

Investigating EFL Teachers' Strategies to Engage Learners in "Conversation" Classes at University Level

(This research is abridged from an M.A. thesis that holds the same title)

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ABSTRACT

Engagement is broadly defined as learners' involvement in activities that bring about high-quality learning. Educationally speaking, learners' engagement outlines the degree of attention, curiosity, interest and passion that learners display as they are learning or being taught. Recently, learners' engagement has been researched quite intensively as it plays a crucial role in the acquisition of knowledge and duly achievement in the field of teaching/learning foreign languages. The current research attends to English as a foreign language university teachers' use of a set of strategies/techniques to make learners' do some actions so as to be prepared for engagement in the ongoing teaching/learning activities and exercises related to their "Conversation" classes. It further aims at identifying the actions done by the teachers of "Conversation" themselves to engage learners. Based on the preceding aims, it is hypothesized that the researched sample of teachers does not require learners to do certain actions as preparation for engagement in the relevant learning activities and do not do what is required from them to engage learners in their classes and duly do not enhance learners' engagement in the different learning activities. To validate the hypotheses, a sample of 12 English as a foreign language university teachers (6 males and 6 females) specialized in linguistics and teaching the subject "Conversation" has been given a 43-item questionnaire, prepared by the researchers and validated through distribution to a panel of juries in the first place and then piloted to a number of English as a foreign language university teachers, to state their responses to a five-point scale that ranges from "always" to "never". The results show that the sample of teachers ask learners to do a set of actions as preparation for engagement in the relevant learning activities; they also do what is required from them to engage learners and duly enhance their engagement in the different learning activities.

Key Words: Engagement, Learners' Engagement, Engagement Strategies, Disengagement.

1. Introduction

Viewing teachers as the real masters of the teaching-learning situations has made them dominate the class time and do most of the tasks that are supposed to be done by the learners. For instance, teachers tend to lecture and provide answers to different types of questions and exercises. Such a procedure, on the part of teachers, has resulted in learners' inability to grasp the information required and failure to manage their

performance of the different linguistic skills.

Quite recently, educationalists' focus has been shifted to learners as the centre of the teaching-learning process. There have been real attempts to identify learners' individual differences and urge them to participate in the different learning tasks and activities. On their part, teachers would act as facilitators who aim at guiding learners to take over the responsibility for an important proportion of their learning and manage the different tasks pertinent to the materials taught. In other words, teachers' realization that "significant learning is acquired through doing", is expected to develop learners' autonomy and independence by

allowing them to have voice and choice in what they are studying and be engaged in learning by doing what is interesting and appealing to them.

The problem of the current research stems from the fact that many EFL learners have an unsatisfactory level of mastery of the different linguistic skills after graduation. Based on this, it is hypothesized that EFL university teachers of the subject "conversation" (1) do not require learners to do certain actions as preparation for engagement in the relevant learning activities, and (2) do not do what is required from them to engage learners and duly do not enhance learners' (henceforth LsE) in the different learning activities. To enhance the verification of the preceding hypotheses, the following research questions are also addressed:

- Do EFL university teachers' of the subject "Conversation" ask learners to do certain actions to get prepared for engagement in the relevant learning activities?
- What do EFL university teachers' of the subject "Conversation" do to motivate learners and duly enhance their engagement in the different learning activities?

The current research aims in the first place, at identifying (1) the strategies/techniques used by EFL university teachers to make learners' do some actions so as to be prepared for engagement in the ongoing teaching/learning activities and exercises related to their "Conversation" classes, and (2) the actions done by the teachers of "Conversation" themselves to engage learners.

The current research is limited to a sample of EFL university teachers teaching the subject "Conversation" at the Depts. of English and Translation, Colleges of Arts, Basic Education, Education and Humanities, Universities of Duhok, Zakho, Nawroz and Jihan, Kurdistan Region, Iraq

during the second term of the academic year 2018-2019. The current research is expected to be of value to those taking part in the teaching and learning EFL at different educational levels. Learners are expected to be familiar with the effective techniques that may contribute to their constant engagement in the different linguistic activities and hence develop good mastery of EFL. Likewise, EFL teachers would pinpoint the drawbacks that impede their efficient teaching of EFL in terms of the strategies and techniques they are supposed to implement so as to develop LsE and learning.

2. Engagement: Definition

According to Krause and Coates (2008), the concept of engagement has been acknowledged in the last two decades as an effective influential factor that can positively help in guiding better educational practices and outcomes. Additionally, in spite of the considerable variation in the way that LsE is defined, the term is broadly used to account for the interaction between the learner and the learning environment in terms of the school community, peers, type of teaching, and teaching materials (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris, 2004: 59).

