

# A Study of the Influence of Learner-to-Instructor Interaction in Online Learning for Learning French

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## ABSTRACT

The objective of the study is to explore learners' perceptions of online interactions. Specifically, this study is conducted to address various questions based on a selected survey. To examine motivational factors for learning among undergraduates, a quantitative survey was conducted using a 5-point Likert scale and referencing [19] interaction types. The survey involved 120 respondents (male 39%, female 61%) and included four sections: A) Demographic Profile, B) Learner-to-Learner Interaction, C) Learner-Instructor Interaction, and D) Learner-to-Content Interaction. The findings revealed a high mean score of 4.4, indicating respondents' agreement with the instructor's teaching style, which involved student's active participation. Additionally, the importance of having an overview of the content before the class begins received a high mean score of 4.2. As for Section C, the findings obtained are analysed using SPSS to find the correlation in the mean scores between Learner-to-Instructor and other types of interactions in online learning. In conclusion, interaction in the learning environment is crucial, as it significantly ensures the effectiveness of acquiring knowledge and skills. It also consists of three essential dimensions of interaction: learning to course content, learner to instructor, and learner to learner which are important in the learning environment [23].

**Keywords:** Online Interaction, Learner-to-Instructor, Learner-to-Learner, Learner-to-Content, Learning French

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of Study

Imagine the absence of interaction in the learning process. It is equivalent to one-way communication, where only one individual plays an active role while the other passively listens without interacting or engaging with the conversation. The key question concerning this is whether the goal of the communication is attainable. This concept of communication is similar to the learning context. Sans interaction, between the learner and the instructor, the learning objective will become difficult to achieve.

Plus, it is considered important within the domain of language, specifically in the context of learning a foreign language. As time progressed, after the COVID-19 breakdown, there was a novelty in the educational atmosphere. According to [15], migrating from the traditional sphere, the physical classroom, to virtual classrooms to ensure effectiveness in interactions with the students is equally a challenging job for the instructors.

This led to the introduction of a blended learning system which rapidly gained popularity and offered a fresh approach to teaching. To minimize interruptions in teaching and learning activities, many higher education

institutions opt for this new learning system [7]. This recent approach eliminates the gap of distance and has portrayed a massive enrolment of students in numerous institutions, resulting in forming a knowledgeable society [32].

In any learning approach, specifically e-learning context or online learning, student interaction signifies a fundamental element [6]. As mentioned earlier by [23], online interaction takes place in diverse forms, including interaction with the instructor, interaction with peers or interaction with the course content. Plus, regarding this matter, underlined by [2], numerous research accentuates the importance of the learning atmosphere such as learning activities, satisfaction, engagement, and interactions between instructors and students.

Added by [30], nowadays, during the era of communication technologies, online learning has become a major hit in the higher education sphere, which leads towards gaining better professional and academic qualifications. In consequence, this leads towards effectiveness in the learning process, in particular, language learning [31] and the discovery of methods and strategies that help in improving learning engagement and achievement in the online milieu [10].

This research emphasises the use of online learning in the learning atmosphere, oriented primarily towards the influence of learner-to-instructor interaction, more specifically, in the online learning context of learning a foreign language, French.

### **Statement of Problem**

In language learning, the interaction between learner and instructor plays a crucial role in the learner's success in acquiring the language. This interaction creates a dynamic environment for learners as they are not just passively absorbing information, but they can actively participate in a conversation using the target language in real-time. Unfortunately, the reality is, the learners often shy away from interacting with the instructor especially in an online class due to multiple factors.

A previous study conducted by [12] highlighted the importance of teacher-student interaction as it provides valuable linguistic input in acquiring a second language and its ability to push learners toward a more complex language use. In addition, a study by [28] found that corrective feedback positively influences learner progress in acquiring second language grammar and pronunciation. Furthermore, a recent study done in Malaysia supported the previous studies where the findings revealed that from students' perspectives, oral corrective feedback is an effective tool for language improvement but, they also highlighted the importance of how feedback is delivered, where it should be supportive, clear, and balanced [4].

Nonetheless, there is a scarcity of studies done on the interaction between learner and instructor in a French classroom in Malaysia especially in an online setting. Hence, this study aims to investigate the influence of Learner-to-Instructor interaction in online learning for learning French.

