year: I ¹¹	Student Age: 15	Number of Students: 26 students	Present in Class: 6
Ratio			
Female Students: 2	Male Students: 4		

Table 4.5: General information about the first freshmen classroom observation in MP

This was the first observation conducted in MP in a freshmen class. As shown in Table 4.5 a small number of students were present in class. However, it is safe to say that the predominant number of those present in class were male students. The book used in this class was "New Headway Elementary Student's Book" for an upper beginner – lower intermediate level. Regarding the usage of the book, the teacher stated that learners' level of English was extremely low which is why it was the only appropriate book for the class. The topic of the lesson that day was Food Around the World. This particular class included all three interaction types: student – content; student – teacher; and student – student interaction. A total of 37 questions were raised in class. In other words, 27 questions were raised by the teacher, six questions were raised by male students, and four questions were raised by female students. These particular questions were striving for interaction as they involved different activities and different answers. Taking the age into account, one can argue that the questions were not of variable difficulty. However, students' proficiency level was rather low as they were barely able to speak in English. As such, it is safe to say that questions were of variable difficulty because students were asked to answer to questions regarding a particular text,

share their opinions and even translate sections into their native language, in this case Albanian.

This particular class appeared to show profound results of interactivity. The students were encouraged to come up with questions they can refer to their fellow classmates. Those questions included translations, explanations, and even information regarding the text that was previously read in class. Even though the language used in class was quite simple, the lesson was very interactive. The teacher persuaded the students to communicate and ask questions. The activities included: fill-in the blanks exercise, Q&A, translations, and even sharing likes and preferences regarding the foods and drinks. It also included daily habits.

When it comes to participation, only four students were actively involved in interaction, two of which were male and 2 female students. Statistically, the class was divided 50-50 in terms of gender. Taking the questions raised by the teacher into account, she asked 13 questions that referred to the whole class. The majority, or nine, of the questions were answered by male students, and only four by female students.

General Information			
Observer: Natasha Gjorgjevska	Institution: "Mosha Pijade" – Tetovo		Observation: # 1
Teacher: Elmedina Omeri	Date: 18.05.2021	Time: 11:40 h	Length: 35 min
Class Year: I ²	Student Age: 15	Number of Students: 12 students	Present in Class: 5
Ratio			
Female Students: 0	Male Students: 5		

Table 4.6: General information about the second freshmen classroom observation in MP

This was the second observation conducted with the same teacher. Unfortunately, it was impossible to observe the same class twice as a result to the fact that it was the end of the school year. However, this particular observation involved the same material, which was "New Headway Elementary Student's Book" and the same topic that was about "Food Around

the World". Out of 12 students, only five were present in class. This particular classroom observation was quite critical for the study as all students were males. The two types of interaction implemented in this class were student – content and student – teacher interaction. There was a total of 33 questions raised in class, all of which were raised by the teacher. It is important to state that the approach to teaching this material was extremely identical to those approaches implemented in the previous classroom observation that included the same material.

The questions were striving for interaction as they involved different activities and different answers. Here again, the students' proficiency level was low. Yet, the questions were of variable difficulty since students were expected to give responses regarding the text read in class, share likes and dislikes, and describe photos.

As mentioned previously, the class followed the same pattern as the previous class since it involved the same material. To add, the questions raised by the teacher were identical to the ones in the previous observation. Since the students' level of English was extremely low, the teacher was often forced to ask questions in their native language. Students managed to remain interactive during the whole class. However, this observation clearly approves the hypothesis which states that online classes with a predominant number of female students tend to deliver better results in interactive activities than those classes with a predominant number of male students.

General Information			
Observer: Natasha Gjorgjevska	Institution: "Moshka Pijade" – Tetovo		Observation: # 1
Teacher: Dragana Milosavleska	Date: 28.05.2021	Time: 08:50 h	Length: 35 min
Class Year: I	Student Age: 15	Number of Students: 3	Present in Class: 2
Ratio			
Female Students: /	Male Students: 2		

Table 4.7: General information about the third freshmen classroom observation in MP

The observation illustrated in Table 4.7 was the last freshmen observation conducted in MP. The material used in this particular class was Close -Up B1 book and Young Adventurers video, as that was the topic of that day's lesson. What is visible here is that the teacher used the same book as the teacher from NS did in the freshmen class.

The different types of interaction used in class were: student – content and student – teacher interaction. A total of 34 questions were asked, and all were raised by the teacher. These questions were striving for interaction as a big number of questions were asked generally so that the students can choose whether they want to answer the questions or not. Apart from that, questions were of variable difficulty since they ranged from explaining word meaning to sharing opinions, and even conducting presentations.

Despite the extremely small number of students, the class seemed rather interactive. Even though these kinds of classes are difficult to be observed and, therefore, might not be applicable for approving or disproving the hypothesis of this study, the teacher did a good job in making the students participate. The main part of the lesson included exercises connected to a video that was played in class. After that, students were expected to translate or describe the meaning of certain words that were pointed out by the teacher. Finally, the class finished with the presentations of the two students. The presentations included extreme sports that the students elaborated on and ended up by answering to several questions asked by the teacher.

4.2.2 Senior Classroom Observation Results

When it comes to the senior classroom observations, three were conducted in Nikola Shtejn, whereas two were conducted in Mosha Pijade. These observations, too, were conducted online.

Below each observation table, there will be a summary and comments that have been written throughout each class that has been observed.