Based on the preceding statements, Bomia, Beluzo, Demeester, Elander, Johnson, and Sheldon (1997) state that engagement refers to learners "willingness, need, desire and compulsion to participate in, and be successful in the learning process". On his part, Chapman (2003) points out that LsE outlines their readiness to take part in the ongoing academic activities such as attending classes, doing and submitting assignments, and implementing teachers' directions. Markwell (2007) states that the term LsE is also often used to outline learners' involvement in the academic activities that are educationally beneficial and fruitful. According to Zepke and Leach (2010: 168), LsE refers to their cognitive investment and active participation

in, and emotional commitment to their learning. To conclude, LsE can be operationally defined as the extent of both qualitative and quantitative involvement that learners have in the learning tasks and the various aspects pertinent to the educational program.

3. Engagement: Types

Within academic settings, and in the light of learners' reaction to, reflection upon, involvement in, and fulfillment of learning activities and tasks, engagement falls into the following types:

3.1 Intellectual/Cognitive Engagement (I/CE)

According to Almarado (2018), I/CE refers to learners' possible reflection on an issue when they are engaged in it. In other words, learners' memorization of what they learn comes from their thinking about the content of that learning. Furthermore, I/CE, as Newmann (1992) outlines, demands learners' feeling good about what they are doing and ability to acquire new knowledge. Herein lies the paramount role of I/CE as it makes learners move from thinking to action; i.e. learning is doing. Based on (The Glossary of Education Reform for Journalists, Parents, and Community Members, n.d.), learners' I/CE can be boosted as teachers may (1) introduce lessons, give assignments, or suggest projects that arouse learners' interest or stimulate their curiosity, (2) make learners have choice first over the topics given as assignments, especially the topics that interest them, and second over the way to investigate a topic or present their learning achievements. Examples are oral presentations, short videos, audio or multimedia presentation, (3) give learners choice in either investigating a topic or presenting their learning of it orally, orthographically, and/or visually, and (4) introduce materials or activities of problem-solving nature which demands the learners to probe the real reasons behind the problem and suggest the most appropriate solutions.

3.2 Emotional Engagement

Learners are more likely to be emotionally engaged when they find, especially within the educational setting, people who regularly meet them, ask them about their academic and non-academic matters, and give them advice on different personal, academic and social issues. Almarado (2018) states that "learners must emotionally engage in the day's learning. How learners feel is real; it is the link to how they think!" This is so because if a learner is emotionally disengaged due to causes outside of school or due to a comment we made on their first stepping into classroom, it will be difficult to get him/her to broadly think, in the first place, and hence specifically think about the subject taught. Learners are expected to slip into the "survival mode"; i.e. as they will think of just getting something done and/or taking a task to its end. Accordingly, developing emotional engagement, i.e. preventing the afore-mentioned feelings on learners' part can be achieved through teachers' well-planned and soundly implemented teaching materials. Added to that, teachers' interacting with learners and identifying their moods, feelings, providing effective and beneficial counseling, peer mentoring and giving learners all forms of support they need, are all effective techniques that make learners have feelings of relaxation, stability and self-confidence, feel positive and optimistic about the educational setting and learning; i.e. they become emotionally engaged (The Glossary of Education Reform for Journalists, Parents, and Community Members, n.d.).

3.3 Behavioural Engagement

Behavioural engagement is the easiest type of engagement to observe as learners overtly deal with learning activities and work through the content rather than retaining or implementing some new knowledge. It outlines learners' commitment to their academic

obligations and the on-time fulfillment of the assignments. Yet, behavioural engagement by itself does not suffice unless learners are also cognitively and emotionally since a learning course may be completed with no improvement of the skills and knowledge required (Christenson and Anderson, 2002). In this type of engagement, and based on the information accessed (via the net, 1), the teacher may (1) set activities and assign roles to the learners so as establish behaviors more conducive to learning, (2) use cues or gestures to make learners re-concentrate on what they have been distracted from, (3) use physical motions to remind learners of what they are supposed to do, and (4) set consistent routines to make learners go on dealing with a learning task or to keep them engaged. The latter can be enhanced by teachers' introduction of variation into a classroom routine so as to "reduce the monotony and potential disengagement that may occur when learners sit in the same seats, doing similar tasks, for extended periods of time" since it is evidenced by relevant research on brain-based learning "that variation, novelty, and physical activity can stimulate and improve learning" (The Glossary of Education Reform for Journalists, Parents, and Community Members, n.d.).