### **Research Questions**

This study is done to explore perception of learners on online interactions. Specifically, this study is done to answer the following questions;

- How do learners perceive learner-to-instructor interactions in online learning?
- How do learners perceive learner-to-learner interactions in online learning?
- How do learners perceive learner-to-content interactions in online learning?
- Is there a relationship between learner-to-instructor and other types of interactions in online learning?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Framework

#### Benefits and Drawbacks in Online Learning

E-learning has many benefits that improve the learning experience. One major advantage is flexibility, allowing students to access materials anytime and anywhere, and learn at their own pace [29]. [8] noted that e-learning helps improve language skills through courses accessible on portable devices, while [26] highlighted how it provides up-to-date resources that can be quickly updated, making learning more efficient and cost-effective by eliminating travel.

E-learning also supports different learning styles. Learners can choose subjects and tools that work best for them. [1] pointed out that it connects new knowledge to personal experiences and promotes learning across multiple subjects. Digital platforms enhance interaction between learners and instructors, and [5] noted that tools like Google Translate and Grammarly help improve writing skills. E-learning encourages participation, especially for those who struggle in traditional classrooms. [26] found that learners felt more comfortable and engaged without the pressure of face-to-face interaction, particularly in tasks like reading. It also allows for quicker access to lessons and content.

However, e-learning has challenges. A key issue is social isolation, which reduces direct interaction between learners, instructors, and peers, hindering collaboration [16], [3]. [8] noted that this lack of connection can affect communication skills and lead to feelings of detachment.

Technological issues are another challenge. Reliable internet and tech skills are essential for e-learning, but not all learners have access to these [29]. High internet costs and disruptions can also create difficulties [26], [9]. Additionally, the lack of immediate feedback from instructors can make learning less personalized [11].

Distractions like social media, games, and movies can reduce focus during e-learning [1]. The anonymity of online learning also increases the risk of plagiarism and cheating, as noted by [26]. Over-reliance on tools like translators can reduce learners' engagement and independence [5]. Furthermore, family distractions and reduced group cooperation can weaken the collaborative experience [9].

In summary, e-learning offers flexibility, easy access to resources, and self-paced learning. However, challenges like isolation, technical issues, and distractions need to be addressed to make e-learning more effective and engaging.

#### Types of Interactions in Online Learning

identified three main types of interaction in distance learning: learner-to-learner, learner-to-instructor, and learner-to-content. Firstly, learner-to-learner interaction involves students working together and communicating, which can vary depending on their motivation and age. Secondly, learner-to-instructor interaction is seen as the most valuable because it relies on frequent and meaningful instructor engagement. However, it also requires learners to be independent in order to avoid overly general teaching. Lastly, Learner-to-Content Interaction happens when learners engage with the subject matter, which forms the foundation of learning.

Building on these ideas, [14] expanded the framework by including collaboration and introducing three new types of interaction in online learning: academic, collaborative, and social. Specifically, academic interaction focuses on using resources and completing tasks, collaborative interaction emphasizes teamwork, and social interaction involves support and encouragement from instructors. Their study revealed that these interactions, particularly social communication and teamwork, significantly improve learning, satisfaction, and participation.

Furthermore, [20] introduced the concepts of "purposeful interpersonal interaction" (PII) and "supportive interaction." Learners study and build connections, while supportive interaction ensures learners have the tools and environment necessary for success. [19] also highlighted that while more interaction doesn't always guarantee better results, meaningful and purposeful communication often boosts satisfaction and achievement.

In conclusion, e-learning interactions—academic, social, and collaborative—are shaped by several factors, including instructional design, support systems, and learner independence. Importantly, research shows that both the amount and quality of interaction play a crucial role in improving engagement, participation, and success. By encouraging clear communication and teamwork, online learning can be more effective and enjoyable.

## **Past Studies**

### **Past Studies on Benefits and Drawbacks in Online Learning**

There have been many past studies on benefits and drawbacks in online learning. The study by [33] has been done to explore this topic focusing on the pros and cons of online learning at a university in Vietnam. A total of 25 students who took English as major studies from different cohorts participated in this study. Participants have been selected randomly and got interviewed for the study purpose. Benefits of online learning extracted from their responses include convenience, cost and time saving, and teaching quality. Meanwhile, the drawbacks of online studies according to participants are isolation, technical problems and cheating. The researcher believes that online learning could be a constructive learning method if educators could come up with a suitable approach towards students. Concurrently, students also need to be mindful of the learning process.