General Information			
Observer: Natasha Gjorgjevska	Institution: "Nikola Shtejn" – Tetovo		Observation: # 1
Teacher: Drita Maksuti	Date: 17.05.2021	Time: 14:10	Length: 35 min
Class Year: IV ¹²	Student Age: 18	Number of Students: 35	Present in Class: 8
Ratio			
Female Students: 2	Male Students: 6		

Table 4.8: General information about the first senior classroom observation in NS

The first senior classroom observation was conducted in Nikola Shtejn. The material used in class was FOCUS -Teacher's book 4, whereas the topic was "Writing: A Review of a Travel Destination". The general information indicate that the predominant number of students present in class were male. The different types of interaction implemented throughout the class were: student – content and student – teacher interaction. A total of 12 questions were raised throughout the class. No question was raised by the students. The questions asked by the teacher were striving for interaction as they involved personal opinions and experiences. To add, they covered various topics connected to the material used in class.

This senior class is consisted of 35 students. However, only eight students were present in class. It is necessary to highlight that this was the last week of the semester for senior high school students. They were not as interactive as the students from the freshmen classes

except for one particular male student who managed to answer almost all of the questions raised by the teacher. The teacher had a tendency to refer the questions to the whole class instead of pointing out at individuals. This approach allowed students to choose whether they want to take part in interaction or not.

General Information			
Observer: Natasha Gjorgjevska	Institution: "Nikola Shtejn"		Observation: # 1
Teacher: Aneta Filipovska	Date: 18.05.2021	Time: 1:30 h	Length: 35 min
Class Year: IV ⁵	Student Age: 18	Number of Students: 15	Present in Class: 9
Ratio			
Female Students: 8	Male Students: 1		

Table 4.9: General information about the second senior classroom observation in NS

Table 4.9 illustrates the second observation in NS that was conducted in a senior class. It included nine students present in class. As it can be seen from the general information, this was a class with a predominant number of female students. There seems to be a similar pattern when it comes to the material since the book used in class was FOCUS 4, which was the same as in the first observation.

The different types of interaction used in this particular class were: student – content and student – teacher interaction. Since it was a review class, students were expected to answer to particular questions regarding a text that had previously been read. The questions asked did strive for an interaction since students were already familiar with the text that the questions alluded to. To add, the questions included personal preferences regarding travelling.

It is necessary to mention that these students were more or less finished with their classes and were preparing for their Matura examination. Therefore, the teacher took the time to

explain about some of the reading activities that can be found in the above-mentioned examination. Apart from that, this teacher, too, asked questions by referring to the whole class instead of pointing out at particular individuals. A total of 9 questions were raised, and all were answered by female students.

Finally, it should be taken into account that these students were not as motivated to participate in interaction as the freshmen due to the fact that they were about to finish with high school.

General Information			
Observer: Natasha Gjorgjevska	Institution: "Nikola Shtejn" - Tetovo		Observation: # 1
Teacher: Aneta Filipovska	Date: 18.05.2021	Time: 14:10	Length: 35 min
Class Year: IV ³	Student Age: 18	N. of Students: 13	Present in Class: 12
Ratio			
Female Students: 9	Male Students: 3		

Table 4.10: General information about the third senior classroom observation in NS

Table 4.10 shows the general information regarding the second observation with the same teacher. Unfortunately, observing the same class twice was impossible as that was the last week before senior students graduate from high school. However, it was the same material from the previous observation that was applied to this one. Therefore, this observation can strongly impact the conclusion of the study.

To begin with, there were a total of 13 questions and all were raised by the teacher. As this was a class with a predominant number of female students, all questions were answered by them. They did strive for interaction since they referred to the text that was already familiar to the students. To add, questions were of variable difficulty since they not only involved personal preference, but particular facts found in the text.

Here, too, the teacher made sure to explain about some critical aspects which can help the students with their Matura examination. Even though it was a review class, students were very interactive during the whole lesson.

General Information			
Observer: Natasha Gjorgjevska	Institution: "Moshja Pijade" – Tetovo		Observation: # 1
Teacher: Silvija Stojanovska	Date: 18.05.2021	Time: 08:50h	Length: 35 min
Class Year: IV ⁹	Student Age: 18	Number of Students: 8	Present in Class: 6
Ratio			
Female Students: 1	Male Students: 5		

Table 4.11: General information about the first senior classroom observation in MP

Table 4.11 illustrates the general information regarding the first senior classroom observation conducted in Moshja Pijade. It is necessary to mention that in this class, too, the material used was FOCUS 4. The lesson topic was It's a Crime.

A total of 12 questions were raised throughout the whole class, and all by the teacher. The type of interaction used was the following: student – content and student – teacher interaction. When it comes to raising the questions, this teacher, same as the rest who teach the senior classes, referred to the whole class instead of pointing out at individuals. Apart from that, the questions were of variable difficulty and some of them strived for interaction. The reason why all of the questions did not seem to be striving for interaction would be because they included exercises from the workbook.

Two out of six students cooperated throughout the class. As it was consisted of a predominant number of male students, this observation appears to support the hypothesis on gender as the class wasn't as interactive. It is important to take into account that the lack of participation

might be a result to the fact that it was quite early in the morning so students were still sleepy, and they are focused on their Matura examination.

General Information			
Observer: Natasha Gjorgjevska	Institution: "Moshja Pijade" – Tetovo		Observation: # 2
Teacher: Silvija Stojanovska	Date: 20.05.2021	Time: 07:30 & 08:10	Length: 70 min
Class Year: IV ⁹	Student Age: 18	Number of Students: 8	Present in Class: 4
Ratio			
Female Students: 1	Male Students: 3		

Table 4.12: General information about the second senior classroom observation in MP

The second observation in Moshja Pijade was conducted on the same class. The lesson topic was Reported Questions, Requests and Imperatives. Even though the number of students present in class was smaller, it still included males predominantly.