3.4 Physical Engagement

Teachers can trigger learners' interest through the use of short physical activities and quick exercises that also aim, in the main, to reduce learners' distracted behaviours (via the net, 1). Teachers' use of 'kinesthetic learning', i.e. the use of physical motions and activities during the learning process, is a key technique in physical engagement. Learners' walking to the front of the classroom and taking over the teacher's role by posing questions either verbally or nonverbally can help in learners' better remembering of the relevant information as different areas of the brain are operating

simultaneously and duly enhances learners' speaking.

3.5 Social Engagement

Teachers may make use of social interactions as a means to create a variety of techniques that lead to LsE (Via the net, 1). Learners are said to be socially engaged when they are divided into pairs or groups that either work collaboratively or take part in academic competitions. In language classes, the debate teams form a good example of academic and co-curricular activities that bring together learning experiences and social interactions. Added to that, learners' public presentation of their works can also characterize the learning process as civic and social. Finally, the learning that centres around societal problems and active participation in probing the social reasons behind such problems can also improve engagement.

3.6 Cultural Engagement

Within educational settings, learners from diverse cultural backgrounds usually come together. The authorities at such institutions are supposed to make the new comers feel welcomed, accepted, safe, and valued. They should also hold special guidance meetings and offer translation services and informational materials translated into multiple languages. Here, engagement is initiated when teachers set classes that account for the history, literature and arts of the diverse ethnic groups. Likewise, the out-of-class activities should subsume varied materialistic elements and educational materials derived from the learners' cultural diversity so as to minimize the feelings of confusion, alienation, disconnection, or exclusion that some learners may experience (The Glossary of Education Reform for Journalists, Parents, and Community Members, n.d.). Finally, Almarado (2018) quoting (Appleton, Christenson and Furlong, 2008) states that the first three types of engagement, namely I/CE, emotional and behavioral engagement

are the most prevalent and frequently heeded in most academic settings. He further points out that within a given classroom, on any given day, the levels of engagement for each individual learner range between these three main types.

4. Teachers' Role in Engaging Learners in Foreign

Language Classes

LsE in foreign language (henceforth FL) classes is usually demonstrated by the amount of time and effort learners put into their studies in the first place and also in other educationally purposeful activities. It is further displayed by the way that the institution accommodates its resources and organizes the curriculum and other learning opportunities to make learners participate in activities pertinent to their FL learning.

Since teachers play many roles in the lives of the learners in their classrooms, they have to set the tone of their classrooms, create good environments conducive to effective learning, mentor and give feedback to learners, present role models and try to pinpoint the problematic areas so as to suggest the best remedies (Via the net, 3). Hill and Rowe (1996) state that although much of the issue is intrinsic, i.e. works from within the learner, research has highlighted that teachers play a vital role in learners' motivation and engagement. Likewise, Martin (2006) found out that a teacher's enjoyment and confidence in teaching, pedagogical efficacy, and affective orientations in the classroom have a positive impact on LsE. Contrariwise, teachers who are lecturing, i.e. presenting the teaching materials by doing much talking about it are less likely to be sources of engagement for the learners during classroom instruction (Young, 2015).

According to Bandura (1997), teachers who are confident are usually capable of **(1)** introducing, testing

and looking for alternatives when initial success is not there; **(2)** enhancing working by means of high levels of both effort and persistence; **(3)** handling problematic situations through the practice of impact on the cognitive and emotional processes pertinent to the situation; and **(4)** engaging in instruction with positive, proactive, and solution-focused orientations, and in such a way that results in more motivation and engagement on learners' part. In the same vein, when teachers enjoy teaching and feel confident in managing its varied requirements, they can affectively influence learners and have positive learner-teacher relationships. In this respect, Teven and McCroskey (1997) found out that learners who think that their teachers were caring about them and their education showed good readiness to learn and develop socially, cognitively and even linguistically. Finally, Connell and Wellborn (1991) point out that learners-teacher positive relationships are closely related to learners cognitive, emotional and behavioural engagement in the class.

Based on the information the researcher could get access to from the website entitled (via the net, 2), teachers' role in engaging learners can become quite outstanding and prominent when they **(1) impart knowledge by means of a curriculum that is based on sound and effective** guidelines and varied techniques such as lecturing and small group activities, **(2) create environments conducive to learning**, **(3) model good roles**; **(4) mentor since mentoring** is a basic required attribute of every efficient and successful teacher; **(5) pinpoint the learners problematic issues**; and **(6) motivate learners**.