Furthermore, a study that took place in Cambridge International School in Istanbul, Turkey has also been done to investigate the advantages and disadvantages of online learning. [35] conducted the research by asking 40 participants to write an essay pertaining to their online learning experience, especially on benefits and drawbacks of the learning method. The participants comprising 24 females and 16 males between 16 and 22 years old collectively agree on few advantages of online learning including financial affordability, flexible schedules, access to and sharing resources easily, individual attention, self-discipline and self-motivation. Simultaneously, the students found that online learning causes lack of interaction, health issues, connection problems, concentration problems, lack of motivation and lack of teacher control. Ultimately, this study has been done to examine issues regarding online learning and suggesting proper solutions to tutors.

Despite coming from two different institutional settings and different geographical locations, these two past studies display similar outcomes on benefits and drawbacks of online learning. Both studies exhibit convenience as suggested main benefits of online learning. Besides that, participants from both studies propose that online learning contributes to isolation among students as there was lack of interaction between them. There is also an issue of technical problems as online learning requires extra necessities such as stable internet connections.

### **Past Studies on Types of Interactions in Online Learning**

There have been many past studies on types of interactions in online learning. A study done by [27], was conducted to examine university students' interactions between learners, instructors, and course content during online engagement. A total of 171 students from several faculties participated in this study. These participants answered a structured questionnaire that was based on [19] framework. This study discovered that all three engagements are equally beneficial to students. Learner-to-Learner Interactions are proven to motivate learners and minimise dropout rates. Next, Learner-to-Instructor engagement in the sense of constructive feedback, active participation and potent instructor communication are highly appreciated by learners. Moreover, Learner-to-Content is also acknowledged as effective engagement as participants appreciate activities that induce critical thinking and present immediate assistance. Each respective engagements are then proven to have significant relationships among each other.

Another study by [34], also investigated 55 students from a public university in Malaysia regarding student engagement methods used in online learning. Data from this study was collected through a set of 24 item survey questions by applying [23]'s interaction framework. It was concluded that Learner-to-Instructor engagement was the most effective interaction in maintaining student engagement as opposed to other interactions, Learner-to-Learner and Learner-to-Content. This discovery can serve as a guidance to instructors in enhancing learning experience by basing the discovered effective interaction as learning tools.

These two past studies are seen to utilize [19]'s framework, assessing three types of engagements: Learner-to-Learner, Learner-to-Instructor, and Learner-to-Content as their investigation structure but with different intent. While [27], investigated student's general perception of online learning engagements, [34], sought to uncover the most effective interactions among these three engagements. It can be concluded that these three types of interactions exhibit significant positive connections with each other and Learner-to-Instructor engagement as the most effective interactions.

### Conceptual Framework

Is Learner-to-Instructor Interaction needed in online learning? It is assumed that online lessons are one-way interactions, and only traditional classrooms provide two-way communications. Some may find these one-way interactions appealing while others prefer the traditional student and teacher interactions. Past findings revealed that learners perceived some factors that caused them to be less satisfied with online learning, while some factors are perceived as giving positive online experience [25]. This study (refer to Figure 1) explores the relationship between Learner-to-Instructor Interactions and Learner-to-Learner and Learner-to-Content Interactions. According to [19], in online learning, there are three types of interactions. The first type is Learner-to-Instructor Interaction, and this refers to the teaching style of the instructor, the tasks assigned by the instructor to make the lesson effective. Next, Learner-to-Learner Interaction refers to the communication between students during the online class. This can be done one-to-one, in pairs or even in groups. The last type of Learner-to-Content Interaction. This refers to the activities assigned to make learners understand the content of the lesson better. It can even be in the form of class online discussion that encourages critical thinking skills.