As shown in Table 4.12, this observation included a double class of 70 minutes. As a result, 44 questions were raised throughout the whole class. No student asked a question. Compared to the previous observation, this time the teacher tended to not only refer to the whole class, but point out at particular individuals. Even though the predominant number of students were males, 50% of the questions were answered by the single female student. Since it was a grammar class, it included questions regarding tenses, verbs, and completing activities. This can be one of the reasons why the class was not interactive. Questions appeared to be of variable difficulty since students were asked to explain some of the grammatical aspects in terms of reported speech, which included tenses and verbs.

One can argue that this particular class was not as applicable for observation because of the topic. It can be seen that the teacher asked a lot of questions throughout the whole class.

Since it was a double class without a break, the interactivity decreased after a certain time. Here again it can be concluded that the class wasn't as interactive due to the following:

1. Students were sleepy at that time in the morning
2. Students are about to graduate
3. Students lack grammatical knowledge

All the classroom observations will serve in approving or disproving two of the hypotheses in the following chapter.

4.3 Textbook Analysis

Textbook analysis was the final instrument that was required for this study. Three books for analyzed in other to help contribute to get to authentic conclusions. When it comes to the freshmen classes that were observed, two different materials were used. Those books are Close Up 4 and New Headway Elementary Student's book. The senior classes from both MP and NS used Focus 4. The aim of this final instrument is to understand whether the books incorporated in the class promote interactive activities that can be applicable in the online English classroom in the course of a global pandemic.

4.3.1 Textbook Analysis Results

The first textbook analysis was conducted on Close Up B1 for freshmen students that was almost used in all the first-year classes in MP and NS. In order to get a better insight on the effectiveness of the book, the analysis was managed in terms of the four criteria for textbook analysis. The criteria include: objective, content, language skills, and design. To be more precise, the objective part of the analysis is about the syllabus match, level suitability and whether the textbook is available on the e-textbook website that has been set up by the Ministry of Education and science in North Macedonia. In the content, the analysis was conducted based on the number of chapters and description of what is the textbook consisted of. In terms of language skills, what is important is to determine whether there is an even

distribution of the language skills which are listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Finally, the design is the last part of the analysis. Here it is necessary to determine whether the textbook contains appropriate cover, book block, and up to date photos.

CHECKLIST	Book Name: Close Up		
OBJECTIVE:	Syllabus Match	Available on E-Textbook website	Level Suitability
	✓	✓	✓
CONTENT:	Number of Chapters:	Description	
	12 Units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Evenly distributed length -Different typed of activities -Promotes interaction -Video tapes -Review Section 	
LANGUAGE SKILLS:	All skills available	Even distribution	
	✓	-Bigger focus on receptive skills	
DESIGN:	Cover	Book block	Up to date photos
Textbook contains the appropriate following:	✓	✓	✓

Checklist 4.1: General information regarding textbook analysis of Close Up

The first criteria with which the textbook was assessed is the objective. As a result, it is safe to say that this textbook matches the course syllabus for freshmen students. Additionally, it has been selected by the Ministry of Education and Science of North Macedonia as an appropriate textbook choice for this particular age group. Written in an intermediate level of English, freshmen students are expected to possess a proficiency level that will be as much as the required for getting a passing grade in the course.

The second criteria by which the analysis was conducted is the content. Close Up is divided into 12 different units. Each unit covers a different topic that should be of interest to the

student. For instance, there is material that covers family, food, nature, extreme situations, entertainment, the list goes on. The length of each unit is the same, as it is evenly distributed throughout the book so that each chapter is consisted of 12 pages. There is a variety of different activities that are incorporated in the book. Notably, these activities are designed to promote interactive learning, even in an online environment. Moreover, each unit contains a video connected to the reading activity. There is a review section at the end of each unit. Particularly, students discuss vocabulary and grammar segments in the review chapter. That being said, the content of Close Up is, both, applicable and satisfying for the needs of first year learners in MP and NS.

The third criteria used in the textbook analysis are language skills. This included the appropriate use and distribution of the four language skills. To begin with, it is safe to conclude that the whole book incorporates reading, listening, speaking, and writing in each unit. However, it seems like bigger focus is given on reading and writing since there appear to be more pages and activities planned for these two particular language skills. Needless to say, listening and speaking are not left but, but could use more activities that cover these two language skills. However, many of the reading and writing activities require expressing thoughts, recalling, and answering questions which balance the incorporation of all four language skills implemented in the book.

The final criteria by which this textbook was analyzed is the design. Without any further analysis, one can conclude that the cover of Close Up is eye-catching with the matching vivid colors. Furthermore, each unit contains different high-quality pictures that are in accordance with the topic of the unit. This can undoubtedly grab learners' attention as the pictures often illustrate students' leisure activities or things familiar to their daily lives.

As mentioned above, Close Up is a book for first year high school students that is objective for their age and needs. It contains diverse content that can be fun to learn and is consisted of often repetition which can impact the overall language learning process. All four language skills are almost evenly distributed, but could use further improvement in terms of expanding the time for listening and speaking activities. Finally, the overall design of the book is quite satisfactory and can impress the learner. When it comes to the age and gender, it is undoubtable that the topics can be applied to freshmen students and are applicable for both genders. As a result, it can be concluded that this particular language textbook promotes

interaction since the activities push learners to take part in answering questions, sharing thoughts, etc.