According to Ferlazzo (2014), teachers' role becomes prominent as they come to help learners staying on the right track by providing plenty of self-checks and formative assessments so as to watch their own progress, be aware of their learning pace, and get

learning activities; introduce challenging but attainable activities and assignments; provide the necessary materials and resources so as to bring about success at the end; be positive with the learners by highlighting the good points in their performance rather than concurrently reminding them of the wrong points; provide the possible choices and optional assignments since learners who are able to make sensible choices concerning their work will find it intrinsically engaging based on the sense of autonomy derived from such choices; design classes that are conducive to interaction and enable learners to use technology and other media creatively and solve authentic problems. Learners' realization that their in-class performance would be implemented in real-life situations will open many avenues of engagement, and attend to learners' delight on dealing with situations full of fun.

In the following lines, light will be shed on the roles that are supposed to be played by teachers and as outlined by the reference that the researcher could get access to (via the net, 3).

- a. **Teacher as a learner:** A teacher has to think from the learners' perspective before planning to interact with them. By doing so, s/he can instill in them interest and the sense of success by convincing them that education and knowledge are the routes for achieving their needs.
- b. **Teacher as a facilitator:** Teachers should make learners feel that they are in the classrooms for assistance and caring. In this respect, teachers have to provide environment that are conducive to better learning and attend to learners' life in terms of its societal, intellectual and linguistic aspects.
- c. **Teacher as an assessor:** Assessment is a crucial tool for identifying learners' knowledge and hence providing the required feedback so as to bring about good learning. Similarly, assessment helps

teachers in having better planning of their forthcoming teaching based on the effective techniques and strategies to be implemented.

- d. **Teacher as a manager:** Teachers' adoption of the right and workable teaching techniques enables them to handle teaching issues within the time set and cover academics as well as interpersonal skills. Well-experienced teachers can make use of the most efficient mechanisms that result in the success of the teaching-learning process.
- e. **Teacher as an evaluator:** True and fair evaluation plays a crucial role in teachers' success. It should be done by teachers so as to be fair in judging learners' performance in such a way that makes learners benefit from and learn through the mistakes they commit.
- f. **Teacher as a guide:** Teachers are supposed to provide learning conditions and develop activities that lead to LsE in the learning activities. Teachers' realization of learners' needs and the implementation of the effective techniques to meet such needs can make learners have a high sense of self-confidence and success.

In conclusion, teachers' keeping abreast of research in the domain of education through reading journals, attending workshops and using effective, research-based strategies and techniques is the key for them to remain the most salient pillars of any education system, and to be the real masters who have the required feat to motivate learners and engage them in the FL varied learning activities. Though most of the motivation and engagement techniques are intrinsic to the learner, teachers play a vital role in creating learners' motivation and cultivating their engagement.

5. Methodology

5.1 The Procedure and Data Collection

A two-fold procedure is adopted in the current

research. In addition to the theoretical part which subsumes a number of topics and subtopics that are relevant to the subject under investigation, the practical part attends to the methodology adopted in conducting the study. It makes reference to the questionnaire used to elicit data from the sample of EFL university teachers so as to investigate the techniques they are using to engage learners in the learning activities introduced in the classes of the subject "Conversation".

5.2 The Population and the Sample of the Research

The population of a research is generally viewed as the largest group to which a researcher would like to generalize the results of a study. Accordingly, the present research endeavours to elicit data from a population that comprises the EFL university teachers of the subject "Conversation" during the academic year 2018-2019.

With regard to the sample of the study, it is worthy to note that a sample is a group of individuals who share a number of identical characteristics reflected by the population from which the sample is usually taken. As such, the sample of the present research comprises (12) EFL teachers of the subject "Conversation".

5.3 The Research Tool / The Questionnaire

To bring about the aims and verify the hypotheses of this research in terms of identifying the techniques used by the sample of teachers to engage learners in "Conversation" classes at university level, a 42-item questionnaire, as the main and sole research tool, was designed by the researchers depending on the related literature. The questionnaire was administered to the sample of teachers during the second term of the academic year 2018-2019.

5.4 Validity of the Questionnaire

A main property of a research tool to be accepted and approved is its validity. According to Lado (1961: 321), a research tool validity means that the tool is relevant to

what it claims or purports to measure. It aims to improve and qualify the content of the research tool before its actual administration to target sample. Chappelle and Brindley (2002: 254) report that three points are crucial in considering the validity of a research tool, namely content validity that looks at whether the items of the questionnaire are appropriate; criterion related validity which shows whether other research tools measuring similar capabilities are correlated with the used research tool and construct validity that indicates whether the research tool fits and measures the construct of the research.

Based on this, the draft version of the questionnaire was presented to a panel of jurors specialized in applied linguistics (See Appendix II). They were asked to judge the face and content validity of the questionnaire by making the necessary additions, deletions and modification of the items included. Fortunately, all the items have been judged valid by all jurors who stated that the scale was within an acceptable and comprehensive standard, suitable for the sample under investigation, and measured what it intended to measure. However, some slight changes and modifications were made and the questionnaire was ready for administration for the pilot study.