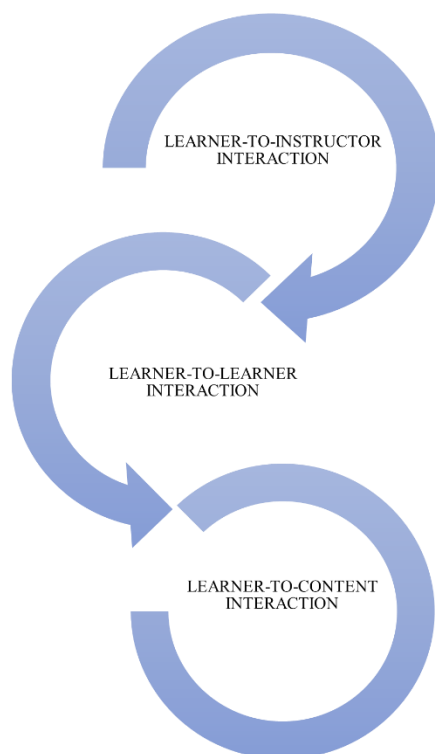


Figure I :- Conceptual Framework of the Study-Influence of Learner-to-Instructor Interaction in Online Learning

## METHODOLOGY

This quantitative study is done to explore motivation factors for learning among undergraduates. A purposive sample of 120 participants responded to the survey. The instrument used is a 5 Likert-scale survey and is rooted from [19] to reveal the variables in Table 1 below. The survey has 4 sections. Section A has items on demographic profile. Section B has 6 items on Learner-to-Learner Interaction. Section C has 8 items on Learner-to-Instructor Interaction. Section D has 8 items on Learner-to-Content Interaction.

Table 1 :- Distribution Of Items In The Survey

SECTION	TYPE OF INTERACTION	NO OF ITEMS	
B	Learner-to-Learner	6	.832
C	Learner-to-Instructor	7	.909
D	Learner-to-Content	18	.891
	Tot no. of Item	21	.944

Table 1 also shows the reliability of the survey. Analysis was done on all variables. The analysis shows a Cronbach alpha of .832 for Learner-to-Learner Interaction, a Cronbach alpha of .909 for learner-to instructor and Cronbach alpha of .891 for Learner-to-Content. The overall Cronbach alpha of all 21 items is .944; thus, revealing a good reliability of the instrument chosen/used. Further analysis using SPSS is done to present findings to answer the research questions for this study.

## FINDINGS

### Findings for Demographic Profile

Table 2 :- Percentage For Q1 – Gender

NO	ITEM	PERCENTAGE
1	Male	39%
2	Female	61%

Table 2 presents the findings regarding the gender distribution of the respondents. Of those surveyed, 39% are male and 61% are female.

Table 3 :- Percentage For Q2 – Course

NO	ITEM	PERCENTAGE
1	Level 1	58%
2	Level 2	34%
3	Level 3	8%

The findings presented in Table 3 show the findings of respondents across different levels. The majority, 58%, are categorized as Level 1, while 34% fall into Level 2. Only 8% of respondents are classified as Level 3.

Table 4 :- Percentage For Q3 – Discipline

NO	ITEM	PERCENTAGE
1	Science	31%
2	Social Science & Humanities	69%



Table 4 illustrates the findings of respondents by discipline: science, and social science and humanities. A significant majority, 69%, of respondents are from the social sciences and humanities, while the remaining 31% come from the science discipline.

Table 5 :- Percentage For Q4 – Internet Access

NO	ITEM	PERCENTAGE
1	Slow	4%
2	Medium	73%
3	Strong	23%

Table 5 outlines the findings regarding the quality of internet access at different speeds. The majority of respondents, comprising 73%, report experiencing medium-speed internet. Additionally, 23% of respondents indicate that they encounter strong-speed internet. In contrast, only 4% report experiencing slow-speed internet.

Table 6 :- Percentage for Q5 – Ict Skills

NO	ITEM	PERCENTAGE
1	Beginner	14%
2	Intermediate	77%
3	Advanced	9%

Table 6 presents the findings on the respondents' levels of ICT skills. A vast majority, consisting 77% of the respondents, are at an intermediate level of ICT skills, followed by beginner level, at 14%. Conversely, only 9% of the respondents are at an advanced level of ICT skills.

### Findings for Learner-to-Instructor Interaction

Table This section presents data to answer research question 1- How do learners perceive Learner-to-Instructor Interactions in online learning?