CHECKLIST	Book Name: New Headway Elementary Student's Book		
OBJECTIVE:	Syllabus Match	Available on E-Textbook website	Level Suitability
	X	X	X
CONTENT:	Number of Chapters:	Description	
	14 Units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Evenly distributed length -Different typed of activities -Promotes interaction -Focus on grammar and vocabulary 	
LANGUAGE SKILLS:	All skills available	Even distribution	
	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Main focus on reading -Very little focus on listening 	
DESIGN:	Cover	Book block	Up to date photos
Textbook contains the appropriate following:	✓	✓	X

Checklist 4.2: General information regarding textbook analysis of New Headway Elementary

The second textbook which was analyzed in this study is the New Headway Elementary Student's book. This particular book was only used by one of the teachers who taught in the first-year classes in MP.

To begin with, it seems that this particular textbook doesn't pass the first criteria, which is the objective. As mentioned previously, this specific book is of a lower language level than the one students are expected to have achieved by the first year of high school. Furthermore, the New Headway Elementary Student's book has not been selected by the Ministry of Education

and Science of North Macedonia. That being said, it appears as this book is not applicable for freshmen students in high schools, since it doesn't match the syllabus.

Moving on to the content, the textbook consists of 14 units in total. Even though quite basic, all the topics can be of an interest to the students. The variety of topics include meeting people, talented teenagers, food, adventure, etc. This book, too, has each unit distributed evenly throughout the whole publication. In other words, each different unit is eight pages long. As it can be seen, the main focus of the book is grammar and vocabulary learning. There are no videos like the previous book included, but cassettes, which the teacher may or may not have. Another interesting thing is that the book does not have any review sections after each unit. The language use is simple so students using this book can find expressing themselves quite easy. Moreover, the activities incorporated in the book promote interaction.

In this textbook analysis, the third criteria which was used, in order to make an evaluation on the effectiveness of the book, are the language skills. As expected, listening, reading, speaking, and writing are all implemented in the book. However, it seems that the skill that was found to be the most present throughout the whole textbook is reading. Speaking and writing were skills that were less implemented in the textbook, but still present. Unfortunately, listening was a skill which was the least implemented in the whole textbook. It is necessary to indicate that this is a book for students that are younger than first year high school students, which is why it lacks listening activities.

Looking at the design, the cover seems to be quite interesting and can attract students' attention. Apart from the pages which are fulfilled with grammar activities, the book contains a lot of pictures that are connected to the topic. However, the pictures do not have the same high quality as the ones in the first book that was analyzed. Apart from that, it seems as they are not up to date. In other words, pictures of old phones should be replaced with smartphones, and old-looking computers with new ones. The reason this is quite critical is because students need to be engaged in topics that are familiar to their everyday lives in order to interact effectively.

In summary, New Headway Elementary Student's book gives the impression of not being applicable for this particular learner group. One of the biggest reasons would be the fact that it hasn't been selected by the MOE. Another reason is that the textbook is assembled using everyday language so that elementary students are able to comprehend and engage in

interaction, not freshmen students at MP high school. However, the incorporated topics are applicable for, both, male and female students. In addition, there lacks a balanced focus on all four language skills which is a censorious factor on the overall language learning process. Finally, published in 2006, the textbook requires renewal so that learners who use it can find the design familiar to objects they use in their everyday lives.

CHECKLIST	Book Name: FOCUS 4		
OBJECTIVE:	Syllabus Match	Available on E-Textbook website	Level Suitability
	✓	✓	✓
CONTENT:	Number of Chapters:	Description	
	8 Units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Evenly distributed length -Different typed of activities -Promotes interaction -Focus on contemporary issues -Review section 	
LANGUAGE SKILLS:	All skills available	Even distribution	
	✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Extensive reading -Bigger focus on receptive skills 	
DESIGN:	Cover	Book block	Up to date photos
Textbook contains the appropriate following:	✓	✓	✓

Checklist 4.3: General information regarding textbook analysis of FOCUS 4

The third, and final, textbook that was analyzed in this study is FOCUS 4. It is necessary to mention that all senior classes from Mosha Pijade and Nikola Shtejn used this textbook for the subject.

Same as with the previous analyses, the first criteria which helped assess the textbook was the objective. Fortunately, it seems that FOCUS 4 matches with the syllabus of senior students in high schools. As a result, it can be found on the website for electronic textbooks that has

been put up by the MOE of North Macedonia. To add, the level in which it has been written matches with the level of proficiency level senior students in all high schools ought to possess. Taking a look at the content of the textbook, it is easily concluded that it passes the criteria for several reasons. It has eight units in total, which is much less than the previous books that were analyzed previously. The variety of topics range from youthful cities, cool places to hang out in town, best jobs in the world, to biased media, technology, and environment. From this, one can conclude that the subject matters revolve around contemporary issues that are familiar to the learners. What is different from the previous textbooks is that the units here are much longer, which is why there are less. From further analysis, it can be stated that each unit contains an extended review section, not only with vocabulary and grammar activities, but exercises that cover all the language skills.

Following are the language skills criteria. As seen in the previous books, listening, reading, speaking, and writing are all present throughout the whole textbook. For instance, there is extensive reading in each unit, making it the skill that was present the most throughout the book. Listening was the skill that was almost as common as reading, as some of the activities required the use of the two language skills altogether. That being said, more importance is given to the receptive language skills. However, the productive skills are not left out either. That being said, each unit contains a page fulfilled with activities that require productive language skills respectively.

Lastly, FOCUS 4 passes the final analysis criteria, which is the design. Starting from the cover page, it is designed out of two rather bright colors that make the book noticeable together with the capital letters in which the title is written. The inside of the textbook contains two different kinds of pictures. Some are animated, whereas others are high-quality photos.