5.5 Reliability of the Questionnaire

A questionnaire must have reliability so as to guarantee the stability of the data collected. A questionnaire reliability, as Birolini (2014: 299) reports, is the degree of accuracy of a given questionnaire to measure whatever it is measuring. It is mainly concerned with consistency and fairness of the data collected by means of the administered questionnaire.

To elicit data from the sample of teachers assigned for the pilot study, a 5-point scale was adopted. Here, the respondents were required to state their options according to a scale that ranged from "Never" to

“Always” and as follows:

0 point = “Never”; 1 point = “Rarely”; 2 points = “Sometimes”; 3 points = “Often”; 4 points = “Always”.

Additionally, in an attempt to check (1) the wording of the questionnaire, i.e. clarity of the questionnaire items, its instructions and layout, and whether the content covers the majority of the strategies/techniques manipulated by the sample of teachers, (2) time required to give responses to the items of the questionnaire, and (3) the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire, the latter was piloted on the same sample of (12) EFL university teachers of the subject “Conversation” on two occasions, with a time interval of 2 weeks. In other words, the present researcher applied the test-retest method by using Pearson Coefficient Correlation technique. The correlation between the two tests was found to be coefficient and it scored 96%; a percentage that indicates the high reliability of the questionnaire. Building on that, the questionnaire was approved and put in its final version (See Appendix I).

5.6 Statistical Means

The data collected by means of the questionnaire were analysed by means of the Weighted Mean Means (WAMs) and T-Test.

6. Data Analysis and Discussion of Results

6.1 Data Analysis

The data collected on the basis of the sample’s responses to the items of the research tool, i.e. the questionnaire, were analyzed taking into account the hypotheses of the current research, the aims and the research questions posed in this respect. As such, to make the results and their discussion more feasible to understand, it is important to remind the reader that the questionnaire, in its original version that was administered to the sample of teachers of “Conversation” falls into two main parts with Part One

including the items from 1 to 11 and Part Two including the items from 12 to 44.

It is evident that the values assigned to the options range from 0-4. As such and broadly speaking, any part of the questionnaire, and more specifically speaking, any item within any part, that gets the value 2 and above, means that what has been done is in favour of the process of LsE in terms of (1) The actions recommended by the teacher and the learners are supposed to do as preparations for engagement, (2) Teachers’ actions to enhance LsE, and (3) Learners’ engaged-in actions. In the following pages, each one of the two afore-mentioned parts of the questionnaire will be attended to on the basis of the sample’s responses followed by the required discussion.

6.1.1 Analysis of Part 1: The actions recommended by the teacher which the learners are supposed to do as preparation for engagement

The analysis of the data of this part and the following part of the questionnaire will be based on the hypothesis, aim(s) and research question relevant to each part and as follows:

- **Hypothesis 1:** “EFL university teachers of the subject “Conversation” do not require learners to do certain actions as preparation for engagement in the relevant learning activities”.
- **Aim(s):** Investigating EFL university teachers’ use of different techniques to prepare learners, in the first place, so as to be engaged in the different activities and exercises pertinent to the teaching of the subject “Conversation”.
- **Research Question 1.** What do EFL university teachers’ of the subject “Conversation” recommend or ask learners to do so as to get prepared for engagement in the relevant learning activities?

To better understand the outcomes of the data collected through the responses provided by the sample

of teachers on the first part of the questionnaire, consider Table 1:

6.1.1.1 Discussion

A close look into the contents of table 1, where the values of the relevant items have been ranked from the highest to the lowest, reveals the fact that the sample of research has positively responded to the items related to teachers' recommendation of what the learners are required to do so as to get engaged in their "Conversation" classes. Additionally, as the weighted arithmetic means (henceforth WAMs) for all the items on that aspect, namely "learners' preparation for engagement" go well beyond the middle mean value 2,

Table 1: The Weighted Arithmetic Means and Standard Deviations of Teachers' Responses to Part 1 of the Questionnaire

Item No.	Part 1: To prepare learners for engagement in my "Conversation" classes, I ask them to...	Mean	Std. Deviation
2	submit required work.	3.6	0.69921
4	participate in the activities offered.	3.6	0.5164
1	attend classes.	3.4	0.69921
3	follow my instructions in the class.	3.4	0.69921
6	exert intense effort and concentration in the implementation of learning tasks.	3.4	0.84327
7	get involved in materials that are highly relevant to real-world context.	3.3	0.48305
9	give insightful questions in the class.	3.2	0.78881
8	tell what they know about a topic, and then what they think they do not know about it.	3.1	0.99443
5	initiate action when given the opportunity.	2.9	0.8756
11	choose the topics they are asked to write about.	2.9	0.73786
10	make use of the new educational technology.	2.6	0.96609

teachers, this indicates that the sample of teachers are well aware of the fact that learners by themselves might

not give participation in the learning activities its due importance and value. As such, they, i.e. the sample of resort to those strategies/techniques in their attempt to bring the learners closer to the teaching-learning process and make them get involved in the varied learning activities.