Table 7 :- Mean for Learner-to-Instructor Interaction

STATEMENT	MEAN
L2IQ1 Does your instructor's teaching style involve students' active participation?	4.4
L2IQ2 Do you feel encouraged by your instructor to keep engaged in online classroom?	4.2
L2IQ3 Does your instructor provide feedback from your previous assessment	4
L2IQ4 Do you feel feedback from your instructor on your performances are clear and positive?	4.3
L2IQ5 Does your instructor use more than two communication tools to stay connected with students?	4.2
L2IQ 6 Do you think that online platforms used by your instructor for your online class are effective and convenient?	4.3
L2IQ7 Does your instructor maintain the ongoing interaction with students after online class?	4.2

Table 7 presents the mean score for Learner-to-Instructor Interaction. Based on all 7 items, the mean scores ranged from 4 to 4.4. The item with the highest mean score is item L2IQ1 "Does your instructor's teaching style involve students' active participation?" (M=4.4). At the same time, the item with the lowest mean score was found to be item L2IQ3 "L2IQ 3 Does your instructor provide feedback from your previous assessment?" (M=4).

## Findings for Learner-to-Learner Interaction

This section presents data to answer research question 2- How do learners perceive Learner-to-Learner Interactions in online learning?

Table 8 :- Mean for Learner-to-Learner Interaction

STATEMENT	MEAN
L2LQ1 Does collaborative learning promote peer-to-peer understanding?	3.9
L2LQ2 Are you more likely to ask for help from your peers?	3.9
L2LQ3 Do you prefer to be in the same group with your chosen peer for online activities?	4.2
L2LQ4 Do you think that the sense of community helps you to engage in online class?	4.1
L2LQ5 Do you think support from peers motivates you to finish tasks?	4.2
L2LQ 6 Do you think that support from peers prevent you from dropping out of course?	4.2

Table 8 presents the mean score for Learner-to-Learner Interaction. Based on all 6 items, the mean scores ranged from 3.9 to 4.2. Item L2LQ3 “Do you prefer to be in the same group with your chosen peer for online activities?”, item L2LQ5 “Do you think support from peers motivates you to finish tasks?” and item L2LQ6 “Do you think that support from peers prevent you from dropping out of course?” shared the highest mean score (M=4.2). On the other hand, item L2LQ1 “Does collaborative learning promote peer-to-peer understanding?” and item L2LQ2 “Are you more likely to ask for help from your peers?” shared the lowest mean score (M=3.9).

## Findings for Learner-to-Content Interaction

This section presents data to answer research question 3- How do learners perceive Learner-To-Content Interactions in online learning?

Table 9 :- Mean for Learner-to-Content Interaction

STATEMENT	MEAN
L2CQ1 Do you think that the synchronous activities (i.e. online discussion) could offer immediate assistance?	4
L2CQ2 Do you think that the asynchronous activities (i.e. assignment) could offer immediate assistance?	3.9
L2CQ3 Do you think the activities could improve the understanding of subject-matter?	4.1
L2CQ4 Do you think the activities in online learning could improve your critical thinking skills?	3.9
L2CQ5 Do you think you can use relevant knowledge wisely in the learning process?	4
L2CQ6 Do you feel that the ease of online content is important?	4.1
Do you feel that it is important to get an overview of the content before the class begins?	4.2
L2TQ8 Do you think that ODL gives more benefits than drawbacks?	3.7

Table 9, referring to the mean for Learner-to-Content Interaction, reveals that the highest mean of 4.2 corresponds to the importance of having an overview of the content before the class begins. The lowest mean of 3.7 is linked to the item suggesting that ODL offers more benefits than drawbacks. Two items scored notably well with a mean of 4.1. The first item emphasizes that learners view the activities as playing a significant role in enhancing their understanding of the subject matter. The second item highlights their belief in the crucial accessibility of online content. With a moderate mean of 4, respondents indicate that relevant knowledge can be effectively applied in the learning process and that immediate assistance can be provided through synchronous activities, such as online discussions. Additionally, with a mean of 3.9, learners feel that



asynchronous activities, such as assignments, offer immediate assistance and that online learning activities contribute to improving their critical thinking skills.

### Findings for Relationship Between Learner-to-Instructor and Other Types of Interactions in Online Learning

This section presents data to answer research question 4- Is there a relationship between Learner-to-Instructor and other types of interactions in online learning?