To come to the point, FOCUS 4 is a textbook which is extremely appropriate for the senior high school students. It has been suggested by the MOE, it includes content that is relevant to the learner, and it has an appealing design. Even though the main focus seems to be on the receptive language skills, it still promotes interaction and contains activities that are easily implemented in the online English classroom. Since it is appropriate for senior students, and it has been selected by the MOE, further analysis points out that it does incorporate the two genders evenly throughout the whole textbook.

As stated above, these are the books that were used in the classes in which observation was conducted. After a detailed analysis, it is safe to say that some pass the criteria, and some don't. However, all books promote interactive activities that can easily be implemented in the online English classroom in the course of a global pandemic.

Chapter V: Discussion

This chapter gives prominence to the analysis and interpretations of the gathered results. At this stage of the study, collected results from the different instruments used are discussed. Apart from the findings, a reflection upon the literature review and comparison to the results gathered from the research is intended.

5.1 Hypothesis I

One of the factors that has been treated as decisive throughout this study is the age. Being part of the biographical variables that tend to impact the overall process of learning, such factors required further analysis in terms of online education in times of a global pandemic. As a result, how does age influence the productivity of interaction activities online? The hypothesis of the study reflected upon the high possibility that senior students who take part in online classes show better involvement in interaction activities than freshmen students in high schools. The review of literature serves to show that other researchers agree with this. For instance, Einarsson and Granström (2002) point out that “teachers interact more frequently with their pupils at the upper level than at the intermediate level” (p.122). Others go on and agree with this too. Morin’s et al. (2019) quite recent research concludes that “students in the older category ... are more enthusiastic about participating in online learning as they feel that they have stronger self-efficacy and better mental readiness” (p. 314). However, the research that has been conducted in this study through the classroom observations and student questionnaires strongly disprove the hypothesis. As mentioned in the previous chapter, 10 observations were conducted in “Moshajade” and “Nikola Shtejn”. As a result, five observations were conducted in MP and five observations were conducted in NS. In order to be more precise, five observations were conducted in the senior classes, whereas the other five were conducted in freshmen classes of the two schools mentioned above. With this, 9 out of 10 observations strongly disprove the hypothesis that senior students who take part in online classes show better involvement in interaction activities than freshmen students in high schools. To add, the textbooks used in all the classes promote

interaction that can also be implemented in the online classroom. Additionally, the topic of each unit can be found interesting and applicable for the age group that these textbooks have been selected for. Therefore, it is safe to say that the textbooks do not have any influence on the disproval of this hypothesis.

It is also necessary to repeat that the views on this particular matter have scholars divided. In other words, Koh and Lim indicate that “as the age of the student decreased, the student’s performance for tools that allowed for more open means of communication increased” (as cited in Simonds & Brock, 2014, p. 4). As such, this view matches with the hypothesis that has been disproved in this study.

Although disproved, this hypothesis requires additional research. The reason for that would be that the classroom observations took place from 17.05.2021 to 28.05.2021. However, there was a need for the classroom observations in the fourth years to be completed by 20.05.2021, as that was the last day of the semester for senior students. As a result, it may seem that senior students did not take part in interaction activities, in the online classroom, as much as the freshmen students because of the reality that they were, more or less, finished with their high school education and focused on the Matura examination.

5.2 Hypothesis II

The second factor that has been treated as decisive, apart from age, when it comes to the effectiveness of interaction activities that have been integrated in the online English classroom in the course of a global pandemic, is gender. This element, too, is a part of the biographical variables and, therefore, important for the overall learning process. Yet, is it important in terms of interaction activities online? What impact does gender place on the effectiveness of interaction activities integrated in the online English classroom? The study indicated that online classrooms with a predominant number of female students tend to deliver better results in interaction activities than those classrooms with a predominant number of male students. As the research showed, scholars’ opinions were differing regarding this particular element, too. To begin with, Einarsson and Granstörn (2002) believe that

“gender makes no general difference in the classroom” (p. 118). Others disagreed by stating that “gender is an affecting factor in the process of teacher/student interactions in the classroom. In other words, gender ... influences the quality and quantity of interaction in the classroom” (Rashidi & Naderi, 2012, p. 30). As a result, which is the gender that is positively affecting the quality of interaction activities? Some studies point out that boys are the dominant gender in the classroom since they are the ones that “get more attention from teachers and interact more with them than do girls” (Einarsson & Granstörn, 2002, p. 118). The hypothesis of this study points out that girls are the dominant gender that positively influence the effectiveness of interaction activities. As already familiar, the observations that were conducted in the schools included the following:

- Classroom observations with a predominant number of male students in MP
- Classroom observations with a predominant number of female students in NS

From the classroom observations and the student questionnaire, it is safe to conclude that the research approves the second hypothesis of this study. In other words, one can summarize that online classrooms with a predominant number of female students tend to deliver better results in interaction activities than those classrooms with a predominant number of male students. Some of the researchers mentioned in the review of literature in this study regard this hypothesis as true. For instance, Arbaugh points out that “women participated more than men in class discussions and were more collaborative” (as cited in Woods & Baker, 2004, p. 6). Others also found gender to be a rather critical factor influencing the effectiveness of interaction activities since “gender and communication style influenced level of interactivity ... and were more consistent with female online communication than with male communication” (Herring, as cited in Woods & Baker, 2004, p. 6). As a result, a big portion of the literature confirm the second hypothesis of this study.

When it comes to the textbook analysis that was conducted, it is safe to say that the material does not have any negative influence on the hypothesis regarding gender. Notably, the textbooks appear to have topics which can be seen as interesting and applicable for the two genders.