It is also worthwhile to note that the 11 items standing for learners' preparation, based on the recommendations provided by their teachers are almost all academic in nature. This is so due to the fact that EFL university teachers always believe that academic matters should be heeded in any attempt to put learners on the right learning track and make them get engaged in the varied activities.

Finally, the item which states "make use of the new educational technology" has got the lowest WAM, namely 2.6. The scoring of such value is due to the fact that the new educational technology is available to the samples of teachers but to a limited extent. That is on one hand. On the other hand, as teachers are not given the full freedom in the choice of the teaching materials, they always find themselves under time pressure as they struggle to cover the assigned material that is distributed over the study-year calendar and also know that unexpected interruptions are possible every now and then. Accordingly, hypothesis no.1 which states that "EFL university teachers of the subject "Conversation" do not require learners to do certain actions as preparation for engagement in the relevant learning activities" is rejected.

6.1.2 Analysis of Part 2: Teachers' actions to enhance learners' engagement

- **Hypothesis 2:** "EFL university teachers of the subject "Conversation" do not motivate learners and duly do not enhance their engagement in the different learning activities".
- **Aim(s):** investigating EFL university teachers' use

of different strategies/techniques to prepare learners, in the first place, so as to be engaged in the different activities and exercises pertinent to the teaching of the subject "Conversation".

- **Research Question 2.** What do EFL university teachers' of the subject "Conversation" do to motivate learners and duly enhance their engagement in the different learning activities?

Part 2, through its 33 items, accounts for the diverse actions done by teachers of "Conversation" in their attempt to engage learners.. To pave the way for better realization of the responses provided by the sample of teachers, consider table 2:

Table 2: The Weighted Arithmetic Means and Standard Deviations of Teachers' Responses to Part 2 of the Administered Questionnaire

Item No.	Part 2: To bring about learners' engagement in my "Conversation" classes at University Level, I	Mean	Std. Deviation
12	acknowledge their voice.	3.6	0.5164
13	understand their needs and skills.	3.6	0.69921
27	give them the time they need to understand and an activity by themselves.	3.6	0.5164
42	become open to communication with them and give feedback.	3.6	0.69921
14	enhance their self-belief.	3.5	0.70711
19	strengthen their sense of competence in learning activities.	3.5	0.52705
43	pause after asking a question— and again after getting an answer.	3.4	0.96609
44	contribute to the class discussion.	3.4	0.69921
36	organize the curriculum and other learning opportunities.	3.3	0.82327
15	make them feel they are competent to achieve their own objectives.	3.2	0.63246
16	give them the opportunity to explore.	3.2	1.13529
18	give them frequent positive reinforcement.	3.2	0.42164
21	create a positive emotional climate.	3.2	0.91894
37	use personalization; i.e. make the teaching material attune to their specific contexts.	3.2	0.91894

20	challenge them to learn and explore materials outside of their level of expertise.	3.1	0.99443
25	give them time to discuss the question with their neighbor.	3.1	0.8756
30	present a debatable issue and try to persuade them to become invested in a topic.	3.1	0.8756
31	include interactive elements in my teaching.	3.1	0.8756
33	bring up ideas or concepts from different courses during class discussions.	3.1	0.73786
34	give them brief and convenient assignments.	3.1	0.8756
24	create challenging and enriching educational experiences for them to extend their academic abilities.	3	0.4714
38	give teaching materials that match their ability and understanding.	3	0.8165
22	create an environment that allows exploration and multiple "right" choices.	2.8	0.78881
23	create learning communities, i.e. a group of learners taking the same classes together.	2.8	0.63246
26	give them short times for reflection	2.8	1.0328
35	align the curricula and instruction with their interests.	2.8	0.42164
40	give them materials through which to apply and show what they know.	2.7	0.82327
29	provide them with collaborative tasks.	2.6	0.84327
39	introduce teaching materials with a mystery and/or in the form of puzzles.	2.6	1.3499
41	integrate the peer culture, academics, and interests in the way that they are best reached.	2.6	0.84327
32	build routines and cues into my classroom.	2.5	0.97183
17	interfere in their personal problems.	2.4	1.26491
28	help them select tasks within their competencies.	1.6	0.96609