To determine if there is a significant association in the mean scores between learner-to-instructor and other types of interactions in online learning, data is analysed using SPSS for correlations. Results are presented separately in Table 10 and 11 below.

Table 10 :- Correlation Between Learner-to-Instructor and Learner-to-Learner Interactions

Correlations		LEARNER2IN STRUCTOR	LEARNER2LE ARNER
LEARNER2INSTRUCTOR	Pearson Correlation	1	.709**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	120	120
LEARNER2LEARNER	Pearson Correlation	.709**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	120	120

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 10 shows there is an association between Learner-to-Instructor and Learner-to-Learner Interactions. Correlation analysis shows that there is a high significant association between Learner-To-Instructor and Learner-To-Learner Interactions ( $r=.709^{**}$ ) and ( $p=.000$ ). According to Jackson (2015), coefficient is significant at the .05 level and positive correlation is measured on a 0.1 to 1.0 scale. Weak positive correlation would be in the range of 0.1 to 0.3, moderate positive correlation from 0.3 to 0.5, and strong positive correlation from 0.5 to 1.0. This means that there is also a strong positive relationship between Learner-to-Instructor and Learner-to-Learner Interactions.

Table 11 :- Correlation Between Learner-to-Learner and Learner-to-Content Interactions

Correlations		LEARNER2LE ARNER	LEARNER2C ONTENT
LEARNER2LEARNER	Pearson Correlation	1	.710**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	120	120
LEARNER2CONTENT	Pearson Correlation	.710**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	120	120

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 11 shows there is an association between Learner-to-Learner and Learner-to-Content Interactions. Correlation analysis shows that there is a high significant association between Learner-to-Learner and Learner-to-Content Interactions ( $r=.710^{**}$ ) and ( $p=.000$ ). According to Jackson (2015), coefficient is significant at the .05 level and positive correlation is measured on a 0.1 to 1.0 scale. Weak positive correlation would be in the range of 0.1 to 0.3, moderate positive correlation from 0.3 to 0.5, and strong positive correlation from 0.5 to 1.0. This means that there is also a strong positive relationship between Learner-to-Learner and Learner-to-Content Interactions.

## CONCLUSION

### Summary of Findings and Discussions

The findings from Section A indicate that most respondents are female, classified as Level 1, with a background mainly in Social Sciences and Humanities. They typically experience medium-speed Internet and possess intermediate ICT skills. This suggests that females are more inclined to learn a new language, particularly French, compared to males. Furthermore, online learning plays a significant role in today's world, as highlighted by [30]. Therefore, acquiring a certain level of ICT skills can be advantageous for learning something new, such as a foreign language.

Secondly, from Section B, in response to Question 1 indicates that most respondents acknowledged the positive influence of the instructor's teaching style on enhancing student participation. For Question 2, the results suggest that respondents preferred to work in groups with peers of their choosing for online activities, valued the support from peers in completing tasks, and recognized the role of peer motivation in preventing course dropout. This signifies that learners have their own personal view in acquiring a new language.

Thirdly, the results from Table 10 indicate a strong positive relationship between Learner-to-Instructor and Learner-to-Learner Interactions. Additionally, Table 11 reveals a significant positive relationship between Learner-to-Learner and Learner-to-Content Interactions. This emphasizes the vital role of interaction in promoting the effectiveness in learning a foreign language as mentioned prior by [2].

Lastly, as for the question highlighted in Section D about how learners perceive learner-to-content interaction in online learning, most of the respondents agreed with the importance of having an overview of the content before the commencement of the class. This clearly illustrates the need of providing the overall content before the introduction so that the students get the general view about the course learning outcome (CLO).

### Pedagogical Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

In terms of pedagogical implications, this study goes deeply into the learning atmosphere, specifically examining the effectiveness of various types of interaction [19] in the context of foreign language acquisition in a post-pandemic society. This research not only accentuates the significance of interaction from the students' perspective but also highlights its importance from the instructors' viewpoint, as communication requires the engagement of both parties. Numerous studies have already stressed the positive impact of interaction within educational settings. Future research aims to further explore the role of interaction, particularly in enhancing students' speaking skills, which is a primary objective in foreign language learning.

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