Yet, it is important to indicate that throughout the whole process of classroom observations there were classes that were profoundly interactive. These classes were consisted of a predominant number of male students and managed to achieve a profound success in the

interaction activities integrated in the online English classroom in the course of a global pandemic.

5.3 Hypothesis III

The third, and final, element that was seen as important and, therefore, investigated in this study was learner attitudes and confidence. The reason this is seen as influential is because learners' needs often have a huge impact on the success rate in learning, both, online and in a traditional face-to-face classroom. As a result, the emergence of online education due to the outbreak has had educators question what some of the learners' preferences are. So, are students more confident participating in interaction activities online or in the traditional classroom? The hypothesis of this study states that students appear to be more confident in being active participants in interaction activities online than they are in the traditional classroom. Same as with the previous hypotheses, scholars agree or disagree on the matter, too. Those who disagree state that "student expectation of interaction gets lowered when they take online courses. Several students mentioned that it is quite difficult to interact in a natural way without hearing and seeing others' responses" (Su et al., 2005, p. 13). Even though this can be improved with the use of cameras and microphones, other research includes that "the chances for students to discuss questions with other students were limited in the virtual online classroom environment" (Chang, 2006, p. 1). However, there is a sufficient number of research that supports the hypothesis. For example, "In online interaction, the level of student engagement increases, giving them the drive to excel in their craft of studying and to develop their opinions on a wide array of thoughts" (Aydin, 2013, p. 1343). As a result, "students displayed a high level of satisfaction" when it comes to the whole process of online education (p. 1347).

After a thorough analysis of the students' questionnaire, it is provable that the third hypothesis with which was expressed that students appear to be more confident in being active participants in interaction activities online than they are in the traditional classroom, is partially accepted. That being said, 41,1%, or 39 students, answered that they feel more confident participating in interaction activities online than in a traditional face-to-face

classroom. Apart from that, 13,6% of the total number feel more confident when it comes to actively taking part in interaction activities online, whereas 34,6% feel confident in participating in interaction activities, both, in an online English classroom and in a traditional face-to-face English classroom. Numbers overlap when it comes to the level of difficulty as 46,9% of participant believe that online education has made interaction activities more difficult. Yet, 27,2% indicate that interaction activities are easier in the online English classroom, whereas 25,9% strongly state that the level of difficulty remains the same. To add, 82,7% of the total number of students that answered the questionnaire feel confident participating in classroom discussions online. As a result to that, the research that has been conducted on this particular issue partially accepts the hypothesis which revolves around the probability that students tend to be more confident in being active participants in interaction activities online than they are in the traditional classroom.

Lastly, the analysis of the three different textbooks used in MP and NS points out that the material found in each unit promote interaction activities and can easily be manifested in an online teaching and learning environment. As a result, the textbooks have no influence on additional accepting or rejecting the third hypothesis.

The complexity of this study has led to three different answers regarding the various hypotheses. As mentioned above, the first hypothesis which indicated that senior students who take part in online classes show better involvement in interaction activities than freshmen students in high schools, has been disproved. The second hypothesis which draws a conclusion that online classrooms with a predominant number of female students tend to deliver better results in interaction activities than those classrooms with a predominant number of male students, has been approved through the classroom observations and student questionnaire. Finally, the third hypothesis which alludes to the probability that students appear to be more confident in being active participants in interaction activities online than they are in the traditional face-to-face classrooms has only been partially approved.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

The unexpected shift to online teaching and learning had students and teachers unprepared. Despite the fact that the change was quite unexpected, it appears as the inevitable substitute forced everyone into adapting and getting the best out of the whole educational process. Notwithstanding the severity of the outbreak, education was not terminated, but instead measures were taken by the Ministry of Education for a productive learning to take place online. As a result, the need for further research in the field remained the same. What was needed were answers that can somehow contribute to the bettering of online education in a course of a global pandemic.

One of the most important items, when it comes to online education, is the presence of interaction. In order to ensure successful interaction in the online English classroom, it was necessary to examine some of the decisive factors influencing such effectiveness. Those previously mentioned decisive factors that can impact the success of interaction activities online, are age and gender. As such, the purpose of the study was to investigate how they correlate to the productivity in the online English classroom, in the course of a global pandemic. Another item, which was as important as age and gender and can have an impact on the success of online classes, that was investigated in this study was learner attitudes and confidence when it comes to taking part in interaction activities online. This can, undoubtedly, serve when it comes to improving the quality of online education in the future. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to understanding how confident students tend to be in being partakers in interaction online. Before making any conclusions, a review of literature was conducted. It showed that researchers and different studies have contradicting reasonings on the matter. Some of them supported the three hypotheses, others did not. As a result, the performed research included three instruments. Those instruments were: students' questionnaire, classroom observation, and textbook analyses. These tools helped answer the research questions, as well as, approve and disprove the hypotheses of the study.

In order to answer to the first research question, and approve or disprove the first hypothesis regarding age which indicated that, "Senior students that take part in online classes show

better involvement in interaction activities than freshmen students in high school”, classroom observations were conducted in two different schools, which were “Mosha Pijade” and “Nikola Shtejn” in Tetovo. The conclusion drawn by the classroom observations was backed up by the students’ questionnaire and the textbook analyses. Once the research was brought to a conclusion, the results designated that the first hypothesis is not supported and, therefore, disproved. In other words, 9 out of 10 classroom observations pointed to the fact that freshmen students showed a higher level of interactivity in class than senior students in MP and NS.