6.1.2.1 Discussion

The second half of the administered questionnaire addresses the initiatives taken and the actions done, whatsoever, by the sample of the researched sample of teachers in terms of motivating learners and duly making them get engaged in the varied learning activities and practices. Through its 33 items, this part

attends to two types of actions that are varied in nature, namely academic and interactive (social). Looking closely into the contents of table 2, it becomes evident that

- 29 items out of the total no. of items in part 2 are academic in orientation and only 4 items are social in orientation,
- All the 29 items which are academic in nature have WAMs that goes well above the mid-point 2 except item 28 “help them select tasks within their competencies” with the WAM 1.6. This indicates teachers’ realization that a noticeable proportion of LsE is required from them as they are supposed to play the roles of mentor, guide, facilitator and supporter. As for item 28 which has the WAM 1.6 which is below the mid-point and is interpreted to be on the negative side of the scale, it is important to state that learners at almost all universities in Iraq at large and Kurdistan Region universities in particular have no voice in the matter of selecting the teaching materials which are either left to the teachers or are broadly recommended by the ministry of Higher Education through its specialized sectors.
- The 4 items that are social in nature, namely items 42 “become open to communication with them and give feedback”, 21 “create a positive emotional climate”, 41 “integrate the peer culture, academics, and interests in the way that they are best reached” and 17 “interfere in their personal problems” have the following successive WAMs: 3.6, 3.2, 2.6, and 2.4. Such positive WAMs also outlines teachers’ realization that engagement in learning activities can be enhanced when learners feel that their teachers care about them, establish relaxing environments that are conducive to learning, and try to identify their personal problems so as to

provide the suitable remedies.

- It is believed that the sample of teachers has mistakenly interpreted and accordingly negatively responded to item 32 “build routines and cues into my classroom” which has got the rank before the last among the 29 items that have academic implications. The WAM 2.5 of the item in question is probably due to the sample’s not understanding of the meaning of the word “routine” which means the repetitive use of learning activities and practices rather than their boring and monotonous characteristic.

On the basis of the responses by the sample of teachers concerning the items listed in the second part of the administered questionnaire, the second hypothesis which states “EFL university teachers of the subject “Conversation” do not motivate learners and duly do not enhance their engagement in the different learning activities” is rejected.

7. Conclusions and Findings

7.1 Conclusions

Promoting LsE has been proved as an effective teaching strategy in the domain of teaching and learning English as an FL. This is so because engaging learners and involving them in the ongoing teaching/learning activities can boost their empowerment and motivation. As such, ensuring the sound implementation of the right tactics and the use of the right tools can create effective engaging opportunities for learners at different study levels.

The current research has adopted the techniques recommended and used by EFL university teachers of the subject “Conversation” to engage learners as its focal and salient point of departure. Through satisfactory handling of the relevant theoretical literature of the varied topics closely related to the topic under investigation and the use of a questionnaire as

the sole tool research administered to a sample of EFL university teachers, the following concluding remarks have been arrived at:

7.1.1 General Conclusions

- LsE forms a priority for the educational circles nowadays due to the shift of focus from teacher-centred approaches to learner-centred approaches.
- Based on 1 above, the current learner-centred orientations advocate the development of learners' autonomy and independence; a quite aspiring aim that cannot be brought about unless learners are given voice and choice in the varied aspects relevant to their education.
- A distinctive feature of LsE is that it boosts learners' focus and attention. It is especially important at the university level as it increases learners' persistence and mastery of the challenging materials.
- LsE is a cooperative joint matter that remains incomplete and unfulfilled without the exertion of the required joint efforts by the people involved in the educational system. In other words, not only LsE, but also that of teachers is crucial for developing learners' satisfaction with and enjoyment in it. If the teachers is disengaged, the learners are not expected to be engaged and inspired either.
- LsE is not workable and productive to the level required unless the learners are cognitively, emotionally and behaviourally engaged in the actions and the activities at hand.
- The concept of LsE stems from the fact that learning improves when learners are curious, interested, or inspired, and that it tends to suffer when learners are bored, dispassionate, disaffected, and/or disengaged.