The second hypothesis which stated that, “Online classrooms with a predominant number of female students tend to deliver better results in interaction activities than those classrooms with a predominant number of male students” was supported by the classroom observations. That being said, the statistics showed that more than 50% of classroom observations help approve this hypothesis. Additionally, the students’ questionnaires show that female students are in the majority of those who actively participate in interaction activities online.

The final hypothesis which specified that, “students appear to be more confident in being active participants in interaction activities online than they are in the traditional classroom”, was only partially accepted, which seems to be rather common in social sciences. To be precise, 39 students feel more confident as partakers in interaction activities in a traditional face-to-face classroom. This number makes up for the majority of participants. However, 11 of the participants strongly indicated that they feel more confident in taking part in interaction activities in a virtual classroom, whereas a total of 28 students that took part in the questionnaire feel confident in, both, virtual and traditional classroom. As such, the authenticity of the third hypothesis is partially approved.

The final question of the student questionnaire was included to serve as a guide in understanding what some of the students’ needs and thoughts were on the overall teaching and learning process online. A conclusion that can be drawn upon, based on the answers, is

that each student should be treated as an individual. They have different needs and, therefore, different likes and preferences. There were those who missed traditional face-to-face classes because they feel more confident at school. However, the majority of them missed the traditional classes for the sole purpose of creating a sense of community, with physical presence, at school. Nevertheless, this research served and proved that learners did an excellent job when it comes to adapting to the new “normal”. Even though not all of the hypotheses of this study were approved, they still serve as an important guide when it comes to surpassing the effectiveness of interaction activities integrated in the online English classroom in the course of a global pandemic.

6.1 Limitations

The first limitation that appeared before conducting the classroom observations was not having an account for the teaching platform. At the beginning of the pandemic, the Ministry of Education and Science in North Macedonia had decided that online classes will be conducted through a platform called “Schools”. However, the limitation was getting an access that would enable the observer to passively observe a lecture. The reason for that is the factuality that the MOE in North Macedonia was accountable for creating a Schools-account for each student and administrative staff of the schools. Luckily, with the consent of the school principals of Mosha Pijade and Nikola Shtejn, the classroom observations managed to be conducted.

The second limitation that is worth mentioning is the lack of time for classroom observations. Due to the Covid19 restrictions, the length of the classes was reduced to 35 minutes. As a result, a big amount of time was wasted on ensuring that everyone has successfully entered the classroom and can hear the teacher clearly. Uncontrollably, there appeared to be times when the teacher or the students experienced internet problems, with which time was lost leading to not having enough time for implementing successful interaction activities in the online English classroom.

The last limitation that came across throughout this research was the time limit. As mentioned above, classroom observations began on 17.05.2021. That being said, senior students in Moshajade and Nikola Shtejn were three days away from graduating. Therefore, the last classroom observation conducted in the senior classes took place on their last day of school. As a result, this can be seen as one of the reasons why senior students were not as interactive as freshmen students, and maybe the reason why the first hypothesis, which indicated that senior student who take part in online classes show better involvement in interaction activities than freshmen students in high schools, was not supported.

6.2. Recommendations

A very important recommendation for any further research on the topic is having a sufficient amount of time for conducting classroom observations. Conducting such observations in the senior classes at the beginning of the term, instead of the end, may contribute to different findings and conclusions when it comes to the thought that senior students who take part in online classes show better involvement in interaction activities than freshmen students in high schools.

It is very important to explain to the teachers, whose classes ought to be observed, what is intended to be achieved with the research. As a result, educators would not invite the researcher to observe a grammatical class, but instead a class that can promote interaction activities and contribute to discovering objective findings.

Many of the students who took part in answering the questionnaire pointed out that one of the critical factors that can influence the effectiveness of interaction activities in the online English classroom would be teacher preparedness. As a result, classroom observations should be conducted in classes that are consisted of teachers who are prepared for the class and therefore promote interactivity in the virtual environment.

Another recommendation that can positively influence the overall effectiveness in online education would be the use of appropriate materials in class. As a result, there should be a variety of materials that have been created for the sole purpose of being used in an online environment. Therefore, the Ministry of Education should create textbooks that are created for online use instead of scanned versions of the materials that have been used before the beginning of the Covid19 outbreak.

Finally, the novelty of the current issue with the outbreak alludes to the fact that there is an insufficient amount of research on the matter. Therefore, conducting further studies on the matter is strongly encouraged. The reason would be the fact that some findings can serve in the making of positive changes in the world of online education in times of a global pandemic.

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Appendices

Appendix I

Decisive Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Interaction Activities Integrated in the Online English Classroom in the Course of a Global Pandemic / Решавачки Фактори кои Влијаат на Ефективноста на Интеракционите Активности Интегрирани во Онлајн Училицијата по Англиски Јазик во текот на Глобална Пандемија / Faktorët Vendimtar që Ndikojnë në Efektivitetin e Aktiviteteve Ndërvepruese të Integruara në Klasën Online të Gjuhës Angleze gjatë Pandemisë Globale

Student Questionnaire / Прашалник за Ученици / Pyetësi i studentit

1. Sex / Пол / Gjinia:

- Male / Машко / Mashkull
 Female / Женско / Femër

2. Age / Возраст / Mosha:

- 15
 16
 17
 18
 Other

3. You participate in online English classes/ На час учествувате / Ju merrni pjesë në klasë:

- actively / активно / në mënyrë active
 passively / пасивно / në mënyrë pasive

4. How often do you ask questions in class? / Колку често поставувате прашања на час? / Sa shpesh bëni pyetje në klasë?

- Never / Никогаш / Asnjëherë
 Sometimes / Понекогаш / Ndonjehere
 Often / Често / Shpesh
 Always / Секогаш / Gjithmonë

5. How interactive are the online English classes? / Колку се интерактивни часовите по англиски јазик онлајн? / Sa interaktive janë orët e gjuhës angleze online?

Exceedingly non-interactive
Премногу неинтерактивни
/ Jashtëzakonisht jo-
ndërvepruese

1. 2. 3. 4. 5

Exceedingly interactive /
Премногу интерактивни /
Jashtëzakonisht interactive

6. What type of interaction activities take place in the online English classroom? / Каков вид на интеракциони активности се одвиваат во онлајн училищата по англиски јазик? / Çfarë lloj aktivitetesh ndërveprimi zhvillohen në klasën e gjuhës angleze online?

If necessary, tick more than one option / Доколку е потребно, штиклирајте повеќе опции / Nëse është e nevojshme, zgjidhni më shumë opsione

- Learner - Content Interaction/ Интеракција: Ученик - Содржина / Ndërveprimi: Nxënësi - Përmbajtja
- Learner - Teacher Interaction / Интеракција: Ученик - Наставник / Ndërveprimi: Nxënës – Mësues
- Learner - Learner Interaction / Интеракција: Ученик - Ученик / Ndërveprimi: Nxënës – Nxënës
- All of the above / Сите горенаведени / Të gjitha sa më sipër

7. Do you feel confident participating in classroom discussions online? / Дали се чувствувате самоуверено да учествувате во онлајн дискусији на час? / A ndiheni të sigurt duke marrë pjesë në diskutimet në klasët online?

- Yes / Да / Po
- No / Не / Jo

8. How often do you participate in classroom interactions online? / Колку често учествувате во интеракции за време на онлајн часовите? / Sa shpesh merrni pjesë në ndërveprimet në klasët online?

- Never / Никогаш / Asnjëherë
- Sometimes / Понекогаш / Ndonjëhere
- Often / Често / Shpesh
- Always / Секогаш / Gjithmonë

9. In your opinion, how effective are the interaction activities online? / Според вас, колку се ефективни интерактивните активности за време на онлајн часовите? / Sipas mendimit tuaj, sa efektive janë veprimtaritë e ndërveprimet online?

Ineffective / Неэффективни / Joefektive

1. 2. 3. 4. 5

Extremely Effective / Исклучително ефективни / Jashtëzakonisht efektive

10. Online education has made interaction / Интеракцијата во онлајн наставата е / Ndërveprimi në mësimdhënien në internet është:

- Easier / Полесна / Më e lehtë
- More difficult / Потешка / Më i vështirë

The same / Иста / Е njëjta

11. Where do you feel more confident to take part in interaction activities? / Каде се чувствувате посигурни да учествувате во интерактивните активности? / Ku ndiheni më të sigurt për pjesëmarrjen në aktivitete ndërvepruese?

Online / Онлајн / Online

In a traditional classroom / Во традиционална училница / Në një klasë tradicionale

Both / Двете / Të dyja

None / Ниедно / Asnje

12. State the reason for your answer / Наведете ја причината за вашиот одговор /
Thoni arsytet e përgjigjes tuaj

Talk about the reasons behind your answer to the previous question / Зборувајте за причините што стојат зад вашиот одговор на претходното прашање / Flisni rreth arsyeve që qëndrojnë përgjigjur në pyetjen e mëparshme

13. What are some factors that influence the effectiveness of interaction activities in the online English classroom? / Кои фактори влијаат врз ефективноста на интерактивните активности во онлајн училницата по англиски јазик? / Cilët faktorë ndikojnë në efektivitetin e aktiviteteve ndërvepruese në klasën e gjuhës angleze online?

Teacher preparedness / Подготвеност на наставникот / Gatishmëria e mësuesit

Motivation / Мотивација / Motivimi

Age / Возраст / Mosha

Gender / Пол / Gjinia

Technical difficulties / Технички потешкотии / Vështirësitë teknike

Computer Literacy / Компјутерска писменост / Njohuri kompjuterike

Other

14. Share your views on the effectiveness of interaction activities in the online English classroom. / Споделете ги вашите ставови за ефективноста на интерактивните активности во онлајн училницата по англиски јазик. / Ndani pikëpamjet tuaja mbi efektivitetin e aktiviteteve ndërvepruese në klasën e gjuhës angleze online.

Observation Sheet

General Information				
Observer:		Institution:		Observation: #
Teacher:		Date:	Time:	Length:
Class Year:	Student Age:	Number of Students:	Present in Class:	
Ratio				
Female Students:	Male Students:			

Materials used in class

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
Lesson Topic:	

What is observed?

What is intended to be achieved?

Interaction Types	*Tick a box every time a certain type of interaction takes place												
Teacher – Student	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teacher – Students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student (s) – Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Student (s) – Student (s)																			
----------------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

*List down all the questions asked in class. Include who has raised and answered each question (T – teacher; FS – female student; MS – male student)

	Asked by:	Questions Raised		Answered by:
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				

Comment:

Figures	
Number of Questions:	#
Questions Asked by Female Students:	#
Questions Asked by Male Students:	#

Are the questions asked striving for interaction?

Are the questions of variable difficulty?

Summary and additional comments:

Appendix III

CHECKLIST	Book Name:		
OBJECTIVE:	Syllabus Match	Available on E-Textbook website	Level Suitability
CONTENT:	Number of Chapters:	Description	
LANGUAGE SKILLS:	All skills available	Even distribution	
DESIGN:	Cover	Book block	Up to date photos
Textbook contains the appropriate following:			
Is the textbook age applicable?			
Is it applicable for both genders?			