7.1.2 Research Conclusions (Findings)

Based on the analysis of the data collected from the sample of EFL university teachers of the subject "Conversation", the following research conclusions are worthy to note:

- EFL university teachers are familiar with different aspects and procedural steps to bring about LsE. They are also aware of the fact that engaging learners in the varied teaching/learning activities forms part and parcel of their academic mission, and that no betterment and/or improvement can be made in learners' acquisition of information and duly achievement outcomes unless they are involved in the ongoing activities.
- EFL university teachers utilize and manipulate a set of activities and provide learners in their classes with some instructions just as prerequisites that urge learners to get involved in the learning tasks.
- EFL university teachers realize that the matter of engaging learners is not learners' responsibility only. They realize that the guide, mentor, facilitator, supporter, etc. roles they play make them responsible for a noticeable proportion of LsE.
- EFL classes at large and those of the subject "Conversation" in particular are characterized by the availability of abundant tasks, practices, activities and exercise that form real sources of LsE.

7.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings arrived at and in attempt to create more LsE in EFL classrooms at all educational levels, the current research recommends the following:

- Since the current orientations target the learner as the focus of the teaching-learning process, EFL university teachers' familiarity with the tenets, procedures, practices and implementation is quite important.
- Based on no.1 above, there should be training courses for EFL teachers so as to be acquainted with

the accelerating development in the field of teaching at large, and that of teaching FLs in particular. This can also be brought about by means of reading the related literature and attending workshops, professional development days and conferences whenever the opportunity lends itself.

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Appendix I
Questionnaire

Dear Teacher of “Conversation”

I am conducting an M.A. research entitled **“Investigating EFL University Teachers’ Techniques to Engage Learners in “Conversation” Classes.**

Would you please state your frank responses to the items of the enclosed questionnaire in terms of their application to you on the basis of the five options stated opposite to each item. Your answers will be kept confidential and used for the purposes the current research is set to meet. Your cooperation and efforts are highly appreciated. Thank you in advance. Best regards.....

Dept.	
College	
The Subject(s) you are teaching	

The Researche

Items		Options				
Part 1:						
To prepare learners for engagement in my “Conversation” classes, I ask them to...		always	often	Some- times	Rarely	never
1	attend classes.					
2	submit required work.					
3	follow my instructions in the class.					
4	participate in the activities introduced.					
5	initiate action when given the opportunity.					
6	exert intense effort and concentration in the implementation of learning tasks.					
7	get involved in materials that are highly relevant to real-world context.					
8	tell what they know about a topic, and then what they think they do not know about it.					
9	ask insightful questions in the class.					
10	make use of the new educational technology.					
11	choose the topics they are asked to write about.					
Part 2:		always	often	Some-	Rarely	Never

To bring about learners' engagement in my "Conversation" classes at University Level, I				times		
12	acknowledge their voice.					
13	understand their needs and skills.					
14	enhance their self-belief.					
15	make them feel they are competent to achieve their own objectives.					
16	give them the opportunity to explore.					
17	interfere in their personal problems					
18	give them frequent positive reinforcement.					
19	strengthen their sense of competence in learning activities.					
20	challenge them to learn and explore materials outside of their level of expertise.					
21	create a positive emotional climate.					
22	create an environment that allows exploration and multiple "right" choices.					
23	create learning communities, i.e. a group of learners taking the same classes together.					
24	create challenging and enriching educational experiences for them to extend their academic abilities.					
25	give them time to discuss the question with their neighbor.					
26	give them short times for reflection					
27	give them the time they need to understand and an activity by themselves.					
28	help them select tasks within their competencies.					
29	provide them with collaborative tasks.					
30	present a debatable issue and try to persuade them to become invested in a topic.					
31	include interactive elements in my teaching.					
32	build routines and cues into my classroom.					
33	bring up ideas or concepts from different courses during class discussions.					
34	give them brief and convenient assignments.					
35	align the curricula and instruction with their interests.					

36	organize the curriculum and other learning opportunities.					
37	use personalization; i.e. make the teaching material attune to their specific contexts.					
38	give teaching materials that match their ability and understanding.					
39	introduce teaching materials with a mystery and/or in the form of puzzles.					
40	give them materials through which to apply and show what they know.					
41	integrate the peer culture, academics, and interests in the way that they are best reached.					
42	become open to communication with them and give feedback.					
43	pause after asking a question – and again after getting an answer.					
44	contribute to the class discussion.					

Appendix II

List of Jury Members of the Questionnaire

	Name	Academic Status	Specialization
College of Basic Education / University of Mosul			
1.	Dr. Ansam Ali Ismaeel	Asst. Prof.	Applied Linguistics
College of Languages / University of Duhok			
2.	Mr. Lazgin Khidir Suleiman	Asst. Prof.	Applied Linguistics
College of Humanities / University of Zakho			
3.	Dr. San'an Shero Malo	Lecturer	Applied Linguistics
College of Languages / Nawroz University			
4.	Dr. Idrees Ali Hassan	Lecturer	Applied Linguistics